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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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Monday 11 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NORTHAMPTON BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Pedestrians (Casualties)

1. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken in the last two years into measures to reduce pedestrian casualties.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): A lot. This is one of our highest priorities.

Mr. Hughes: I thank my hon. Friend for that full answer to my question. When looking at pedestrian casualties, has my hon. Friend taken into account the important part that can be played in preventing casualties by using speed humps to slow down vehicles? Does he agree that it is almost impossible for a local authority to institute speed humps, because the road either has too much or too little traffic and never seems to be quite right?

Mr. Bottomley: I may arrange to have more detailed information placed in the *Official Report*. This year we are spending £1·5 million as part of a £5 million pedestrian-related safety programme.

We are on our second or third set of regulations relating to speed humps. I should be delighted to relax the regulations again. They have been made tight in the past to avoid their being rubbished because of one accident, but they can prevent many. I hope that we will find ways of reducing or eliminating the cost of drainage, which accounts for two thirds of the cost of road humps. More road humps could then come in. I will pay special attention to the degree of traffic.

Mr. Allen: The Minister will be aware that the North report on road traffic law has been published, and he will have a copy. When will that report be brought before the House in the form of legislation, especially to avoid pedestrians being killed by reckless driving or—under the North recommendations—the new offence of "bad" driving?

Mr. Bottomley: The House will know that my right hon. Friend has promised a preliminary report before the end of this Session—the rest will follow on. I look forward to the time when heavy goods vehicles will stop intimidating and crashing into cars; cars will stop crashing into motor cycles; motor cyclists will leave cyclists alone; cyclists will leave pedestrians alone; and pedestrians will not get so drunk and kill so many of themselves. We all need to recognise the importance of co-operation on our roads.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the answer to pedestrian safety lies in education? What discussions have he and his departmental colleagues had with the Department of Education and Science about pedestrian safety tuition being included in the core curriculum for all schoolchildren?

Mr. Bottomley: It is not so much a question of incorporating that into the core curriculum, as of trying to go from one school out of five knowing what it is doing about road safety training to five out of five. The

Department of Transport, the Department of Education and Science and local education authorities have a responsibility to ensure that any parent, teacher or governor can work through a checklist so that more can be done to provide safety for the children in their school.

Traffic (Central London)

2. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce the density of private motor traffic within central London.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I aim to promote measures to help the existing traffic to flow more freely. The measures that we are taking are improving trunk roads to take traffic round, rather than through, London; promoting the use of new technology to improve traffic management; encouraging more effective parking controls; and working with British Rail and London Regional Transport to improve the quality of the rail and Underground systems.

Mrs. Michie: Does the Minister have a view on the report in the press today that four private consultant firms consider that London should have a network of new toll roads? Would it not be much better for the public to use public transport? How will he encourage them to use it much more?

Mr. Channon: On the first part of the hon. Lady's question, that is an extremely unlikely idea. She is referring to a progress report by consultants who have been working on the project for two years and have another year to go. None of the suggestions has had the blessing of the Government. They are merely progress reports to be considered by the relevant people.

It is absolutely essential to increase investment in public transport. I am determined that we should have a better commuter service into London and a better Underground service. That will be done by providing, as we have, large measures of investment in those services.

Mr. Squire: In view of the congestion in the Westminster area, will my right hon. Friend confirm that his Department is looking at proposals to build a tunnel under the Thames to take through traffic well away from Westminster?

Mr. Channon: Westminster city council and the Government have commissioned a consultants' report to examine that matter. We await the report.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to tell the House and the public at large that the report in *The Guardian* today is accurate, that he condemns the plans to demolish 5,000 homes in London and introduce toll roads in London, that he will call a halt to all major road building in London, and that instead he will put far more resources into public transport and diverting traffic around London? Is he aware that when the GLC was controlled by Labour the use of public transport increased significantly and that road traffic in London was reduced because London's transport policy was directed towards the needs of the people of London rather than towards the minority of car commuters and heavy goods vehicles traversing London?

Mr. Channon: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the use of public transport is increasing a great deal faster now than it was when the GLC was in existence. Investment in the Underground is 60 per cent. higher in real terms than it was under the GLC, which starved the Underground of investment.

Mr. Tony Banks: Oh, come on.

Mr. Channon: Well, I shall give the figures to the House. Today, investment is running at £365 million a year. That is 60 per cent. higher in real terms than when the GLC had control of the Underground. As for the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have already made it clear that these are progress reports of studies that were announced two years ago. The sensational story in *The Guardian* today merely repeats an answer that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport gave to the House on 27 June and information that was placed in the Library over two weeks ago.

Mr. Cormack: But is not the time coming when my right hon. Friend will have to consider radical remedies, such as charging people extra for driving regularly into London and restricting deliveries by goods vehicles to the hours of darkness?

Mr. Channon: I should be very reluctant to charge people for travelling into London by road. It would allow only those who could afford it to come into London by car. It would be very difficult and bureaucratic to operate and would lead to many unfairnesses. My hon. Friend may be right. One day somebody may have to do that, but it is a deeply unattractive option which I am not at all keen to pursue.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Secretary of State, in what might be described as a moment of glasnostian candour, admit that his Department does not have a clue what about to do about getting cars off the roads of London? His response to his hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) illustrates that fact. Does the Secretary of State admit that on the Kensington-Fulham border, where four years ago the Government refused to allow the GLC to invest £25 million to improve the rail system, the Government are now talking about an investment of £150 million to build two miles of road, which would mean pulling down houses and bringing further traffic on to an already too dense traffic system?

Mr. Channon: I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman should show this sudden interest in Kensington. So far as I know, he has never before asked a question about Kensington and I suspect that he will never again. I repeat that we have no new proposals for changing the road system in Kensington.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Why is not more use made of the River Thames and other waterways in London, which would take traffic off the roads? Will my right hon. Friend take a trip to Venice and see the effectiveness of the water buses there and introduce them on the Thames?

Mr. Channon: I cannot imagine anything nicer than a trip to Venice. My hon. Friend is on to a good point. In the past we have neglected the Thames far too much. I hope that commercial services will start very shortly. Such a service already exists between, more or less, this House and

docklands. I hope that it will be extended to Chelsea. It will play a useful part in carrying a proportion of the traffic that wants to come into the centre of London.

Roads

3. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take in the light of the Audit Commission report on local authority maintained roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The main action is for local authorities. I have already urged them to implement the commission's recommendations for spending up to their provision on maintenance, and for improving the efficiency of their arrangements. I repeated this message at a meeting with them only last week.

Mr. Blunkett: The Secretary of State will be aware that the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has welcomed the bulk of the Audit Commission's report, but obviously some matters still cause it concern. Over the 10 years to 1986 traffic on urban roads increased by more than 20 per cent., but spending fell by 10 per cent. Deregulation has put more traffic on the roads, and revenue support for public transport fell from £512 million to £249 million between 1982 and 1987. As a consequence, and as has already been said this afternoon, there is a major crisis in road maintenance and traffic management. Does the Secretary of State have any positive proposals rather than encouraging local authorities to spend more and then penalising them when they do so?

Mr. Channon: I am not doing the latter, as the hon. Member knows. I have provided local authorities with nearly £150 million for 1988-89 above their estimated expenditure. If only local authorities will get on and spend that money, local roads will be considerably improved. That is the action I am urging them to take.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am sure that my right hon. Friend agrees that people living in our larger cities, such as Nottingham, hold their district council responsible, when it is the county council that holds the purse strings. Will he re-examine that aspect and either insist that counties spend their full allocation, or make the money available to districts, so that they can deliver what the public demand of them?

Mr. Channon: I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion, although I suspect that it might turn out to be mildly controversial. The important point is that the relevant authorities have had the money and they must spend it, or our local urban roads will deteriorate, and then the cure will be very much more expensive.

British Rail

4. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of British Rail on 24 May. They discussed a variety of railway matters.

Mr. Hughes: In view of the announcement that is expected this week about new investment schemes for the Channel tunnel project, can the Minister give a preliminary indication that British Rail will be allowed to invest in Wales, Scotland and the north of England, and that there will not be just another bonanza for south-east England? Will the Minister bear in mind that the port of Calais is a relatively deprived area, but stands to gain considerably from the Channel tunnel project?

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail expects to publish its study on Thursday. The hon. Gentleman will know that British Rail is planning to invest about £3,800 million over the next five years. Moreover, whatever area of the country may be the subject of viable British Rail proposals for investment, I shall consider them sympathetically.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend has been instrumental in securing improved road transport facilities for north-east Kent. When he last met the chairman of British Rail, did he impress upon him the need for a rail service to replace the rather mediocre one from which we suffer at present, which, in these days of high-speed trains, transports passengers at an average speed of 40 mph?

Mr. Mitchell: As to Kent passenger services, part of the reason for the study being published on Thursday is to ensure that British Rail can cope with Channel Tunnel traffic without damaging commuter services.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Minister agree that it is vital that investment in the so-called regions of the United Kingdom be increased? Is he aware of the high demand for increased electrification of the east coast line north of Edinburgh, and of continuing demand for a rail crossing at Dornoch Firth? Both are of vital importance if we are not to be disadvantaged when the Channel tunnel comes on stream.

Mr. Mitchell: Investment in British Rail is designed to meet the volume of passenger or freight demand. In the further regions of Scotland the passenger volume is a great deal less than it is in some other parts, but wherever British Rail has a viable business project to bring forward for investment purposes we shall look at it very carefully.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: When my hon. Friend saw the British Railways Board, did he stress that when the board brings forward proposals for privatisation it will not be thought acceptable for British Rail merely to be transferred to a private monopoly? What Conservative Members want is competition.

Mr. Mitchell: These are very early days in our plans for the longer-term future of British Rail, with privatisation as an option, but I shall of course keep my hon. Friend's point in mind.

Mr. Snape: When the Minister next meets the chairman of the board, Sir Robert Reid, will he impress on him the need for proper facilities for both passenger and freight traffic arising from the Channel tunnel development? Those facilities are necessary across the provinces and regions, and particularly in the west midlands.

Will the Minister also insist that on-train customs and immigration facilities should be provided on cross-Channel trains, in the same way as they are in the rest of Europe? Will he ignore the reactionary views of the Home Office, which predictably wants more bureaucrats than passengers on the trains?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall of course ensure that the hon. Gentleman's comments about proper facilities for Channel traffic are conveyed to the chairman. Substantial consultation is taking place about the services, particularly freight services, that should be provided from north of London and throughout the country to maximise the benefits from the Channel tunnel.

When I next meet the chairman, I think that I should tell him that we are very pleased to learn from his recent report that he is getting there—and getting there much faster than we expected. After all, 1987-88 was an outstanding year, with the highest operating surplus in British Rail's history. Passenger volumes were the highest for 27 years, and passenger earnings were the highest in real terms since nationalisation.

Road Crossings

6. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy on providing equestrian, cycling or pedestrian bridges across, or tunnels under, major roads, and what criteria are laid down for such projects.

Mr. Channon: We consider suggestions and proposals on their merits.

Mr. Chapman: Will my right hon. Friend look sympathetically at the need for a combined equestrian, pedestrian and cyclists' crossing on the section of the A1 between South Mimms and Stirling corner, not only because it is effectively of motorway standard, but because of the volume and velocity of the traffic on the road? For example, 800 horses are stabled in that corridor of that part of north London.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has raised this difficult matter assiduously on behalf of his constituents. As he says, the A1 is a very large road with a great deal of traffic, which makes it very difficult to cure the problem of horses crossing it. What my hon. Friend suggests would cost a good deal and I shall have to consider it carefully, but it is an important point and I shall certainly look into it.

Crowlas Bypass

7. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received seeking a bypass for Crowlas on the A30.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Penwith district council, the A30 Action Group, the Crowlas A30 Action Group, Ludgvan parish council and the Ludgvan conservation society have supported my hon. Friend in pressing for the inclusion in the national roads programme of a bypass for Crowlas.

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend will know from letters that he has received from the bodies that he has listed of the strong and entirely justifiable feeling of residents of those communities, whose lives are made a misery by the amount of traffic on the existing road that masquerades as the A30. Will he give an undertaking that the long-awaited bypass will be included in the programme to be announced, presumably, next spring?

Mr. Bottomley: Without prejudging decisions to be made then, I can say that it will certainly be considered.

Mr. Tredinnick: Although I am sympathetic to the problems of the A30, is my hon. Friend aware of the difficulties facing my constituents because junction 1 on the M69 goes only in a northerly direction? Will he consider pressing his Department to answer the requests made three years ago for an inquiry into why that is, and take express measures to get the southern link built?

Mr. Bottomley: The Department will consider what my hon. Friend has said.

Wheel Clamping

8. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines and advice he has given recently on wheel clamping and the circumstances in which it should be used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Requests for wheel clamping areas may be made by local highway authorities to my right hon. Friend. We issued a guidance note on selection criteria in May 1987. Responsibility for operational matters rests with the police.

Dr. Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that wheel clamping should be reserved primarily for deterring motorists from parking in no-parking areas, and that clamping motor cars parked in residential areas without permits or at parking meters after the clock has run out is an inappropriate use of clamps which should have low priority?

Mr. Bottomley: Most people will agree that what is important is that when a car should not be parked in a certain place an effective deterrent is needed—clamping is certainly that. The other matters are rather more operational and I shall make sure that they are considered in the appropriate places.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May we have an inquiry into how a back-street garage in Brighton managed to secure the contract for removing vehicles from the streets of Brighton?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not have a clue.

Mr. Higgins: While, in general, wheel clamps seem to waste an enormous amount of police time and slow down traffic even more than would have happened if the vehicles were not clamped, will my hon. Friend consider putting massive wheel clamps on coaches on Westminster bridge which discharge their passengers into the centre of the road and are likely sooner or later to cause a serious accident?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bottomley: The House notes my right hon. Friend's persistence in this matter. It would be appropriate if the Department encouraged the relevant authorities to get together to try to solve the problem before there is a serious accident.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that the low level of enforceability of parking restrictions in London is a matter of massive concern to hon. Members and Londoners generally? What does he think about the proposal that local authorities should take over responsibility for the traffic warden system? If we could decriminalise parking in London, the fines that could be

levied by the local authority run traffic warden system could go direct to paying for the cost of the system, in which case we could perhaps get somewhere with enforcing parking restrictions in London.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is good at encouraging us to suck eggs. The important part of this question and the answers to it is that the privatisation of wheel clamping and towing away has led to a higher degree of deterrence, which is to be welcomed. I know that the hon. Gentleman is against the privatisation or contracting out of anything——

Mr. Tony Banks: Why does the Minister not answer the question? He is so stupid and smug.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Driving Instructors

9. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further measures are being taken to improve the quality of driving instructors.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Targeting and extension of check testing; widening the syllabus and introducing a banding system in the written examination; and limiting failures in the practical tests.

Mr. Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that although those actions will go a long way towards increasing the quality and standard of driving instructors, it might also be a good idea to publish league tables showing how successful individual driving instructors and schools are?

Mr. Bottomley: It is certainly true that for a market to work effectively one needs not only competition but information. The point my hon. Friend makes is being considered and discussed with the associations of driving instructors. There are problems, especially those of identifying a candidate with a particular instructor, but we shall report to the House when we have come to a conclusion on these matters.

Inner Cities

13. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking to aid the regeneration of inner city areas.

Mr. Channon: We have under construction or in our plans, road schemes worth £2 billion to assist inner city areas. Transport supplementary grant is assisting local roads costing £600 million in these areas. The London Docklands light railway has shown how innovative public transport can help to attract private sector development.

Mr. Sayeed: In welcoming my right hon. Friend's excellent answer, may I ask whether he would care to amplify it by saying what contribution he is encouraging from private finance to increase the transport systems in inner city areas?

Mr. Channon: We are working very closely with the private sector to try to bring enterprise back to inner city areas. The best known example is Canary wharf, where the developers are jointly funding the Docklands light railway extension. Another example is the Meadowhall development in the Don valley, to which my Department will contribute 30 per cent. of the cost of the access roads. I am sure that there is scope for further extending this process.

Mr. Rees: Who will have responsibility in the UDC areas that the Government have set up for the planning of roads?

Mr. Channon: Local highway authorities will have that responsibility.

Public Transport (London)

14. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he expects to announce a major initiative to improve public transport in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a study into the overcrowding problems on British Rail and London Underground services in central London in March this year. It is too early to say what proposals may emerge from it.

Mr. Marshall: May my hon. Friend tell the House when he expects this study to be concluded? May we have an assurance that a major factor in the study will be the proposals that have been put forward to improve the capacity on the Northern line, which has been described by the chairman of London Regional Transport as "an abomination"?

Mr. Mitchell: We expect the central London rail study to report shortly to Ministers. We shall have to consider it before we can come to any conclusions on it. Investment for improvements to the London Underground is running at the rate of £1 million a day, and that is nearly 60 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1984-85.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister take this opportunity to say something about the shameful chaos at London's airports? Why are the Government failing to carry out the investment programme that is required to bring air traffic control in the south of England up to the standard that ought to be required?

Mr. Mitchell: That is a somewhat different question, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the problem lies, not in the airports, but in congestion in the air space.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Can my hon. Friend confirm the report in *Private Eye* that London Buses Ltd. is thinking again about the introduction of one-person operated buses in central London?

Mr. Mitchell: London Buses Ltd. identifies appropriate services for the introduction of one-man operation. It is not the intention of London Buses Ltd. to operate such buses throughout the system. It is a question of considering the matter route by route and forming a judgment about the best method for each route.

Ferry Crews

15. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken to ensure that existing procedures avoid any risk of double counting by his inspectors of crew numbers on ferries.

Mr. Channon: Some 118 inspections of cross-Channel ferries carried out in the last six months have revealed no evidence of double counting of crew.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Secretary of State confirm that all inspections of the ferries are done by prior arrangement with the ferry operator? Would he care to comment on what steps his Department took to examine the allegation that appeared recently in the press to the effect that crew members were being shifted from ferry to ferry in order to make up the crewing complements?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The inspections are not all done by prior arrangement. I have checked carefully and repeat that some are not done by prior arrangement. My marine surveyors have found no evidence to support the allegation in the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend confirm not only that the Government have implemented many of the proposals of the Sheen inquiry about ferry safety, but that all the people who work on our ferries are now working on ferries that are far safer than they have ever been in the history of Britain's ferry transport?

Mr. Channon: We have carefully implemented a great many of the recommendations of the Sheen report. We may have to consider more. I confirm what my hon. Friend says about the immense amount of work that has been done and the immense amount of work being caried out by my surveyors to make sure that ferries are sailing safely.

Mr. Skinner: In the past few months there have been several major accidents and lack of safety has been central to almost every one of them. Those accidents were at Zebrugge, King's Cross and now in the North sea. In the light of that, would it not make sense for the Government, instead of taking the side of Jeffrey Sterling and P and O, to institute a proper inquiry into all the complaints about lack of proper inspection on the ferries? Would it not make sense to get on with the job and carry out an impartial investigation instead of siding with the management?

Mr. Channon: I do no such thing, as the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well. I treat his remarks with contempt. We investigate carefully any allegations that are made, from whatever source they come.

Coach Safety

17. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of his discussions in June with the Bus and Coach Council on improvements in coach safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The outcome of the discussion was that the Bus and Coach Council agreed to make progress on the safety of power doors and the need to fit seat belts.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as his Department's figures show that bus passengers are three times more likely to be injured than, for example, rail passengers, the cost of £1,000 to £1,500 to give seat belts to all passengers in a 57-seater bus is cheap at the price?

Mr. Bottomley: It is worth remembering that we need to go step by step. The House passed the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Rear Seat Belts By Children) Bill 1988. We are requiring seat belts in the exposed front seats of coaches, but is has not yet been made mandatory. I prefer to see coach operators fit seat belts voluntarily and then see whether passengers are willing to use them. I agree with my hon. Friend that we need to continue to try to improve safety in all forms of transport, but travelling by coach is substantially safer than travelling by car. Perhaps we should turn our attention to car safety, even more than to coach safety.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the greatest contributions that could be made to safety in coaches would be to stop them going too fast in the wrong lane on motorways, too close behind other vehicles? Is he aware that, in Japan, heavy goods vehicles are fitted with lights which show when they are exceeding the speed limit and that it is perfectly possible to have a system which shows when they are too close behind another vehicle? When will he do something along that line?

Mr. Bottomley: Very shortly. Legal speed limiters on coaches are coming in, and that is greatly welcomed. The excessive speeds of coaches have been reduced dramatically. Speeding by HGVs and by cars has come down, although not speeding by motor cycles. We should pay attention to my hon. Friend's point about automatic visibility signs on speeding vehicles. In Singapore, for example, light vehicles flash a yellow light when they are going too fast and the police just wave them in.

Minibus Services

18. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of services in England outside London are now operated by minibuses.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information is not available in the form requested. Deregulation has encouraged operators to introduce minibuses on their services and they now represent about 10 to15 per cent. of all PSVs used on local services. Passengers in over 400 areas are benefiting from this flexible form of transport.

Mr. Pike: With respect, does that answer not show that the Minister does not really know what has happened as a result of the Transport Act 1985? Should the Government not do more to survey the congestion that arises in some areas, as well as boasting about the improvements achieved? Many people have suffered a deterioration of service. Why does the Minister not analyse the situation and give a full report to the House?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that the latest research shows an increase from 400 minibuses operating in 40 places throughout the country before deregulation to no fewer than 5,600 in over 400 places. The big advantage of the minibus is that it reaches those parts that bigger buses cannot reach.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. Friend aware that I, like the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), come from Lancashire and that, in the rural parts of Lancashire that I represent, there are more minibuses than ever before, which are reaching far more customers in those areas and are greatly appreciated by the communities there?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for calling attention to one of the most phenomenally successful aspects of deregulation.

Waste Imports

20. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact on the trunk roads network in Merseyside of increased heavy vehicle movements consequent upon the importation of American waste for dumping in Warrington.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend now proceed to such an assessment, given that 600 22-tonne lorry movements will be involved every day from Liverpool to Warrington for five years, bringing in 7½ million tonnes of rubbish to my constituency? Does he not think that that is an unacceptable strain on the road network in the area?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend would be on stronger ground if he were to refer the House, as I will, to the clear statement made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 30 June. I imagine that some cases involve a Department of Transport interest, but it is worth noting that those issues are mainly the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, with some important aspects for my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Road Bridges

21. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway and trunk road bridges are currently in need of repair.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Between 5 and 10 per cent. of the department's 8,500 or so bridges need structural maintenance each year.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister accept that that is quite a high figure and that those of us who use the motorways and the north-west trunk road bridges realise that, apart from avoiding accidents, there are opportunities to provide jobs in the construction industry?

Mr. Bottomley: We can no longer say that the country has a major problem with jobs in the construction industry. Some of us consider that in some parts of the country the position is slightly the reverse. Programmes of maintenance have kept pace with the need for general repairs, and the special needs of older bridges in particular are being tackled under a 15-year strengthening and upgrading programme.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

61. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the investigation by City of London police into telephone calls made by Dr. Frank Skuse during his appearance as a witness at the Old Bailey in the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): On Friday 8 July 1988.

Mr. Mullin: Has Sergeant Paton been asked when he was last in touch with Dr. Skuse, and if so, what was his reply? If the Attorney-General cannot answer that question now, will he undertake to supply an answer later?

The Attorney-General: I will undertake to remind the hon. Gentleman of the course that the inquiry has taken. On 17 March he made the assertion that Dr. Skuse had been in touch with the former Detective Sergeant Paton in the course of his evidence at the Court of Appeal hearing. My hon. Friend the Minister of State advised the hon. Gentleman to place any evidence he might have of any possible irregularity before the police. It was not until 3 June, in response to a request made on 9 May from the Commissioner of the City of London police for the source of the information, that the hon. Gentleman identified the source of his information. That turned out to be somebody who, in turn, had it from somebody else, and he has refused to identify that person. Therefore, the inquiries have come to an end.

Mr. Marlow: What is the value to IRA fund raisers in America of the campaign by subversives and muddle-headed Opposition Members to undermine the credibility of British justice? What is the cost in United Kingdom lives?

The Attorney-General: On 20 June, when I last answered questions on these matters, I said that I deprecated as being very harmful, determined attempts, as they are seen to be, to undermine confidence in the administration of justice. I reiterate that opinion today in response to my hon. Friend.

62. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the further police inquiry into telephone calls made by Dr. Frank Skuse during the Birmingham pub bombings appeal.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I have just given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Attorney-General aware that during the previous police inquiry carried out by the Devon and Cornwall police, Sergeant Paton changed his statement to make it fit in with Dr. Skuse's version of events? Has he been asked why he did that?

The Attorney-General: I recall that the Court of Appeal, in its judgment delivered in February, had this to say about the scientific evidence to which much of the inquiry and the fresh evidence had related. I shall cite what was said by the Court of Appeal:

"We repeat the question which we posed for ourselves before considering the impact of the fresh evidence and answer it without any hesitation as follows: nothing has emerged from this mass of material which causes us to doubt that the scientific evidence proves that one or more of these appellants had been in recent contact with explosives."

The conclusion of the judgment states:

"As has happened before in References by the Home Secretary to this Court under Section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, the longer the hearing has gone on, the more convinced the court has become that the verdict of the jury was correct.

We have no doubt that these convictions were both safe and satisfactory."

As to whether any witness at the main trial or at the hearing before the Court of Appeal gave conflicting

evidence in any regard, each of those matters was considered in a hearing before the Court of Appeal, which lasted longer than any similar hearing. That is the measure of the confidence that the country should have in the outcome.

Mr. Baldry: Is not the fact of this case that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary exercised his powers to refer the case to the Court of Appeal? Having heard all the evidence that the men's legal representatives wanted to put before the Court of Appeal, the court decided that the convictions were safe and that there was no reason to interfere with them. Having regard to the length of time that the Court of Appeal took in hearing the case, is it not now time to say, once and for all, that there is absolutely no reason why those convictions should in any way be questioned or interfered with?

The Attorney-General: It is very important to remind ourselves that every opportunity was given to those who take the view of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), that there was something unsafe in the original convictions, to call fresh evidence and review the previous evidence before the Court of Appeal. I have read, because I thought that it would be helpful to do so, the opinion of the Court of Appeal on that fresh evidence. Accordingly, to keep on and on seeking to undermine the reliability of the conclusion of the Court of Appeal without further evidence is very harmful to public confidence.

"Spycatcher"

63. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the implications for his general policy on initiating litigation of the costs of legal actions relating to the book "Spycatcher".

The Attorney-General: To enforce the duty of confidentiality owed to the Crown I shall, on behalf of Ministers collectively, continue to take such steps by way of civil proceedings as appear to the Government to be appropriate.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Attorney-General accept that where there is a serious criminal seditious conspiracy, it is a civil servant's duty to expose that conspiracy, and that an attempt to bring down the 1974 Labour Government is set out in Peter Wright's book "Spycatcher"? Is it not shocking that the Attorney-General should spend in excess of £1 million trying to suppress that book, which no Government officer has tried to contradict, when those people in MI5—Tory supporters—who tried to organise the downfall of the democratically elected Government of the day are getting away with it scot-free? What is the Attorney-General going to do about law and order and maintaining the reputation of British justice if he lets those Tory people in MI5 get away with it?

The Attorney-General: The litigation that has been conducted on behalf of the Government in these courts and in courts elsewhere in the world has resulted in an affirmation of the duty of confidentiality that is owed by those who have served in the security services. It is extremely important that, where there is reliable evidence of criminal activity, that should be investigated. The Director of Public Prosecutions has expressed his conclusions with regard to the assertions that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has in mind. It is equally important that the duty of confidentiality owed by former members of the security services should be enforced. If any Government were to shrink from enforcing that duty, the cost would soon be paid, not in money, but in lives.

Mr. Lawrence: Is it not typical of Opposition Members to attach such a low financial price to the upholding of a principle so important for a free society as the confidentiality of those secret service agents who are sworn to protect the nation's secrets?

The Attorney-General: This is yet another example of the wide gulf between the opinions of all our constituents on the one hand and the opinions of certain Opposition Members on the other.

Landlord and Tenant Laws

64. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Attorney-General what studies the Lord Chancellor is currently undertaking into the law relating to landlord and tenant, in the light of recent reports from the Law Commission.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Government have under current consideration three recent reports of the Law Commission relating to different aspects of landlord and tenant law.

Mr. Fraser: During his canvassing in north Kensington, has the Solicitor-General been struck by the unanswerable case for leasehold reform for flats? Since the report of the Law Commission into strata title makes it immensely easier to have a framework for enfranchisement, will the Government announce that they are now as in favour in principle of leasehold enfranchisement for flats as for houses?

The Solicitor-General: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Law Commission's most recent report is an agenda for consultation.

North Report

65. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General what further consideration he has given to the implications for prosecuting policy of the North report on road traffic law.

The Attorney-General: The implications for prosecution policy of the report of the road traffic law review will not become apparent until the detailed scrutiny of its recommendations now under way is complete, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Home Department have made such legislative proposals as they may then think fit.

Mr. Allen: The Attorney-General may not be aware that in Transport Questions one of his colleagues said that the North report recommendations might come before the House before the summer recess—*[Interruption.]* He said a lot else besides. If the Under-Secretary of State for Transport wants to contribute, he will have to wait. Does the Attorney-General—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are questions for the Attorney-General.

Mr. Allen: Well, I hope that we get further than we did with the Under-Secretary of State for Transport. Does the Attorney-General agree with the Solicitor-General that the courts will have the power in future to extend sentences relating to "bad driving" should the "bad driving" offence, which is one of the recommendations of the North report, be agreed by the House? Does the Attorney-General endorse that view?

The Attorney-General: That is not a matter for me. It is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, as I am always anxious to express an opinion on something that interests me, the style of drafting recommended, by the North report when referring to "bad driving" or "really bad driving" is very much to be commended as everybody understands what that means. It is a welcome suggestion.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid (Education Projects)

75. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of overseas aid from Britain is directed towards education in the recipient countries.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): In 1987 almost a fifth of the bilateral programme —some £140 million—was spent on aid for education and training.

Dr. Clark: I am delighted with my hon. Friend's reply. However, does he agree that to spend money on education aid to Third world countries is one of the best ways of priming the pump? Bearing in mind the many excellent education books in English, does he agree that it is vital that there should be a supply of English language teachers, and is he giving that sufficient priority?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of English language teaching as part of our aid programme. We are expanding English language teaching and 275 English language teachers are now working in developing countries with the support of our aid programme. I am pleased that we have recently managed to increase our English language teaching programme in Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and China. I should like to pay a particular tribute to the British Council, which acts as our agent and does the job with considerable distinction.

Dr. Reid: Is it not a shameful indictment of the Government that when the British people have shown unbounded generosity towards charitable works at home as well as abroad, the Government have halved overseas aid as a percentage of GNP? Will he match the generosity of the people who elected the Government by pledging the Government to support the 0·7 per cent. campaign to make that proportion of GNP the measure of our overseas aid?

Mr. Patten: The premise of the hon. Gentleman's question is wrong. It is important and valuable that we are now increasing our aid programme in real terms.

Joint Funding Scheme

76. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which organisations receive grant assistance from his Department under the joint funding scheme; and what criteria are applied to applications from organisations seeking assistance under this scheme.

Mr. Chris Patten: During the 1987-88 financial year my Department provided grants under the joint funding scheme to 53 non-governmental organisations. I shall arrange for a list to be published in the *Official Report*.

There are four main criteria: projects must be designed to promote economic and social development, rather than emergency relief; they must fit the local communities' aspirations and needs; the costs and benefits must be clearly identified within realistic objectives; and the projects must have the potential to become self-sustaining after our support has come to an end.

Mr. Mitchell: Will my hon. Friend draw public attention, not only to the substantial increase in public funds forthis important scheme, but to the clearly targeted developmental work that it does? In particular, will he note that the sum available from public funds has quadrupled during the past six years and that it goes on a pound-for-pound basis to match the work that major national charities are doing in this important area?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the work of non-governmental organisations. They can often operate at a level that is more difficult for Government-to-Government programmes. That is why this year we have increased by 75 per cent. on the original allocation for last year the sum that is going to the joint funding scheme, which is supporting about 800 projects throughout the world.

Mr. Jack: In considering the non-governmental projects, many of which concern tropical rain forests, will my hon. Friend ensure that the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology has sufficient time for its projects on tree cloning to come to fruition?

Mr. Patten: It may well take tropical forests slightly longer to come to fruition than I am likely to be standing at this Dispatch Box. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether I am lucky or unlucky in making that observation. I wholly agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of forestry as part of our aid programme and that is why we have increased the funds available to it. One of the areas in which non-governmental organisations can work most valuably is in environmental protection and enhancement.

Following is the information:

Agencies receiving grants under the joint funding scheme in 1987-88

Action Aid
Aga Khan Foundation
AHRTAG
Aid for India
Associated Country Women of the World
Boys Brigade
British Red Cross Society
CAFOD
Care
Cerebral Palsy Overseas
Christian Aid
CIIR
Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
Commonwealth Trade Union Council

Co-operation for Development
Duke of Edinburgh's Award
Euro Action Acord
Feed the Minds
Food Agricultural Research Mission
Friends of Urambo and Mwanhala
Hand in Hand
Health Unlimited
Help the Aged
Institute of Cultural Affairs
International Voluntary Service
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Trust
Jalchatra Project
Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Leprosy Mission
Mission Aviation Fellowship
National Children's Home
OXFAM
Plan International
Population Concern
Population Services
RCSB
Richmond Fellowship
Save the Children Fund
SCIAF
Scouts
SOS Sahel International
Sport Aid
St. Johns Ambulance
Tanzania Development Trust
Tear Fund
Uganda Society Disabled Children
VSO
Water Aid
Work-Start Overseas
World University Service
Worl Vision
World Wildlife Fund
Y-Care

Aid Donors

77. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the average percentage of gross national product given in aid in 1987 by donor nations, excluding the United Kingdom, that are members of *(a)* the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations, *(b)* the European Community, and *(c)* the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

79. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the average percentage of gross national product given in aid in 1987 by donor nations, excluding the United Kingdom that are members of *(a)* the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations, *(b)* the European Community, and *(c)* the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987 net aid as a percentage of GNP, excluding the United Kingdom, averaged 0·32 per cent. for the Group of Seven; 0·5 per cent. for those members of the European Community for which the development assistance committee has published figures; and 0·34 per cent. for, all development assistance committee members.

Mr. Barron: Does the Minister accept that, of the 18 OECD major industrialised countries, we now come 14th compared with 12th in 1979? Does he further accept that we are below the average on every percentage that he read out? In 1979, when the Labour Government were in office, 0·52 per cent. of our GNP went towards the 0·7 per cent. target that was set by the United Nations 20 years ago. Now only 0·28 per cent. of our GNP is spent on that. Does the Minister understand that it is no good saying that the figures are better than last year's? We are trying to cure the evil of the wrong distribution of wealth throughout the world and we can do that only by aiming for the target percentage of our GNP, not by saying that we are giving more than we gave last year.

Mr. Patten: It is probably the case that most of the international financial institutions to which the hon. Gentleman may have inadvertently referred would be more encouraged if more developing countries and more countries in general followed the economic policies of this Government rather than if they continued as they are. Thanks to our economic growth our aid programme is now growing in real terms. We shall spend over £90 million more this year than last year.

Mr. Clarke: In view of the appalling nature of these comparisons, will the Minister tell the House when he last had a person-to-person meeting with the Prime Minister on these matters?

Mr. Patten: I last had a person-to-person meeting with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on these matters about a month ago, since when I have been in several countries and she may have been, too. I suspect that, unusually, the hon. Gentleman may have drafted his supplementary question before he listened to my reply.

Mr. Rowe: Is it not absolutely true that my hon. Friend the Minister is to be congratulated on the considerable progress that he has made towards achieving many of the objectives of the aid programme that were manifestly not met when the Labour party was in power? Is it not also true that there is still a large gap between rich and poor countries and that it is to all our benefit if we in richer countries share a larger proportion of our income with poorer countries?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is why we have to continue giving a lead on issues such as the further liberalisation of trade and debt. I am delighted that the Toronto economic summit reached the conclusion that it did, which is a great tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I hope that this week the Paris Club will make a good deal of progress in implementing the terms of the Toronto economic summit communiqué.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is much better to give an increasing amount of aid? Rather than merely considering a higher percentage of a low gross domestic product, is it not better to have perhaps a slightly smaller percentage of a GDP which is now very much greater?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend. As I said before, the effects of the Labour party's policies on our economic growth rate would ensure, without anything being done to the amount being spent on aid, that our aid as a proportion of GNP went up rapidly, and soon.

Miss Lestor: Does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that there is a distinction between an intellectually attractive presentation of a policy and the reality of a performance? If he continues to argue that what is important is not the proportion of GNP but the amount

that he has contributed, unless that amount goes up as a proportion of GNP it follows that the gap between the countries that we are supposed to be assisting and the richer countries will widen. That is why the United Nations had a target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP, so that when GNP went up the proportion to the developing countries would also go up. That is where the Minister is failing the Third world.

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for what I think began as a compliment. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I misjudged her. I apologise for that. It is important that our aid programme should go up in real terms, which it is doing. It is also important that our economic growth rate is now sufficiently rapid and based on sufficiently secure foundations to make sure that we can play the leading role in the international financial institutions and in issues of trade and debt that a country of our history should be able to play. Alas, under our predecessors, we were on the way to becoming a developing country.

Housing Action Trusts

3.31 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his intention to enforce the takeover of local authority housing by Government-appointed housing action trusts.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): Subject to approval by both Houses of Parliament of the Housing Bill and of the necessary designation orders, my right hon. Friend proposes to establish housing action trusts in:

Lambeth: Loughborough and Angell Town estates;
Southwark: North Peckham and Gloucester Grove estates;
Tower Hamlets: Solander Gardens, Shadwell Gardens, Berner, Boundary and Holland estates and part of Ocean estate;
Leeds: Halton Moor, Seacroft South and Gipton estates;
Sandwell: Windmill Land and Whiteheath estates; and
Sunderland: Downhill, Townend Farm and Hylton Castle estates.

Maps have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses today showing the areas that might be covered by the housing action trusts. My right hon. Friend will shortly be appointing consultants to advice him further. Final decisions on the areas to be designated will be taken in the light of the consultants' studies and of local views.

My right hon. Friend has chosen those areas taking account of the matters listed in clause 60(5) of the Housing Bill. The combination of problems associated with the rundown council housing in those areas is such that a radical approach is necessary to give tenants decent housing, better services and more choice. It will therefore be the job of each housing action trust, in consultation with the residents, to carry out a major programme of renovation, to bring empty council properties back into use, to improve the way in which estates are looked after and generally to help improve the economic, environmental and social conditions of the area.

The creation of housing action trusts provides an opportunity to target resources on some of the areas where major concentrations of poor quality public sector stock create very intractable problems. I therefore hope that the local authorities concerned will co-operate fully in setting up housing action trusts so that tenants can gain as soon as possible from the benefits that they will bring. My right hon. Friend is writing to the leaders of the councils concerned today about the proposals. He is also writing to all local residents who might be affected.

Mr. Soley: Yet again, we have had to drag information out of a reluctant Government who are increasingly embarrassed by their housing crisis.

First, why is there no choice for tenants or residents in those areas? What has happened to the word "choice"? Secondly, why has there been so little consultation? Thirdly, what guarantees will we be given that the local communities will not be squeezed out and replaced by people from other areas? What guarantees are the Government giving to homeless people so that they will be able to get housing in those areas and to local authorities so that they can provide that housing for those people?

The Minister said that he was anxious to get empty council property back into use. Will he make sure that the housing action trusts have the same powers to bring back into use empty Government-owned properties, given that there are three times as many empty Government-owned properties as there are empty council-owned properties? Will housing action trusts have the same powers to bring back into use empty housing association properties—there are marginally more of those properties empty than there are council-owned properties—and empty private sector housing, given that there are nearly twice as many of those properties empty as there are empty public-sector properties?

I recognise that, in Committee, the Minister conceded that tenants would be able to go back to the local authority when a housing action trust was wound up if they so wished. It is important that he ensures that that is not just a paper promise, that local authorities have the housing finance to allow them to take those tenants back and that cuts are not imposed on local authorities which would make it impossible for them to offer to repurchase the estates.

What guarantees do we have that landlords such as Mr. van Hoogstraten will not benefit, given that he has already described the Housing Bill as a "step in the right direction"?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) knows the answers to most of those questions because he asked them in Committee and he was given the answers then. I had intended to answer a written question put down by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but I am delighted to answer this matter orally.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith knows very well that there will be consultation with the tenants at all stages and that all the plans and directions, if any, from the Secretary of State will be published. I believe that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that. The hon. Gentleman also knows that the interests of local people are central to the housing action trusts. I had hoped that, rather than taking the usual negative attitude, he would have welcomed what amounts to an additional £125 million over three years for six of the areas where there is most need for that money to be spent. I am sorry that he has not found it in him to welcome that. There is a duty to co-operate with local authorities on homelessness, and he is aware of that. I believe that it is slightly unlikely that there will be Ministry of Defence properties on any of the estates, but if there are, we shall hope to get them back into action as soon as possible.

The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the system for the return of the estates to local authorities if they are willing to have them back, and these authorities will be free to purchase the estates back if they wish to do so.

There was no need for the cheap remark about Mr. van Hoogstraten because the hon. Gentleman knows that any transfers out of HATs will be to "tenant-guaranteed" landlords, housing associations and co-operatives. It is a bit of a cheap scare story to bring Mr. van Hoogstraten into this.

I believe that, in the next few weeks, when the tenants in the designated areas receive the information about the immense potential benefits on offer, they will take a slightly more generous and positive view than the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my hon. Friend accept the congratulations of all the tenants in the

areas that he has mentioned, as the opportunity that he has just announced will enable them to release themselves from the clutches of unsympathetic local authority landlords? Will my hon. Friend accept that HATs will do more to relieve the plight of the homeless? Will he further accept that those areas such as Southwark, which has rent arrears of £30 million, will be relieved from debt? Does my hon. Friend also agree that HATs will produce better housing management and more sympathetic living conditions for those who are currently homeless?

Mr. Waldegrave: I welcome my hon. Friend's support for this extremely important matter. To put it politely, it is perfectly obvious that some local authorities that cover the estates cannot grapple with the severity of the problems that they presently face—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—and central Government are now bringing resources to bear to do that. Labour Members may ask why, but the answer is exactly the same as why they and the leadership of their party would like to see different people in power in many of those local authorities.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): What will be the constitutional position of the new areas in Leeds? On Saturdays, many Leeds constituents consult their Members of Parliament about the allocation of houses and repairs, and I wish to know whether it will be in order now to table private notice questions and to write letters to Ministers. Will the Secretary of State take the place of the local authority? If he is not to do that, who is?

Mr. Waldegrave: The right hon. Gentleman is running a little ahead. The HATs will not be established until the House and another place have debated the matter. In due couse, it will be for the boards of the HATs to deal with management problems. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be ultimately responsible to the House.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my hon. Friend aware that his statement will be widely welcomed, not least by tenants in difficult-to-let estates throughout the country, who have been failed by their local authorities? Will he tell the House when the first HAT will be up and running? Will he confirm that in many instances there is a need for physical improvement and better management afterwards? Will he confirm that HATs will put into effect localised and efficient repair services to maintain the momentum that the HATs begin?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend, as usual on these matters, is entirely right. We hope to have HATs set up early next year. If the Labour party feels that the playing of party games in opposition on all these matters is inevitable, that will delay the bringing of benefits to the tenants whom they claim to represent. The localised management of the priority states project teams and Estate Action, if carried forward, will be carried forward also in the HATs. That is what we shall be doing.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): As a representative of a borough that is to have an HAT, may I say that more Government money for housing in rundown areas of England is welcome? However, I have one or two questions for the Minister for Housing and Planning. First, is this a "this is your choice" designation or is it a "there is no alternative" designation? Will there be a veto? Will tenants be able to approve the proposal, or will it go ahead irrespective of the views of local people.

Secondly, will representatives be on the boards of the HATs, having been democratically elected by local people? Thirdly, will the rents and the tenants' rights that are now enjoyed continue to be enjoyed in a similar way after the trusts have been created? Lastly, will local councils be able to nominate all the homeless in an HAT area, people whom they have a duty and a responsibility to house?

Mr. Waldegrave: We debated some of the hon. Gentleman's questions in Committee. First, I hope that there will be local representatives on the boards of the trusts. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and other departmental Ministers will be meeting local authorities to discuss these matters with them. The hon. Gentleman knows that there is no veto over the establishment of an HAT. Ultimately, it is for the House to decide whether a trust is established.

We have said repeatedly that rents will not increase before improvements have been made, and even then may increase only in line with local authority rents generally. As new money will be brought to bear—it will not be borrowing from the local authority—tenants will enjoy the benefit of smaller increases in rents than there would otherwise be for such improvements. They will remain secure tenants while they are in the HAT.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is there not a simple fact behind my hon. Friend's excellent statement: that the HATs are an imaginative way of bringing assistance to estates that have reached a level that is unacceptable? Is my hon. Friend aware that all men and women of good will will wish the initiative godspeed, not least on behalf of tenants who have suffered too much for too long?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend puts succinctly what is surely the truth. I have visited most of the estates where HATs are to be established, and I think that, between us, I and my ministerial colleagues have recently visited them all. Opposition Members know many of them extremely well. I should be most surprised if anyone were willing to say that the estates do not merit the best efforts of the House and additional resources to bring them into a better condition.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Minister aware that I read out to the Secretary of State the list of estates that he presented at the Dispatch Box this afternoon during the all-night sitting on 14 June on the Housing Bill? When I read out exactly the same list, the Secretary of State said that no decision had been taken. When was the decision taken?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is amazingly perspicacious. As a matter of fact, his memory is at fault —the list is not the same.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is it not a sign of the confusion of the Labour party—not on housing policy alone—that it does not know whether to applaud or to deprecate my hon. Friend's announcement? Will my hon. Friend confirm that if—as Conservative Members believe to be the case—the housing action trusts turn out to be a great success, this pilot scheme will be extended to other parts of the country?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, and doubtless at that point the pushmi-pullyu opposite—which remains stationary, emitting peculiar noises—will come down on our side and join us, as it has on the right to buy and so many other policies.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On many deplorable estates, not least in the borough of Tower Hamlets, the issue that the Minister must consider is whether this is the best way of dealing with those problems or whether he should pursue the previous policy of priority estate projects and begin to repair some of the housing investment programme allocations that have been so grievously reduced in the past few years.

I fear that I know already what the answer will be, but can the Minister really say, despite what he has previously said about consultation, that if both the local authority and the tenants on the estate do not wish to have a housing action trust, nevertheless it will be imposed upon them?

Mr. Waldegrave: I answered the last question when I told the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that it will be for the House to decide.

On the right hon. Gentleman's first question, he knows very well that if additional allocations were made to a number of boroughs—perhaps I say this in relation to his borough—the way in which that money would be spent would be extremely unpredictable, to put it politely, and it may be wasted. I believe that this is the best way forward. We shall continue Estate Action and the priority estates programme where that is the best way, but in some areas the problems are so great that a much longer and more concentrated direction of resources is now needed.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement today and especially on choosing Leeds. Is this not the implementation of a policy for real action that will bring tangible benefits to many people in the rundown areas? Will he especially monitor the progress of the housing action trust when they get under way, so that we can be kept fully in the picture as to their success?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a good point. We should monitor this new policy very closely, and we shall do so. I join him in saying that the policy is likely to bring real benefits, choice and hope to some areas that have been short of them for too long.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Does the Minister accept that Sandwell's housing problems have been considerably worsened in recent years by the consistent underfunding of its HIP allocation? That is not politics, but fact. Can he assure us that the local authority and the local voluntary housing sector will be encouraged to set up these trusts, or will the trusts be confined entirely to the private sector, which has consistently failed boroughs such as Sandwell for many years?

Mr. Waldegrave: These trusts are not in the private sector, but are part of the public sector. They will be established by the House and they will be responsible to my right hon. Friend. We hope for good co-operation from the local authorities, the many housing associations and other housing experts operating in those areas.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my hon. Friend accept that his statement today will bring real relief and help to people in Labour-controlled areas who have been left to rot by successive Labour councils in places in which no Labour Members would wish to live? Does he accept that there will be some disappointment that his statement does not include more areas to be designated as housing action trusts? When does he expect to be able to extend the housing action trusts to Bradford, Manchester, Newham and other areas where the Labour party has failed the people?

Mr. Waldegrave: That remains open to us for the future. If the new policy goes well, I hope that additional housing action trusts will be nominated. My hon. Friend was entirely right when he said that if anybody can doubt that national resources are now needed for these areas to bring them back into decent—*[Interruption.]* If anyone believes that some of the present housing management is capable of that, he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

Mrs. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Can the Minister assure the people who live in north Peckham and Gloucester grove that they will benefit from any additional investment in their estates? Does he recognise that, based on the experience of the London Docklands development corporation in the north of the borough, there is widespread concern that existing tenants will not benefit? It is feared that they will be driven out in favour of those who can buy.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is not all that much comparison between a UDC and an HAT. The interests of existing tenants are central to an HAT's purpose. The failure or the success of housing action trusts will be judged by whether they have brought benefits to the hon. Lady's constituents who are tenants of those estates.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Why has there been no announcement for Bristol, with all its inner-city housing problems that my hon. Friend and I know so well? Could it be that it helps if there is co-operation with the local authority when establishing housing action trusts? One sees from the past actions of the Labour-controlled Bristol city council that it is more interested in bigotry than in caring for the community.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend will well understand that Bristol was not forgotten. I was interested to hear him say that he believes that a housing action trust for Bristol might be worth considering for the future. He is quite right that we face the spectacle of Bristol city council wasting a considerable sum of ratepayers' money by pointlessly petitioning against the UDC, which most people in Bristol warmly welcome.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Reverting to the two estates in my constituency, if the majority of the tenants oppose the order, will that influence the Government and will they not proceed with it? Secondly——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. John Fraser: —if the Government are to provide extra resources for estates such as Angell town, why will the same resources be denied to similar estates in the neighbourhood, such as Tulse hill and Stockwell park? What is the difference in principle? Thirdly, will the Minister give an undertaking that all vacancies will be made available to Lambeth people, and will Lambeth be able to spend only 20 per cent. of its capital receipts, or the whole lot?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman opposes these proposals but then asks why the same cannot apply to

other estates. There were difficult decisions to make about the estates that were in most need. We have selected some estates that we believe will benefit dramatically. On the hon. Gentleman's first important point, I have already made it clear twice to his right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that it is for this House ultimately to decide whether to pursue housing action trusts.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): What consultation was there with Sunderland borough council before the decision was made to designate estates in its area? Is the Minister aware that public housing in Sunderland is extremely well run and that the only problem it faces is the shortage of funds from central Government?

Mr. Waldegrave: There were no formal consultations with local authorities before the estates were designated. That has always been made clear. The time for consultation is now. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State looks forward to discussions with the Sunderland borough council and others in the months ahead. There is nothing new about that. It is right that the proposals should be put to the House before they are discussed with outside interests. I have no doubt that had we done it the other way round the hon. Gentleman would have been jumping up and down and saying, "How dare you consult outside before coming to the House to announce the list?"

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question and that we have had a long run on it. I shall give precedence on a subsequent occasion to those hon. Members who have not been called.

Type 23 Frigates (Orders)

3.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's plans to place orders for further Duke class type 23 frigates.

The type 23 frigate will form the backbone of the Royal Navy's anti-submarine warfare surface force in the future. Principal features of this ship include a towed array sonar to detect low-noise submarines, a 4·5 in gun, a helicopter capable of carrying Sting Ray torpedoes and sonobuoys, Harpoon anti-ship sea-skimming missiles and vertical launch Sea Wolf missiles to counter the air threat. The type 23 will be more capable than the types of ships it is replacing.

Tenders were sought for orders for one to four ships from the four main warship building yards in the United Kingdom. We are very pleased with the outcome of the competition. The precise value of the order is commercially confidential but the prices submitted were very keen. Following evaluation of the tenders, I am pleased to be able to tell the House that an order for three ships is to be placed with Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd. The ordering of all three ships from Yarrow provides best value for money in terms of prices and contract conditions. The average unit cost of the three new ships is some £10 million below the average of the last three ordered in 1986. That reflects, among other things, the keenness of the competition; the benefits of batch ordering; improved efficiency in the shipyards, due in part to improved fabrication methods; and greater experience of building those types of vessel.

I take this opportunity to thank all the yards which participated in this excellent competition and which submitted such competitive bids. Although tenders were sought for up to four vessels in order to explore the benefits of batch ordering, an order now for four—even if all from one yard—would not be significantly more attractive in terms of unit price than an order for three. Therefore, we have decided that it is best to include the fourth ship in the next batch competition. That will enable all the yards that participated in this competition to have an opportunity to bid again for that ship, together with further possible orders.

This decision brings to 10 the number of new frigates now on order, excluding the three type 22 frigates accepted by the Royal Navy from the shipbuilders this year. In recent days, there has been much comment in the press and from the Opposition about the size, age and availability of our surface fleet. I regret that much of it has been ill informed. My announcement today demonstrates in the best possible way the Government's commitment to maintaining a highly capable escort force of about 50 destroyers and frigates.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): We welcome the Minister's statement, but we also have grave misgivings about it. We welcome it because it will mean an enhancement of our surface fleet, which has been much reduced in capability and in relative effectiveness because of the Government's gross inability properly to manage the defence economy over the past few years. We also welcome it because it will provide much-needed job

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

opportunities and safeguards in Glasgow, where the vessels will be built. My hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) are very pleased that Yarrow Shipbuilders has won the order, which will mean maintaining jobs in an area that is currently ravaged by unemployment as a result of the Government's policies.

However, my hon. Friends the Members for Tyneside constituencies are completely dismayed by the Minister's announcement. The recent completion of a type 23 frigate on time and within budget gave them the hope that Swan Hunter would be given one frigate out of this order, or out of the four—a point to which I shall return. Instead, Swan Hunter has been given nothing, which will mean an almost immediate loss of 700 jobs and a potential loss of 2,000 jobs in the near future, with the possible complete closure of the yard.

We note that the original announcement concerning the frigates was made at last year's Tory party conference. We are grateful that the Minister, unlike so many of his colleagues, has on this occasion used the House to make such an important announcement. In making the observation that this is the second announcement of the same order, I note that at last year's Tory party conference the Secretary of State for Defence received 32 seconds of applause for his announcement there. Are we to understand that that is now to be the Government's technique for ordering three frigates a year—once at the Tory party conference, and once in the House?

It should be remembered that the requirement for three frigates a year is a basic requirement laid down in the Select Committee's report. Are the Government returning to ordering one frigate a year, as they have done since 1981—a policy, incidentally, that has reduced the Navy even further than was envisaged by Sir John Nott in 1981? That led to the resignation of one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, but he is not particularly concerned.

Can the Minister give an assurance on the orders? When will the ships be delivered—or are we to have another announcement about that? If tenders were sought for four frigates and if, as the statement said, there are significant advantages in batch ordering, why are the Government ordering only three out of four? Why is the fourth frigate to become number one for next year, and how many are to be ordered next year? What is the Government's continuing policy—or are they dealing with the matter on an ad hoc basis?

As the Select Committee said in its recent report, the Navy desperately needs surface ships if it is to service our commitments in the Gulf and the south Atlantic and to NATO. Although the announcement is welcome news for some of our yards and is undoubtedly a welcome enhancement of our surface fleet, it will lead to dismay on Tyneside and is certainly not enough for our Navy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is very hard to please. His reaction to the announcement, which he is grudgingly prepared to admit is good news, reminds me rather of the remark attributed to Oscar Wilde when he first saw the Niagara falls—that they would be more impressive if they flowed the other way.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions, and it may not be possible for me to answer them all. He asked particularly when the ships would be delivered. As he knows, for operational reasons we do not give acceptance dates in advance, but we expect fabrication of the first of the three ships to start in about six months' time, and for work on the others to follow at roughly six-month intervals. He also asked why there should be three rather than four ships. I thought that I had explained that clearly in my statement. It is perfectly acceptable for the fourth ship to be included in the next order, for which we expect to invite tenders next year.

The hon. Gentleman referred, rather to my surprise, to much reduced capability in the Royal Navy. I entirely reject that allegation. The new ships, like others in the Royal Navy, are highly capable—much more capable than the ships that they are replacing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask for brief questions? We have a heavy day ahead of us.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not a very happy precedent for a Minister responsible for the Navy to start quoting Oscar Wilde? However, apart from his last few remarks, my hon. Friend's announcement will be warmly welcomed.

Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important to emphasise that the new types of frigate being ordered have a vast capability compared with those that they will replace? Will he be able to tell us soon when the other orders will be made, so that we can keep our commitment to a surface fleet of around 50 major ships?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his reaction. I can confirm that the ships are a great deal more capable, particularly in their anti-submarine warfare capability: they have much enhanced sonar capability, and are also much quieter. In addition, they carry a smaller crew—170 as opposed to 220, which was the complement of the previous type of anti-submarine warfare ship.

The next competition will be next year. We have not yet decided how many ships will be involved, but the number will be consistent with an ordering pattern to retain a modern and highly capable fleet of about 50 destroyers and frigates.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Minister include the Select Committee on Defence in his sweeping dismissal of the Government's critics as being ill informed? In particular, does he challenge the Committee's assessment that no fewer than 25 of the existing escort vessels will reach the end of their planned lives over the next 10 years, and that that means 14 orders over and above what he has announced today if the surface fleet is not to become smaller and less capable than it is now? Why do the Government not attempt a planned approach to ordering, instead of the drip-feed approach that they have demonstrated again today?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am glad to say that I did not describe the Select Committee as ill informed. I referred to the reaction to its report, much of which has been ill informed, particularly the reaction on the Opposition Benches. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who is I believe a member of the Committee, will know that paragraph 72 of its report refers to the 25 ships that he has just mentioned, and

also suggests that two orders are required this year to retain the escort fleet at about 50. I have just announced an order for three.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Does my hon. Friend accept that this is excellent news for the Royal Navy, for Yarrow Shipbuilders and for the hundreds of subcontractors who will benefit from the orders? Excellent as it is, however, the news does not mean that my hon. Friend is out of the wood in his determination to keep a destroyer frigate force of about 50. Does he accept that he must order a further two next year, two in 1990, three in 1991 and two in 1992 just to keep pace with the aging quality of the present fleet?

While I have no doubt that my hon. Friend can do that, would it not make sense for him to be able to tell the House as soon as possible that it is his intention, and that it is in the long-term costings? That is the best way to achieve confidence in the Navy, and among other yards that failed this time but stand to succeed in subsequent orders.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the announcement, and for what he said about Yarrow's and particularly about subcontractors. A large number of companies throughout the country will benefit from the subcontracting work associated with this major defence contract, which is not always the case.

I take my hon. Friend's point about the need to order new ships to keep the capability and numbers of the escort fleet up to the required level. My hon. Friend will have heard what I have said about another order next year. I think that he will understand why I do not give precise numbers or timings, looking several years ahead. I am, however, happy to repeat our commitment to retaining an escort fleet of about 50 ships, and to assure him that they will be very capable. The new ships are much more efficient and effective that those that they are replacing.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Notwithstanding the fully justified reservations of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), the Minister will be aware that the news will be greeted with delight and satisfaction on the Clyde, particularly in my constituency. It is certainly good news for the Clyde shipbuilding industry and the Royal Navy. It follows not from ill-informed criticism, but from extremely well-informed criticism relating to the need to keep our service fleet up to strength at about 50.

The Government's good-sense decision reflects—for once, perhaps—a recognition of Britain's real defence needs in the real world and on the real seas, rather than the nuclear preoccupation of the fantasy world in which some military strategists persist in living. This is good news for Glasgow and very good news for the constituency and Yarrow's, which is a centre of excellence. I offer the Minister thanks from my constituents.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his reaction, which, as he said himself, was perhaps a little more genuine and honest than that of his hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who seemed to be looking for reasons to complain about good news. I can do no better than to say that a total of 27 major naval vessels with a value of nearly £4·6 million are now on order for the Royal Navy, or under construction. Some 64 major ships and submarines have been ordered by the Government since they came to power in 1979.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the money saved by the very efficient procurement of these ships will be kept within the defence budget for further procurement?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am glad to be able to confirm that. One of the principal reasons for our drive for more competitiveness and value for money in our procurement expenditure is to provide for the opportunity to buy more equipment with the money saved.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Minister need to be reminded of the bitter disappointment that will be experienced in Cammell Laird this afternoon as a result of his announcement? May I remind him of Cammell Laird's substantial order book for conventional submarines? Will he open negotiations with the yard in the near future on the timing of the placing of those orders, so that any employment effects of today's announcement can be minimised? Will he assure the House that all these orders were decided on price? Having spoken to the shop stewards before coming here, may I extend an invitation to the Minister, now that the tenders have been decided, to visit the yard in the near future?

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says about the disappointment that will be felt by Cammell Laird. As I said in my statement, I appreciate the contributions of all the yards that took part in the competition, and the keen bids that they put in. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the award of the three ships to Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd. was on the basis of price. I may add that Yarrow's bid was fully compliant in terms of contract conditions.

A number of other ships will be coming forward for invitation to tender. We recently had a presentation on the aviation support ship. I have already mentioned inviting tenders for a further batch of type 23s next year. There will be further orders for auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels, single-role minehunters and type 2400s in due course. I shall be happy in due course to pay a visit to Cammell Laird to see the shipyard.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Does my hon. Friend accept that, although there will be general welcome for this addition to the strength of the Royal Navy and the work for the contracting part of the marine industry—the subcontractors—there will be great disappointment on Tyneside that Swan Hunter, the major frigate builder, did not share in the order? Does he accept that there is a strong case for having a long-term ordering programme to avoid uncertainty, with all the problems that that rise gives to for employment?

Will my hon. Friend say a little more about the next batch of type 23s? When he refers to next year, does he mean that the process will start then or that the order will be placed then?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) about Cammell Laird, so I appreciate the disappointment in my hon. Friend's constituency at Swan Hunter. I am equally grateful to it for its participation and contribution to this effective competition. As I said, there will be another order next year. I shall not commit myself now to saying how many ships will be involved, but it will be a batch order and the process will start next year. It might even come to order next year—it is as yet too early to say. As with Cammell

[Mr. Sainsbury]

Laird, there are Royal Navy ships under construction at Swan Hunter, which I hope will submit competitive tenders for the future opportunities with which it will be provided.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Minister aware that what he has just said about a further batch order next year will be welcomed by every hon. Member with a naval shipbuilding interest in his constituency? In the meantime, his announcement today will be warmly welcomed on Clydeside, especially as it is clear that the order went to Yarrow strictly on merit—and as, without the order, Yarrow would have been faced with a substantial rundown in the labour force in the next few months.

Mr. Sainsbury: Of course, when I announced the intention to go out for another batch order next year it is clear that not all the yards can win if we place the orders in batches. That is the inevitable consequence of seeking the best value for money for the Navy. I hope that we please the whole House by getting effective competition and being able to order three ships at an average cost of about £10 million less than the previous group. The clear consequence is that not all yards can be successful on each occasion.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement this afternoon, but may I ask what reliance is he placing on the use of advanced weapons systems on surface vessels as a way of maintaining and, if possible, increasing their numbers and prolonging their lives?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for the announcement. The weapons systems and sonars and radars on the type 23s are, as, he would put it, modern and very capable. There are some advantages in some of the latest systems because they are easier to enhance and modernise than some of the older ones. That should enable us to keep some aspects of the sensors and weapons of the modern ships in the most up-to-date condition without the difficulty of refitting, which we have run into on previous occasions when we virtually had to rebuild some of the earlier Leanders.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): In associating myself with the general welcome for this announcement—particularly as a Scottish Member—may I associate myself with hon. Members on both sides who have argued that there is a case for a long-term ordering programme? Does the Minister agree that, as well as getting value for money, it is of great importance to maintain our warship building capacity? Without a long-term building programme there is a risk that some of it could be lost.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the order. Of course, there are always requests for long-term programmes for this and that. He will be as aware as I am that long-term programmes tend to change, and the longer-term and more highly defined the programme, the less flexible it inevitably is. The last thing that we want to do is to commit ourselves too far in advance to ordering precise numbers of particular types of ship with particular categories of arms, sonars and radars, when we are faced with an evolving threat and must continually judge what is required against it.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my hon. Friend aware that, although his statement will give encouragement to the Royal Navy and Yarrow, it will give nothing but disappointment to my constituents in Vosper Thornycroft? May I take it that as a result of that disappointment, of which I am sure my hon. Friend is aware, his Department is bending every effort to assist Vosper Thornycroft in getting orders for both mine hunters and mine sweepers, particularly in the Gulf and for Arab states? Will he add anything in that respect?

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate what my hon. Friend said on behalf of Vosper Thornycroft, which is the third unsuccessful yard in this competition. I repeat to him what I said to our hon. Member the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) about the yards' participation in this competition. Like Swan Hunter and Cammell Laird, Vosper Thornycroft has an opportunity to tender for further orders that come along. Like the other yards, it has ships for the Royal Navy under construction, and it can bid for other work from overseas and from the civil sector as well as from the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Will the Minister accept that, while no one begrudges the work going to Yarrow, there is considerable disappointment about the announcement? In fact, it is a bit of a kick in the teeth for many in the north-east that not one of the orders has gone to Swan Hunter. What hope can the hon. Gentleman hold out for the thousands of workers whose livelihoods depend on Swan Hunter? Does the Minister agree that the merciless application of market forces should not be the only criterion he takes into account when deciding where to place such orders?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am glad to note the hon. Gentleman's enthusiastic welcome for defence orders of considerable size. I appreciate that not every yard can win if a batch order is placed, but I am somewhat surprised that he should suggest that we should incur extra expense by splitting the order. Depending on how the order was divided, the extra expense to the Royal Navy would have between £11 million and £20 million if we had not taken advantage of the best offer. We have a responsibility to ensure that that money is saved to be used for other equipment to ensure that we have the best possible Navy.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My hon. Friend will be aware that, apart from recent events in the Gulf, the evidence given before a Congressional defence committee last week—that modern weapons systems depend completely on their electronic capability—reinforces the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). When was the specification for the electronic equipment frozen; how old will it be when it is installed; how frequently will it be updated?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend will know better than most that it is difficult to answer that question because there are about 62 or 63 different systems in the type 23, and almost all of them have electronic components. The answer to his question would be different for each one, but

I take on board his point about the need, when ordering complex electronic equipment, to bring to bear the sort of approach that he recommends.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): Many—probably most—Opposition Members welcome the Minister's announcement as a step towards achieving his own target of 50 frigates. However, to achieve that goal would require ordering about two or three a year. Over the past five or six years the Government have averaged about one a year. To achieve the target would require far more than simply the ordering process that we have heard about. Does the Minister agree that perhaps his citing of Wilde was quite apt because many ships have been lost in the ordering process? To lose one was surely unfortunate, to lose two was careless, but to lose an extended family of ships amounts to neglect.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the relevant Oscar Wilde play the parents were found again. Perhaps the Select Committee's comments on the ordering rate overlooked the inevitable implications of a reduction in the overall size of the escort fleet from the figure in the 1970s down to about 50, which remains our target size. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, paragraph 72 of the Select Committee report suggests a required ordering rate of 2·6 ships a year, which is the equivalent of two more orders this year. I have just announced three and that seems a good start towards achieving what the Committee asks for.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My hon. Friend's announcement will be warmly welcomed with a great sigh of relief by the Royal Navy. That is because it is aware that it is not able to fulfil its peacetime commitments without withdrawing from some NATO exercises. It is extremely perturbed about the lack of type 23s, in particular the towed array sonar frigates required for the northern area. It is also worried about the impossibility of defending the sea lanes of communication in wartime. Will the Minister reassure the Navy by introducing into the long-term costings a clear programme of continuous ordering of surface units?

Mr. Sainsbury: While I welcome my hon. Friend's reaction to this order, may I say that I do not accept the "impossibility" as he puts it, of defending the sea lanes. The Royal Navy would feel that to say that was selling it short, given the ships that it has, let alone the new ships that we are talking about ordering. I agree that the towed array sonars, which will be one of the main weapons systems of the type 23s, give a greatly enhanced anti-submarine warfare capability, which will be of great value to the Royal Navy.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): May I also welcome today's announcement which will be greeted with enthusiasm throughout Scotland where we justifiably regard the words "Clyde-built" as demonstrating the pride that we feel? Can the Minister say whether emphasis is being placed by the Ministry on decentralisation of defence procurement expenditure? Is he aware that recent estimates show that 68 per cent. of this massive budget was concentrated in the south-east and south-west? Surely some of the pleas that we have heard from the northern regions of England show the need for decentralisation. Will the subcontracted steel come from Ravenscraig?

Mr. Sainsbury: It is apparent that the welcome for this order is not just from Scotland but from all those who have the interests of the Royal Navy at heart. Subcontract work is a matter for the prime contractor, and where he obtains his supplies is a matter for him. I am sure that he will find, as the hon. Lady would expect, some very competitive suppliers in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Further to the points made by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), may I ask my hon. Friend whether he agrees that this is magnificent news for the west of Scotland and a tribute to the professionalism and dedication of the management and work force in Yarrow who have won this contract on merit? Is my hon. Friend able to say anything more about the consequences of the contract for the preservation and creation of jobs? Does he agree that the lesson for the whole of Scottish industry is that the way to preserve and create jobs is to be competitive?

Mr. Sainsbury: Indeed. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. We estimate that about 10,000 jobs will be sustained in the defence industry by these orders. He is absolutely right that in defence equipment supply, as in other industrial and commercial activities, competitive effectiveness in meeting the customers' requirements most efficiently is the best way to ensure the preservation of jobs and to create more jobs in Scotland and throughout the country.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): While the Minister's announcement of the batch order will be welcomed by the Royal Navy, it will be bitter news for the community surrounding Swan Hunter, where it will immediately mean 700 redundancies in the short term and probably 2,000 in the not-so-long term. Many of those people will be constituents of mine who travel to and fro each day.

Has the Minister taken into account the fact that the three orders announced today may yet fall short of the "about 50" that the Royal Navy considers adequate, especially taking into account the increased down time in modern operations and the need to update and refit these vessels more regularly? Will the Minister also take into account the fact that we need not only to renew our vessels but to retain our capacity to renew them? If we close the yards, as is happening at present, we need never look for another conflict like that in the Falklands because we shall be unable to furnish the equipment to send to such a conflict.

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman's constituents, like other people in the area of Swan Hunter, will be disappointed that Swan Hunter has not won this order. Of course the size and shape of the work force at Swan Hunter are matters for the company, but I hope that its continuing programme to improve productivity and efficiency, of which I am aware, will enable the company to win extra orders from the Ministry of Defence, from the private sector or, indeed, from overseas.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): While warmly welcoming this order, which will be a valuable addition to the fleet, may I suggest to my hon. Friend that his financial problems next year may be even greater than they were this year, in that defence expenditure is projected to continue to decline in real terms as a proportion of

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

Government expenditure and as a proportion of GDP? In those circumstances, how will he fulfil his worthwhile and laudable objective of a surface fleet of about 50?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for this order. Expenditure on defence is projected to remain at about a constant level for the next two years. This order is a demonstration of one of the best ways in which we can meet the objective that my hon. Friend and I share—getting better value for money. As I said, the average cost of the three ships for which I have just announced the order is about £10 million less than the last three which were ordered in 1986. That is getting better value for money through more effective procurement, and is one of the best ways to ensure that we can meet the requirements of the Ministry of Defence and the Navy.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The Minister's statement will be greeted with great relief on Clydeside and especially by my constituents. It is not often realised that Yarrow is the largest single employer in manufacturing industry in Strathclyde. There are about 5,500 jobs in Yarrow, and subcontractors will depend on this order. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the order, and enormous credit is due to the management and work force who have won this order on merit.

I should like the Minister to try to be a little less reticent about the batch system and about what it means to defer one of the ships into the next batch. When does he expect to be more explicit about the number of ships and the timing of the next batch? So far he has been a little reticent about that.

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the order. Like some other hon. Members, he is seeking more information, but I am afraid that at this stage I am unable to give that to the House. Obviously, the batch system means that we order ships not singly but in groups. I have already announced that next year there will be another invitation to tender for a further batch. By normal standards that is quite precise. For the reasons that I have already advanced, I do not wish to commit myself further. I repeat our commitment to maintaining an escort fleet of about 50 ships. Those ships will be highly capable.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate the interest in this statement and I hope that I have called all those hon. Members who have a direct interest. I shall call hon. Members who are still rising but I ask them to be brief because other hon. Members wish to take part in the subsequent debate.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Does not the chorus of delight from the Opposition Benches contrast with the performance of previous Labour Governments? Does my hon. Friend agree that the viability of a shipbuilding industry in this country is a major factor in securing competitiveness for the building of warships? Has he given careful consideration to the effect on Swan Hunter, in particular, as a result of his decision?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is right in his observation. If I recall correctly, when the Labour party was in power from 1974 to 1979, it cut the defence budget on no fewer than five occasions, which does not give us great confidence about what it would do in the future. I assure my hon. Friend that we are conscious of his point and that we keep under review the overall capacity of the shipbuilding industry, as we do the ship repair industry, to meet the requirements of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is my hon. Friend aware that his welcome statement this afternoon will mark a major enhancement of our commitment to the defence of the east Atlantic and of NATO's northern flank, as well as to the pre-eminent reputation of our Royal Navy in anti-submarine warfare? However, will he be somewhat cautious about accepting the rather superficial arguments in favour of a longer-term batch ordering policy, not only because there are other priorities in defence procurement, but because it implies a sort of Buggins's turn, which cannot be in the long-term interests of our defence procurement policy?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks, with which I very much agree. The Royal Navy contributes about 70 per cent. of the NATO surface fleet in the east Atlantic and the Channel. That is a reflection of the important contribution of the Royal Navy to the NATO Alliance.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): This is very good news for the Royal Navy, for Scotland and for Yarrow, but may I join my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) in articulating the fact that it is bad news for Swan Hunter, which is having considerable troubles with its present orders, particularly the AOR? When will my hon. Friend order more ships of the types that he mentioned, including ships for the amphibious forces, and will he lay down a more specific timetable for the next batch of type 23 frigates?

Mr. Sainsbury: One of the reasons why I cannot fully satisfy my hon. Friend's curiosity about the precise timing of the next order is that it takes quite a long time to analyse the tenders when they come in. As he will be aware, it is not at all unusual nowadays for there to be perhaps two or even three rounds of tendering to ensure that the Royal Navy obtains the best price and that the tenders are fully compliant with the contract conditions. That can take quite a long time and it is difficult to predict in advance exactly how long it will take. Therefore, I must leave my hon. Friend with no more information than I have already given to the House.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Following the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks), may I congratulate my hon. Friend on the excellent deal that he has struck? However, may I put it to him that we must keep at least two effective frigate builders in being, if we want to be competitive in future? That will almost certainly mean that, at some time in future, we shall have to pay a little more for our frigates than the price at which Yarrow would be able to produce them because, inevitably, Yarrow now has a strong competitive advantage. I put it to my hon. Friend that Swan Hunter should be that other yard.

Mr. Sainsbury: I aware that, to retain competition, we need more than on supplier. As my hon. Friend will recognise, we went out to four yards—not just two—all of which put in bids for that batch. I hope that a number of

yards will continue to compete for future orders to ensure that we have competitive prices. I do not accept that that will necessarily mean that we shall have to pay more than we would otherwise do to ensure that we retain at least two yards with the capability of building new frigates.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I appreciate that the order is an early stage, but is my hon. Friend able to confirm that the radar contract will be awarded to Plessey, which will be good news for its employees on the Isle of Wight, and can he say whether the helicopter requirement of those new warships will be met from existing resources, or whether additional helicopters will be required, which will be even more good news for Westland employees on the Isle of Wight?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said earlier, there are a number of subcontractors and suppliers throughout the country, including the Isle of Wight, which are likely to benefit from the announcement of the order. In due course, those new frigates will carry the EH101 helicopter, which is currently being developed and is supplied by Westland. I hope that my hon. Friend's constituents, like constituents in many other parts of the country, will benefit from that order.

Points of Order

4.34 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the light of new information, according to a headline in *The Evening Standard*, I wonder whether there is any possibility of your reconsidering your decision, taken at 11.30 am, when the information was not available regarding my wish to make an application under Standing Order No. 20. The headline in *The Evening Standard* states:

"I reported Piper gas leak".

The article contained other assertions—*[Interruption.]* I represent, as do some other hon. Members, those people who have been widowed in this most tragic and ghastly accident.

In the light of the new information, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I could make an application under Standing Order No. 20, requesting a statement regarding the urgent interviewing of those people who received telephone calls from people who later died on the rig, as the telephone calls, with all the publicity and emotion, may well be overprinted in the minds of those who received them.

Mr. Speaker: I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about this matter, but I am not aware of anything new that has happened since we discussed the matter earlier today.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that there is a long-standing convention of this House, which has served us well over many years, that hon. Members, particularly senior Members, when abroad, do not criticise the Government of the day? Have you been able to reprimand the Leader of the Opposition for his disgraceful comments on his recent foreign trip?

Mr. Speaker: I am responsible for order in this House. I am not responsible for what anybody may say outside it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter for me. It is not a point of order at all. Is there a different point of order?

Mr. Marlow: It is a different point of order. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is present in the Chamber at the moment, would it be possible for him to make a statement as to whether it is possible for him to withdraw the passport of the Leader of the Opposition?

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the 14 motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Various Local Authorities) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Borough of Sunderland) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Shipbuilders and British Steel Corporation) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

[Mr. Speaker]

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Steel Corporation) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Port of Tyne Authority) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Coal Corporation) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Borough of Walsall) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Borough of Sandwell) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (British Railways Board) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (General) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Central Electricity Generating Board) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (City of Newcastle upon Tyne) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Set-Aside Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant document: Fifth Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 358 of Session 1987-88) on European Community Finance.]

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

As the House will appreciate, as well as the report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, the debate also provides scope for consideration of the Community documents specified at column 122 of the *Official Report* for 7 July.

United Kingdom policy in the Community, throughout the past five years, has had three dominant aims. We have sought to put the Community's finances on a sound basis of good management; we have sought to bring discipline to CAP spending; and we have sought to make a reality of the Community's commitment to a genuine internal market, 320 million strong.

That agenda, originally set by Britain, has become the European agenda as well, and it is being carried into practice. The House heard from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister only ten days ago about the progress made at Hanover towards the single market, the third of the objectives that I have described.

The Bill is concerned to implement the first two of those objectives—sound finance and control over agricultural spending—on the basis of the agreement that we achieved at the Brussels European Council last February. I believe that those achievements have been welcomed by the great majority on both sides of the House.

Attitudes towards the Community in the country at large, as well as in this House, have indeed moved a long way in recent years. The decade of debate about the merits of our membership is well behind us. The common objective now is to see how we can make the Community work as effectively as possible. Certainly that is where the interests of the United Kingdom lie, and the interests of Europe as well.

Of course, I do not by that imply that our perception of our interests will always be in line with the views of our partners. That is the nature of any genuine partnership. On such occasions—there have been many on the road to the Brussels and Hanover European Councils, and there will be many more—we press our country's case with vigour. So, quite rightly, do others. The challenge of Europe is to find what is best in each nation's position, and to offer that to the whole, making the most of our common strength. Real progress is being made when all can see their interests being advanced.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way at this early stage. Will he assure the House that the combination of the effects of the Single European Act and the proposals in this measure will give ample opportunity for any

member state, particularly our own, still to defend what it sees as its essential national interest, whether in financial or politico-economic matters? Is he satisfied of that, and can he reassure the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to take one intervention at this stage. A large number of hon. Members wish to speak in the debate which, as so often, has started an hour late. I make no complaint about that, but I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not give way to a range of interventions, because I wish to set out the argument in support of the Bill as a whole.

I begin by acknowledging the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). Incidentally, I reject the argument that it is wrong for us ever to shift our views for the sake of a common position. If 12 nations are to make the most of their separate resources and talents, each must be ready to join in the search for agreement. But equally, I reject the argument that it is somehow bad form within the Community to fight for what we think right. The suggestion is occasionally made—it was made by some in this House during our struggle for better Community budget discipline—that the right course must always be to go along with the consensus. But that obviously depends whether the consensus is right—right for us and right for the Community. For us to fall in with the majority, where we think it charts the wrong path for the Community, would be to fail the Community, as well as Britain.

I make no apology—and the House would not expect anyone to make an apology—for the fact that the recent far-reaching review of the Community's finances and policies took place at the insistence of this country. The other member states now acknowledge, publicly and privately, just how necessary that review was. The new own resources decision and intergovernmental agreement now before the House are among its results: today's debate gives us an opportunity to review them all.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am normally fascinated by the points that are made by my hon. Friend. I hope that he will forgive me on this occasion, but I wish to stay within the pattern of the argument.

The principal result is a series of deep-seated changes in the way the Community budget will in future be run. The Community now has the solid foundation which it needs in the run-up to 1992. That demonstrates the wisdom of this Government's determination to make a success of the Community through concrete internal reform, consistently and tenaciously pursued, even when many in Brussels urged us to settle for less. Our tenacity in pursuit of those objectives is in sharp contrast to the ineffectual, toothless, gnawing attitude one sometimes detects from the Benches opposite, where vacillation has become accepted as a substitute for leadership and consistency, and resolution and patriotism are conspicuous by their absence.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, but I am sure that I carry my hon. Friend with me in what I have just said about the Opposition.

The same contrast is evident in the attitudes of the two sides of the House to the completion of the single market. That is the next key task for the Community. It is another where the United Kingdom has set the pace, and the tone has been set by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Good progress is being made. In the six months of the German presidency, agreement was reached at Council level on a record number of 56 individual single market measures. That brings the total since the Milan European Council in 1985 to nearly 200. Those key measures included a number of considerable importance to the United Kingdom, such as the removal of controls on capital movements by all member states. That is a prerequisite of a genuine free market in financial services. It will be a major boon to the City of London.

The measures included the full liberalisation of road haulage by the end of 1992. That means the end of continental lorry quotas. British firms will be able freely to compete for business, and costs to consumers will be cut. I mention as well the liberalisation of non-life insurance services—another change of major benefit to the British insurance industry.

Why has there been the acceleration of progress on the single market?

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Lord Cockfield.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am almost delighted that the hon. Gentleman is paying tribute to a British member of the European Commission. Certainly he deserves tribute.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have taken the hon. Gentleman's point.

We have made such rapid progress because, throughout the Community, there has been a growing recognition of the significance of 1992, and the benefits that it will bring, and because the completion of the future financing review, the principal reason for this Bill, has provided the foundation for single market success.

Mr. Budgen: No dialogue—just reading out the Foreign Office brief.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am delighted that my hon. Friend is taking such a close interest in what I have to say. He will find it even more fascinating, as I go on.

The accession of Spain and Portugal on 1 January 1986 brought the Community two new members with incomes significantly below the Community average. Their entry coincided with a strong and increasing awareness of the link between the single market programme and the Community's spending plans. In particular, it was clear that the full development of the single market would best be accompanied by further expansion of the structural funds, to improve the economic infrastructure of the poorer Community regions.

Thus, it became clear too that the ceiling on the Community's own resources agreed at Fontainebleau in 1984 would be insufficient to provide for the needs of a Community of 12 in the run-up to 1992. In consequence, the Commission brought forward, in February 1987, proposals for the comprehensive restructuring of the Community's finances and an increase in the level of the Community's own resources.

From the beginning, the future financing review provided both threats and opportunities. On the positive

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side, the Commission's proposals called for a comprehensive reform of the common agricultural policy. That included, for the first time, the introduction of automatic stabilisers in all the main agricultural sectors, with increased supervisory power for the Commission to prevent possible overshoots. The Commission also proposed improved budget management procedures. The aim here was to improve forward financial planning. To all that, the United Kingdom gave strong support.

But the Commission's proposals also contained dangers. Chief among them was a proposal for a new method of calculating the British abatement which, on our calculations, would have left the United Kingdom hundreds of millions of pounds worse off in each year up to 1992—and by about £700 million in 1992 alone.

The Commission also proposed an increase in the own resources of the Community to 1·4 per cent. of Community GNP. The United Kingdom argued that an increase of that scale—equivalent to a rise of nearly 50 per cent.—was not required, and would impose an unnecessary burden on taxpayers.

Another unwelcome Commission proposal was for a new tax on the consumption of oils and fats. That was designed to lay upon consumers the burden of the Community's oils and fats support regime—by increasing the costs of margarine and vegetable oils by up to 31 per cent. We strongly opposed that tax: it would have been degressive, and it would have done little to address the basic problem of over-production.

In the negotiations which followed, we made four points clear: first, any further increase in Community resources must be accompanied by effective and legally binding controls on expenditure; secondly, there would have to be effective measures to reduce agricultural surpluses; thirdly, there should be no oils and fats tax; and fourthly, we were determined to preserve in full the Fontainebleau abatement mechanism.

We also made it absolutely clear that we were not prepared to agree to any element of the future financing package until we were satisfied with every individual element in the package as a whole. We succeeded on all counts.

We succeeded in getting in place agricultural stabilisers for cereals, oil seeds and the other principal agricultural commodities. Those stabilisers have subsequently been implemented by a series of detailed agricultural regulations covering each of the crops involved. By the standards of Community agriculture in the previous two decades, that stabiliser regime is revolutionary and long overdue. For the first time, we have an automatic mechanism, with teeth, which will control the growth of financial support.

To improve overall control of the common agricultural policy, the Brussels European Council also agreed, again for the first time, to make the financial guideline for agricultural spending legally binding. In future, the Commission's price proposals must always be consistent with the agricultural guideline.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): In the catalogue of success that my right hon. and learned Friend is relaying about how well we are now controlling expenditure, why has he omitted the lack of legally binding controls on the non-obligatory sector? How are the intergovernmental discussions supposed to equate with the legally binding controls that we were promised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend has acknowledged, the arrangements now coming into force provide legally binding controls for obligatory expenditure under the agricultural guideline. They also provide for legally binding limits year on year on the aggregate Community budget. The combination of those two effects provides a legally binding control on the non-obligatory expenditure. In addition, the matter is fortified by the inter-institutional agreement that was also arrived at as part of the arrangements. The point made by my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]* This is the point. Even the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) finds it difficult to follow the complexity of these matters. For that reason, the intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), confirms the wisdom of my original decision to allow a relatively small number of interventions. These are technical points, and we must look at the matter as a whole.

Mr. Marlow: Why is the package so complex?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: With his characteristic wisdom, even from a sedentary position my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has asked, "Why such a complex package?" It is complex to satisfy the legitimate anxieties of my hon Friends to gain effective control in the circumstances.

In future, as I have said, spending on the CAP will be able to grow at a maximum of just three quarters of the rate of growth of Community GNP—that is, about 2 per cent. per annum in real terms. That compares with an average growth rate of 5 per cent. per annum over the years 1980-87. Crucially, it will ensure that the CAP has access to a steadily shrinking percentage of the Community's GNP.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me. No doubt the House is looking forward with great interest to what my hon Friend has to say.

The Brussels agreement also eliminated the general provision for additional expenditure in so-called "exceptional circumstances." Instead, the new budget discipline arrangements make specific and tightly controlled provision for a reserve of 1 billion ecu which will become available only in response to substantial in-year changes in the dollar-ecu exchange rate.

World agricultural prices are in dollar terms, so when the dollar falls against the ecu, CAP budget costs rise. When in future such extra costs exceed 400 million ecu, the new reserve will be triggered, and may be drawn down, but only up to the limit of 1 billion ecu. The arrangement is symmetrical: when the dollar rises, the reserve will fall, automatically reducing the amount available for CAP support.

In line with the provision in the Brussels conclusions that all these controls should be in legally binding form, detailed texts governing agricultural budget discipline, the financing of the CAP and of stock depreciation, and the financing of FEOGA intervention, have been drawn up

since February. They were formally adopted by the Council on 24 June and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The conclusions of the February European Council also provided for a useful tightening of arrangements for budgetary mamagement. Those provisions too are embodied in a Council regulation adopted on 24 June and deposited in the Library of the House.

As I explained earlier in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, a helpful additional control on spending arises from the agreement between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on an inter-institutional agreement covering Community expenditure between 1988 and 1992. Under the agreement, all three institutions commit themselves to respect a reference framework, or financial perspective, for spending over the five-year period which is consistent with the conclusions of the Brussels European Council.

So much for the framework. How are the new arrangements working in practice? The Commission's 1988 price-fixing proposals for support prices for agricultural products were within the agricultural guideline for 1988, as was the compromise package agreed by the Council on 23 and 24 June. The Commission's proposed provision for agriculture in the draft 1989 budget is within the guideline for 1989.

The signal to farmers and the markets is clear. The scandal of soaring CAP costs, at the expense of taxpayers, consumers and developing countries, is at last being brought under control.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To preserve his superb reputation for fairness and honesty, will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State accept that on the basis of the information provided by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the 2 per cent. increase referred to in 1989 actually compares with a year of 14 months and that that 14-month year was created by the £5 billion overspend under the previous strict budgetary controls?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is important that my hon. Friend should give me the opportunity to deal with that matter. I heard him muttering about it, so I thought that I would give the House the opportunity to hear about it.

A change was made last year to alter the arrangements so that the financial control of agricultural expenditure shifted from the system of advances to reimbursements. Whereas previously money used to be advanced by the Community to member states for them to pay, it is now paid by way of reimbursing expenditure actually incurred. We regarded that change as desirable because it gives tighter control. Member states are given money when they have paid it out.

As a matter of practice in making the change, it involved reimbursing after a two-and-a-half-month delay. There was a change in the pattern of timing. If we compare the two years, we see that the figure for 1988 covers the period from 1 November 1987 to 15 October 1988. The second period for the 1989 figure covers 16 October 1988 to 15 October 1989. The two periods are comparable, and the 2 per cent. increase to which I have referred results from comparing like with like.

I am anxious to make that point. It answers the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and no doubt he will have an opportunity to investigate it further. The House will understand that it is possible to make these points only with a high degree of comprehension, as characterised by the intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East.

The change to which I have referred is already having a powerful effect in practice. In the dairy sector, as many hon. Members will be aware from their experience, where milk quotas were first introduced in 1984 and strengthened under our presidency in 1986, the reduction of intervention stocks has already been impressive. Between the end of April 1987 and the end of April this year, butter stocks in the Community have been reduced from some 1·1 million tonnes to about 570,000 tonnes. That is a reduction of almost 50 per cent. in 12 months. Similarly, stocks of skimmed milk powder were reduced from 766,000 tonnes at the end of April last year to just 101,000 tonnes at the end of April this year. That is an 87 per cent. reduction.

All those important agricultural reforms have been achieved without the introduction of the oils and fats tax, despite strong support for such a tax from a number of member states.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman implying that this is the first time that there has been a sharp reduction in the level of butter and skimmed milk stocks, or does he recall that a similar reduction took place in 1982 without such a scheme?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This is the first time that one has been deliberately sought in the face of market conditions that might have produced the opposite result. It has been achieved as a result of the determination with which the Government have sought this precise reform in agricultural policy. One of the most notable contributions was made by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, when presiding over the December 1986 Farm Council, who brought to bear on the working of the Community all the authority that came from his experience as a Government Chief Whip and achieved a good result.

I see this willingness to accept the reform of the common agricultural policy agreed at Brussels as an impressive demonstration of the new seriousness of purpose in the Community. However, it will have to be sustained and intensified for years to come. More, much more, must still be done to make the agricultural sector worldwide more responsive to market signals. The opportunity arises in the current GATT negotiations.

Almost every one of the industrial economies needs to discover ways of promoting the health of their rural communities that do not depend upon the artificially protected production of food surpluses. That need was recognised at the Toronto economic summit. The message that the Toronto summit gave the GATT negotiators in Geneva was clear and can be put simply and graphically: that, if the countryside is to find a different way of maintaining its economic health, we should "start beating ploughshares into golf clubs". *[Interruption.]* Well, it is a striking phrase which should appeal to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), as it has a great appeal in Scotland.

It is a serious point, because for too long we have been devoting resources, not just in Britain or in the Community but throughout the world, to supporting, sustaining and protecting agriculture to enable it to produce food surpluses that cannot be consumed, at prices

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that are artificially sustained. The task of reform is the message that we have been driving home at the Tokyo, Venice and Toronto summits. That task must be dramatised and we must look for other ways of sustaining our rural communities. I make no apology for the phrase. Yes, let us start beating ploughshares into golf clubs. Planning permission is part of the argument.

We want action soon, and, over and above that, we want an agreed framework for major cuts in protection and support in the longer term as well in the short run. Through the Community, Britain will be working—

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) *rose*——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If my hon. Friends will forgive me, I shall not give way; I have given way sufficiently already.

Through the Community, we shall be working to ensure that the GATT negotiations reach a successful conclusion.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way. I know that he is greatly concerned to free the agricultural market, and as moves seem to be in hand to do just that, is it not also true that the Commission is taking an increasingly protectionist stand on the import of non-EEC industrial goods? At the moment, the EEC has a series of quotas, voluntary restraint agreements and spurious anti-dumping duties against a range of goods from steel to typewriters, and from photocopiers to canned mushrooms in brine. How can that help the industries which use those products, and how does it square with the Government's policy of deregulation and freeing the markets?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That intervention may have to substitute for my hon. Friend's speech, although I hope not. It raises a range of question. As my hon. Friend knows, the fact is that on almost every commodity for which there is an argument for anti-dumping regulations and protectionism, more often than not a United Kingdom constituency is arguing for such protection. It is important that the right balance is struck. On the whole, and certainly as far as the United Kingdom is concerned, our pressure is constantly for more liberalisation. I take as an example the removal of quotas in the steel industry, an arrangement which was operated to the advantage of the Community steel industry as a whole for some years, but which we wanted to get rid of, and we have got rid of it, pressing the Community in a more liberal direction.

The conclusions of the Hanover Council clearly record that we want to be sure that the achievement of the single market does not amount to the erection of a new protective hedge around the Community. It is important that we should continue to work as we are doing to achieve more liberalisation of the countries of the European Free Trade Association. However, it is equally important that we should not give away a protection if we could use it to win a corresponding deal from another trading bloc. The matter should be handled intelligently. My hon. Friend's point was worth making, and will be taken on board.

As I mentioned earlier, a further important element of the review of future financing was the adoption by the Council again on 24 June, of a new regulation on the structural funds, putting into effect the decision of the Brussels Council to increase structural funds commitments by some £1 billion a year over the period 1989-92.

The increase will go primarily to the poorest, to Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland, but Britain will remain a major beneficiary from the funds. We shall continue to receive more than £750 million a year——

Mr. Redwood *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, if my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not give way.

The particular problems of Northern Ireland will continue to receive special attention. Areas affected by industrial decline will still benefit from the regional and the social funds. Social fund resources will still be available to tackle unemployment, especially youth and long-term unemployment. The Highlands and Islands, mid-Wales and Devon and Cornwall will continue to qualify for support from all three structural funds.

The final element in the Brussels Council package was the agreement to increase the level of own resouces available to the Community, and to change the way in which member states' contributions were calculated.

The new own resources decision, the implementation of which is provided for by clause 1, gives effect to the February decision to increase the overall limit on the amount of resources available to the Community.

As I have explained, some increase was inevitable, and always foreseen as likely, given the terms of the Fontainebleau agreement, the accession of Spain and Portugal and the increase in the structural funds required in the context of 1992. The new limit has been set this year at 1·15 per cent. of Community GNP. It will rise through a series of annual sub-ceilings to 1·2 per cent. in 1992. The original Commission proposal, strongly supported by a number of member states, was, of course, for 1·4 per cent.

The new own resources decision also embodies a change in the structure of the Community's own resources. Under the new arrangements, the VAT rate will continue to be limited to 1·4 per cent., but the VAT base in each member state will be capped at 55 per cent. of its GNP. The remaining portion of resources due from each member state will be calculated according to its share in Community GNP. The Council has agreed a directive—a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House —to ensure that member states' GNP statistics are comparable and uniform. Calculating an element of member states' contributions on the basis of GNP will bring the own resources structure more in line with the relative prosperity of member states—another change which the United Kingdom has consistently supported.

Most important of all, the new own resources decision preserves the Fontainebleau abatement mechanism intact. Some member states initially argued that it should be abolished outright. Others wanted to see it greatly reduced, or made degressive so as to disappear by 1992. However, in the end all accepted that it should continue. The Fontainebleau arrangement has been worth some £3,000 million to Britain over the past three years. It will be worth some £1,600 million this year. It ensures that,

even if Community spending were to reach the new ceiling, the United Kingdom net contribution could amount to no more than about 0·25 per cent. of GNP.

The abatement mechanism will last as long as the new own resources decision itself, and even thereafter can be changed only by the unanimous agreement of all member states. The Commission's document setting out how the abatement will be calculated in future has been deposited in the Library.

The Bill also seeks the approval of the House for payments to be made under the 1988 intergovernmental agreement. This is needed to ensure that the Community can meet its commitments during the rest of this year, pending the entry into force of the new own resources decision. The procedure of using a single Bill for the new own resources decision and the intergovernmental agreement was expressly commended by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in its report of 18 May, and follows the precedent of the 1985 European Communities (Finance) Act. The present Bill supersedes and repeals that Act.

Throughout this spring, we made it clear that we would not be prepared to recommend to this House an increase in Community own resources until all the decisions reached at the Brussels European Council had been embodied in firm and legally binding texts. With the adoption of the package of texts by the Council on 24 June, that stage has been reached.

Effective CAP reform is at last in train. The Community's finances are at last firmly based. On this foundation the single market can be, and is being, successfully built. Three key United Kingdom aims are thus achieved or under way. The Community's interests are also being enhanced. To set our sights high was right —for Britain and for the Community. We have hit the target, and I commend the Bill to the House.

5.10 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to provide a genuine and expeditious programme for a substantial reduction in common agricultural spending or a corresponding increase in budget allocations for the social and regional funds, for the environment or for assistance to developing countries."

One is tempted to start this debate by saying that it is the same old debate with the same old characters at the same old time, only the figures are bigger.

Mr. Forth: And the hon. Gentleman will make the same old speech.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman says that I shall make the same old speech. I hope that he has taken the precaution of looking at my 1985 speech and comparing it with what the Foreign Secretary said then.

There is a major difference today. It is not just that the figures are much larger than they have ever been, but there is the presence of the Foreign Secretary to open the debate. That is surprising because this is not his Bill, but a Bill presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer. Where is he? Nowhere to be seen. He is not present to defend or even to describe the Bill. That has been left to the man whose job the Chancellor is said to covet even more than a level of interest rates which may stay steady for more than 10 days at a time.

That is all the more surprising since the Treasury has its own European Minister who could have launched the Government's flag ship today. The Paymaster General is present, giving a serious imitation of being awake, which is more than several of his hon. Friends have managed during the Foreign Secretary's speech. The Paymaster General is usually cast adrift on the parliamentary ocean at the mercy of all the sharks on both sides of the House. But he is no mean figure to sail this particular dead fish, if one is to continue with these nautical analogies. He is not a minor Treasury Minister; in his spare, unpaid, time he is the chairman of the Conservative and Unionist party. Who better to tell us of the iniquities of today's creative accountancy which will allow the Common Market once again to escape bankruptcy?

After all, the right hon. Gentleman was appointed to eliminate the charismatic mark of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who won the election but lost the Prime Minister's ear for being too explicit in saying aloud what she allows only to be unattributably leaked. Even in her most demented moments she could not have appointed the Paymaster General to do for the Conservative party what he managed to do for the European Community. For all that, the Paymaster General has the clout and the prestige to launch the Bill, but he is not doing it.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No.

Instead, it is the Foreign Secretary, who on 30 June opened a full day's foreign affairs debate. Today he is here to open the debate on this important Bill which has been stolen from the Treasury, and on Friday he is back at the Dispatch Box opening a full day's debate on Hong Kong. I put it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that three opening speeches in two weeks would make even the most sleepy Lobby journalist stop suspiciously for a moment. After weeks of speculation——

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall consider giving way to hon. Gentlemen who are jumping up and down when I come to an appropriate point in my speech.

We have seen weeks of speculation. On 28 June *The Sun*, among the usual abuse of the Labour party which we have come to expect, had an editorial headlined, "Bye, Geoffrey", which stated:

"In a speech Sir Geoffrey Howe claimed credit for Britain's economic success.

But what he was really doing was fighting for his political life.

Too late, Geoffrey. You would have done better if, instead of siding with Nigel Lawson in the row over the pound, you had supported your Prime Minister.

Now all you can do is wait until October 17 when you're due for the chop."

Clearly, *The Sun* knows more than even the right hon. and learned Gentleman about how he will go and the precise date on which it will happen.

Perhaps the Foreign Secretary has spotted a chink in the door at No. 11 Downing street, with the fourth interest

[Mr. Robertson]

hike in two weeks allowing a previous Chancellor a brief moment at the Dispatch Box to show up in public the present incumbent——

Mr. Gow: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When the Opposition Front Bench spokesman makes an opening speech on the Second Reading of a Bill should not the spokesman direct his mind and words to the Bill rather than to outrageous attacks upon my right hon. and learned Friend?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman will realise that a Second Reading debate is wide-ranging and hon. Members should be allowed to develop their comments as they see fit.

Mr. Robertson: It is indicative of the embarrassment of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen that they have to stoop to such a weak debating point to interrupt a speech. The House is now graced with a predecessor of the Paymaster General, who is sitting on the Back Benches, having fallen out with the Prime Minister, as have so many sitting around him. He was in the position of making up all the fanciful tales about European Community budgets which were told to the House.

My point is that this is a Treasury Bill and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is moving it. It is legitimate for the House to ask why that is and where on earth the Chancellor of the Exchequer is during this debate on his Bill.

It is difficult to explain the Foreign Secretary's completely irrational desire to open the debate on this of all Bills, which provides so little evidence of judgment, efficiency and political or financial prudence. Is the truth that he was left with the short straw yet again because even the Chancellor, who has peddled a few secondhand policies in his time, could not face selling this particular old banger? One can see why anybody, boasting, however fraudulently, of national financial success, would want to keep far from this Bill.

The Foreign Secretary has tried his best to confuse because, obviously, he cannot convince the House that when the bluster, jargon and funny money is set aside, the news in the Bill is not bad for Parliament and for British taxpayers.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Redwood *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: When we strip away the inter-institutional agreements, the intergovernmental agreements, the non-refundable advances, the fourth resources, the stabilisers, the green pound, the social spaces, the financial engineering and all the Euro mumbo-jumbo, the Bill permits a dramatic increase in the Common Market's budget of 25 per cent. on what it spends now. That is one extra pound for every four that the Community is spending.

Last year, after getting everything back that we were due and after receiving the much-vaunted rebate that the Government are so proud of, Britain paid a total of £1,347 million to the Community—that was our total net contribution. For those who struggle to understand these concepts, that is the equivalent of the total amount that the Government spent on the National Health Service's capital investment programme last year.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the figure has since been revised yet again, for the fifth time? The net contribution last year was £1,649 million. There has been a further revision—the revisions occur regularly. That, of course, is an enormous figure.

Mr. Robertson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. At least one expatriate Scot who got away from the fragile and dangerous areas for Tories north of the border makes a constructive contribution. We are now talking about considerably more than what the Government spent on the NHS's capital investment programme last year. As a consequence of the Prime Minister's negotiations and generosity at the Brussels summit, the figure is expected to go up by between £200 million and £300 million, which is the equivalent of the total arts budget of this country. That will be the extra amount paid to the European Community this year.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the increase in the structural funds? We have been helped very much by a document from Conservative Central Office, which tells us some of the things that the Foreign Office is not prepared to draw attention to. It points out that the structural funds will go up by 80 per cent. in real terms. I dare say that the hon. Gentleman, who I expect believes in plenty of industrial and social engineering, will applaud that, and he might even provide us with Tory arguments for the increases. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary did not have anything to say about the 80 per cent. increase in real terms.

Mr. Robertson: I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not. That is why I shall come to that. The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I presume that the briefing that he mentions is issued under the name of the Paymaster General. I am sure that when he winds up the debate the right hon. Gentleman will be pleased to give careful attention to the material that is coming from his own researchers, buried deep in the bowels of Conservative Central Office.

I am giving equivalents of the large sums because such large amounts are almost meaningless. They seem meaningless to the Prime Minister because she agrees to them with such aclarity—[HON. MEMBERS: "Alacrity."] I am sorry. The Euro-jargon is even getting to me.

In the context of those remarkable increases, I should like to draw attention to an exchange in the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service, to which I pay fulsome tribute for producing, yet again, an excellent report on the subject. The exchange was between the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) and Mr. A. J. C. Edwards, under-secretary to the European Community Group in the Treasury.

The hon. Member for Bridlington asked:

"I just wonder what would be the attitude of the Treasury if one of the spending departments came up with a request to increase spending by 25 per cent."

Mr. Edwards replied—these are precious words—

"Well, it is no secret that we would not be well pleased."

The language of Sir Humphrey permeates all this. I recently heard a Minister say at a public gathering that if

people thought that "Yes, Minister" was a comedy, he was able to vouch for the fact that it was a documentary. There is ultimate proof in that quotation.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend quoted from the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill, which says that the net increase in expenditure will be between £200 million and £300 million a year. Does he not agree that that is an estimate, which takes account of what the Government hope will be spent in Britain at Brussels' behest? Would it not be more accurate to say what the extra liability would be? Should not the Paymaster General tell us that? Despite that being the former job of the Foreign Secretary, he did not have the grace to tell us what the liability is.

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. To spare the House the complete tangle of statistics, I left out that substantial point for the moment. As the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said, the structural funds will play a large part in the net calculation that will apply to this country next year. I intend to deal with that and to show that the optimistic assumptions of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have little or no chance of coming to fruition. Therefore, the £200 million to £300 million extra that we shall pay to the Community will be substantially below the amount that we shall get. Indeed, we shall pay far more than that.

The recalculation of the budget financing on a GNP basis is welcome, being fair and much more straightforward than the previous convoluted system, but it is being used simply as a cover for the 20 to 25 per cent. increase in the Community budget that is now proposed. We remain rightly sceptical of the calculation of GNP that will apply in many Community countries, not least our own, but those figures are not the only bad news with which the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not want to be associated.

The second and entirely separate part of the Bill puts the Chancellor's signature on a splendidly generous cheque from the Treasury to the European Community, even more generous than the cheque that the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled handed over to ITV's Telethon at prime time only a few weeks ago. That cheque to the Common Market will be for no less than £765 million. It is the intergovernmental agreement sum that we shall pay as an extra amount to the European Community this year.

It is difficult to find equivalents to show how generous the Government are and how much they have given away, but if I say that the combination of that payment plus the extra payment that we shall give the Community will probably be close to the total spent on the roads programme in the whole of the United Kingdom, perhaps some people will get the gist of what has been conceded.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson : No.

It should be noted that this year we intend to give close to £2 billion as our contribution to the European Community. That extra-generous cheque, which will go under the title of an intergovernmental agreement yet again, a non-refundable advance on our contribution, will add up to 57 per cent. of our net contribution. That special, one-off payment will add up to 57 per cent. on top of our present bill for membership of the Common Market. It is small wonder that the Chancellor of the Exchequer stayed away today. Even he does not have the brass neck or the cheek to tell us how prudent or sensible that amount is.

The expensive saga is still not over because what follows is even more reason for the Chancellor to keep out of the firing line and let the Foreign Secretary take the shellfire, perhaps all the better to benefit the Chancellor in his desire to take over his predecessor's job.

What do those gigantic sums mean for Britain? What does the deal that was wearily accepted by the Prime Minister in the wee small hours in Brussels in February do for our country or even for the European Community? I come back to the point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. For one thing, it will double the structural funds of the European Community—the European social and regional funds. Before she went to Brussels, the Prime Minister said that such an increase would be lacking in any "rational justification".

In the House of Lords, Lord Brabazon of Tara said:

"The proposal by the Commission for a doubling of the structural funds is in our opinion quite unrealistic". —[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 9 November 1987; Vol. 489, c. 1243.]

Of course, he simply reads a script written by the Treasury, because in May the Paymaster General told the House that such a figure was "wholly unrealistic." The structural funds will not go up by 50 per cent., but by 1992, they will go up by 80 per cent., with good reason, of course.

The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Community recently published a report "Reform of the Structural Funds" which says:

"Differences in unemployment rates have intensified throughout the Community. Comparing the Community with the USA, it"—

the Commission—

"estimates that regional disparities in the Community are twice as high as regards incomes, and three times as high as regards unemployment rates."

Mr. Budgen: What proportion of the structural funds are obligatory and what non-obligatory? I believe that almost all of them are non-obligatory and if so, they are not subject to any legally binding constraints.

Mr. Robertson: The bulk of the structural funds are non-obligatory, but in order to reduce the amount of money in the compulsory and agricultural sector next year, the Community has transferred some of that money to the non-obligatory sector and is now claiming a triumph in reducing the agricultural component of the 1989 budget. The accountants employed by the European Community beat anyone employed by any local government organisation in Britain.

When the Prime Minister returned from Brussels she had no regrets about her volte-face on the structural funds but said:

"We receive about £750 million from the structural funds."

The Foreign Secretary repeated that this afternoon. However, she went on to say:

"Indeed we do fairly well out of the funds. We hope"—

note the word "hope"—

"that this figure will increase to about £1,000 million in 1992." —[*Official Report,* 15 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 710.]

[Mr. Robertson]

The division of the structural funds is being negotiated presently and one thing is clear—Britain will not do well, whatever the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary may say.

In the 1989 draft budget, 80 per cent. of the social and regional funds will be devoted to what is entitled "Objective I areas". Most of those areas are in Spain and Portugal and only one United Kingdom area, Northern Ireland, is featured. That area alone will benefit from the lion's share of the new cash that will be poured into the structural funds. Therefore, many suffering British regions and many of our acutely disadvantaged communities will be off the European assistance map for years. The Prime Minister may "hope", but our regions will suffer from her unwillingness to bargain. Her redrawing of the British regional assistance map has kept us out of the reckoning. When the intergovernmental agreement contained in the Bill is endorsed, our only real bargaining lever for a fairer deal on the structural funds will go for many years to come.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I have given way enough and I would like to leave time for others to speak in this important debate.

We are told that the next benefit in Santa Howe's package is the cut in the near-obscene expenditure on agriculture. Anyone who thinks that this much vaunted package will stop the unique protection from market pressures and currency fluctuations that is given to farmers and farming—a protection that is not given to any other industry or work force—will, predictably, be sadly disappointed.

We are assured that there are to be new legally binding controls on agricultural spending. The fatal flaws in 1984 Fontainebleau package about which we and other Members of the House repeatedly warned the Government, have been supposedly spotted and eliminated. This time we are told that it is all watertight.

Certain hon. Members have asked, "What about 1984?" Let me take the Foreign Secretary back to 25 June 1985 when we considered the European Communities (Finance) Bill of that year. In reply to an intervention by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West and describing the great momentous controls that had been negotiated, the Foreign Secretary said:

"If that does not amount to the effective imposition of budget discipline, I do not know what does . . . We have achieved the fundamental change in the operation of the Community"—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 798-800.]

The then Economic Secretary to the Treasury went beyond that and he wrote an article in *The Times* that appeared on that very day. Of course, the Economic Secretary is now dealing with defence and great issues of the nation's security. I met him today on his way to Washington and he expressed a great desire to be in Washington and not in the House this evening. In that article, he said:

"we achieved a system of budgetary discipline designed to bring the growth of Community expenditure under much tighter control . . . we see that the new budgetary disciplines are now beginning to bite . . . Fontainebleau has changed the rules for good."

That is not what the Foreign Secretary said today, rather that Fontainebleau was rubbish. It is like Gorbachev at the all-party union conference a couple of weeks ago when he said that everything in the past was wrong, but that everything that he says now is 100 per cent. correct. Out of modesty I will not read out large chunks of my speech on 25 June when I predicted precisely the fatal flaws that the Foreign Secretary is now willing to admit in his confession today.

We have been told that all the loopholes have been closed—we hope so. I do not believe that anyone in this House does not hope that the controls will work and that the Community will get on with tackling the necessary and urgent problems that face all European countries. However, the House should be as sceptical about those controls as the fifth report of the Select Committee on the Treasury.

The excellent House of Commons Library reference sheet, which has been produced on this Bill, states:

"A more likely scenario is that violation of guidelines by the Commission might be renewed pressure from some member states, already unenthusiastic about budgetary discipline, to change the rules themselves. This would require unanimous agreement; but so of course have the successively more expensive budgetary packages agreed up until now."

That says it all.

In his evidence to the Select Committee, the Paymaster General underlined the concept of legal enforceability by reminding the Committee that, on behalf of the British Government, he took the European Parliament to the European Court of Justice when that Parliament broke the treaty provisions on legal spending limits. He told the Committee that we won the judgment, but he conveniently forgot to remind the Committee that we had to pay the substantial cost involved in fighting that action and that the eventually agreed budget was larger than the one which he had taken the European Parliament to court to stop. If those are the guarantees on the legal enforceability of this budget, we and the Committee are right to be sceptical and suspicious about the controls—all the more so when they apply to the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: Time does not allow me to give way.

The Foreign Secretary is aware that, on the crucial cereals threshold, the Prime Minister was forced to accept what she knew to be a ludicrously generous stabiliser of 160 million tonnes. Before she attended that summit, she had said that that level would be

"an attack on the taxpayer and the housewife"

The Foreign Secretary is aware that the accumulating price cuts with which the Prime Minister dazzled the House in February do not start until the year after the stabiliser limits have been exceeded. At the same time, the right hon. Lady's Government, without using the negotiating power that they had over the IGA to get a fair deal for these extra structural funds, have thrown a bonus of £750 million into the expenditure hole of the 1988 budget, the budget which the Prime Minister has despised.

If the Foreign Secretary was trying today to get back into the limelight, to get back into the reckoning for succession to the Prime Minister, or even to survive the knives of the autumn, he chose a bad cause to plead and a bad case to present to the House. Four years and two weeks have passed since we debated the Bill which

followed the Fontainebleau summit, yet we are still offered only hopes and promises on the financing of the Community.

The Government and the Prime Minister see no vision of a Europe that works for all its citizens, including the young, the unemployed and those whose jobs are threatened by Japanese or United States competition, who could all benefit from genuine pan-European programmes. Instead, the Prime Minister sees a deregulated, free-for-all Europe that is made easy for big business. This sad financial Bill says it all about Thatcherism at home and abroad—prudence for those who need help and profligacy for those who already have the cash.

5.42 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): The extremely long preamble and peroration of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), in which he complained that it was my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary who proposed the Bill's Second Reading and not my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, might have been more convincing had the hon. Gentleman been the shadow Chancellor.

It is rather difficult to regard the increase in own resources that we are debating as more than a further step on the rake's progress which the EEC has developed over the years. We must recognise, however, that the Government have been making strenuous efforts to bring matters under control. The progress that they have made with the United Kingdom abatement is to be welcomed.

It is fundamental to the Government's policy that own resources should not be increased unless there is effective budgetary discipline. Developments on that front have been chronicled over a period by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. On budgetary discipline, I fear that it is no consolation to any member of that Committee to say, "I told you so." The matter was made clear to the Government by that Committee at the time of the Fontainebleau agreement. That is something which none of us can rejoice about.

We must recognise that it is extremely difficult for a Head of Government, as a lone voice, to continue saying no time and time again. It is important to view the developments that we are debating today against that extremely difficult background.

I wish, first, to comment on a major change in the basis of our contribution to own resources from VAT to gross national product. The Select Committee on the Treasury and the Civil Service, in the final paragraph of its report, draws attention to the real dangers that accompany that, especially the GNP statistics. The Committee observes that the United Kingdom's GNP statistics are deficient. I am glad that the Treasury has agreed about that and has introduced a review that will, I hope, result in more accurate statistics. These statistics are used in governing the country and in organising the economy, and when it comes to our contribution to the EEC they mean hard cash.

I was disappointed by the way in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister answered a question which I put to her following her statement on returning from the Hanover summit. I asked my right hon. Friend to check that our own GNP statistics were all right and similarly to check those for the rest of the Community. My right hon. Friend said:

"I agree with my right hon. Friend that a change from a percentage of VAT to a percentage of GNP is significant . . . Obviously, I cannot force the rest of the European Community to do that"—

that is, to initiate an inquiry—

"but we are making strenuous efforts to see that our statistics are as accurate as we can make them."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. 528.]

It is crucial that the review should encompass our own statistics and those of the other member states. If it does not, we may find ourselves paying more to the EEC than we should. I hope that the Treasury will take this matter on board and that we shall have more forthcoming answers in future than the one which I received to my question.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Higgins: I shall give way only once. Complaints have been made that Privy Councillors speak for too long, and I am anxious not to do that.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman's remarks are illustrative of a scrutiny problem. Is he aware that the Government have produced an explanatory memorandum and that the EEC has produced a Commission working paper on GNP? If we read the titles of the documents that are italicised in the *Official Report* for Thursday 7 July, which the Leader of the House did not repeat, we find that they are notionally for debate today. I do not blame the right hon. Gentleman, because there is a great scrutiny problem.

Mr. Higgins: I agree that scrutiny is tremendously important, and I pay tribute to the work of the Select Committee on European Legislation, which the hon. Gentleman heads, in that area. So many directives are being rushed through in anticipation of 1992, and this happens during any presidency of the Council. It is increasingly difficult for the House to ascertain what the directives really mean. It is a problem to which the House should give careful attention. I much agree with what the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has said.

Should budgetary discipline be legally binding? We know that the Prime Minister was disappointed, rightly, that what she believed would be effective budgetary discipline at the time of the Fontainebleau agreement was not. She then said that it must be legally binding. I do not think that the House and the Government are making sufficient use of the legal restraints available to them in controlling those matters, while complying, rightly, with the legal restraints that are imposed on us.

A few days ago, we had to go along with the European Court's decision on imposing value added tax on certain items. It is difficult to understand why we do not insist on imposing legal restraints on matters such as expenditure in the EEC. We have had successive debates on the reports of the Court of Auditors in the EEC, which have said that various devices used to expand the expenditure in the EEC, beyond the limits that were thought right, were illegal. However, the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the EEC as a whole have not pointed out that, if this is illegal, it should not happen. I do not like the asymmetrical way in which, on the one hand, we are complying with our legal obligations but, on the other, we are not using the legal mechanisms to ensure that the EEC stays within the legal limits that have been imposed on it.

Will the agreement embodied in the Bill result in effective budgetary discipline? In that respect it is

[Mr. Higgins]

important to distinguish between non-obligatory and obligatory expenditure and to ascertain whether the present arrangements provide an effective means of legal control. When giving evidence to the Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said:

"There will be a legal instrument. To take you back to the debate we have had in this committee room on previous occasions, we have previously not had legally enforceable instruments. Member States or the Council have recourse to the European Court if a legally enforceable instrument is in fact being infringed."

When the Prime Minister originally said that we would agree to an increase in own resources only if there was a legally enforceable instrument, I do not recall that a distinction was made between obligatory and non-obligatory expenditure. The impression created was that it would apply to both.

I shall deal with obligatory expenditure first. The agreement that we have reached imposes an arrangement whereby limits will be set on obligatory expenditure. But if the limits are exceeded in any given year, there will be a clawback over the next two years—most of it, we hope, in the following year. I understand that, but it is not a very prompt means of securing budgetary discipline.

What is more worrying is that paragraph 8 of the guidelines submitted for a decision of the European Council that dealt with this legally binding arrangement says:

"The budgetary effect of such exceptional circumstances shall be cancelled out within a three year period. If any overruns have not been offset by the end of the period, the Commission and the Council shall assess the situation and decide how to deal with the overrun."

That does not seem to be an effective way of imposing a legally binding agreement. I hope that when the Paymaster General replies, he will make it absolutely clear how this mechanism will work, so that if there is an excess, it will be possible for any Government to take the EEC and the relevant authorities to the Court.

I move from the obligatory expenditure side, which appears to be a little loosely worded, to non-obligatory expenditure. The Select Committee was told that it was not possible to make a legally binding agreement because

"it would fetter the powers which the institutions enjoy under the terms of the budgetary articles of the Treaty."

If I understand it correctly, this is effectively an amendment to the treaty. I am not the least bit clear why we could not amend the treaty in such a way as not to affect those bodies said to have powers that would be fettered if we were to have a legally binding agreement on non-obligatory expenditure.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said that we need not worry about the lack of a legally binding agreement on non-obligatory expenditure, because there is a limit on obligatory expenditure and a limit on the total. Therefore, effectively there is a legal limit on the lot. Will the Paymaster General concentrate on that point in his reply?

Mr. Holland: Wake him up.

Mr. Higgins: I know that he is giving careful attention to it. I do not understand how the mechanism described by the Foreign Secretary will work in practice. One problem is that there are considerable doubts about the way in which it will work and how it will be made legally binding.

The increase in own resources is substantial. The limit on agricultural expenditure will only keep it in line with the increase in GNP—in contrast with earlier attempts to reduce the percentage spent on agriculture. That is worrying. However, some progress has been made in this direction and I hope that the Paymaster General will deal with those points in his reply.

It is worrying that the periods specified for the restraints on expenditure are too long. There is a limit for a particular year and any excess is clawed back in the next year or the year after that. We should try to monitor it quarter by quarter. I hope that, in reply to this debate or in Committee, the Paymaster General will assure us that the figures will be produced each quarter, so that the Select Committee can ensure that the restraints are working within a year and, if necessary, report back to the House. Corrective action can then be taken before the annual limit is exceeded.

The Bill contains some improvements. It is certainly an improvement on the Fontainebleau agreement, but, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, we should continue to impose as tight a scrutiny as we can on the way in which the somewhat complex and nebulous proposals are put before us.

5.58 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): In fending off questions at the beginning of his speech, the Foreign Secretary said that we had only a half-day debate, because the statement had reduced the time available. He added:

"I make no complaint about that."

I suggest that he should have complained to his business managers who had allocated only a half day when, as can be seen from the number of hon. Members in the Chamber——

Mr. George Robertson: It is not a half day, it is a whole day.

Sir Russell Johnston: Then I can be somewhat more relaxed. I had it firmly in my mind that it was only a half-day debate, so I withdraw unhesitatingly my first remarks.

I welcome the Bill. It represents an important step forward in the slow but steady integration of the European Community and the development of stable financial arrangements within it. It is very much in line with the views that I and other of my right hon. and hon. Friends have expressed from this Bench over many years. In his opening speech, the Foreign Secretary referred to the virtues of consistency and their alleged absence from the Opposition Front Bench. Be that as it may, I can claim with justice and no exaggeration that Liberals have been consistent and clear on these matters since the war.

Looking back to the successful Brussels summit in February, the fact is that, when faced with the choice of either jeopardising the achievement of the common internal market or agreeing to a modest and sensible increase in the Community's own resources, the Prime Minister chose the latter. That is fair enough, but I wonder why she was not prepared to endorse what was substantially the same agreement when it was first discussed in Copenhagen at the end of last year. The reality is that the Prime Minister's tactics held back the development of the Community by two to three months, for no reason and to nobody's benefit.

I must mention two related points. First, there is the continuing mystery of why Her Majesty's Government will not join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system when it is known that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Treasury, the Foreign Secretary and most business men—most of whom support the Government—are in favour of it. Yet we continue to say that now is not the appropriate time.

Secondly, there is the mystery of the Prime Minister's attitude to the central European bank proposition. It seems to me that that is a very natural proposition on the road to European integration, that it will certainly come to pass in time and that it will be of great benefit to all the members of the Community. Nobody was asking the Prime Minister to commit herself in advance to any specific plan. All that she was required to do was to keep an open mind and to consider the potential benefits to Britain and to the Community as a whole. This, regrettably, she did not do. She made a sweeping attack on the whole idea, saying that it was absurd and ridiculous and that it should not be entertained because it would mean casting away sovereignty.

Perhaps the right hon. Lady had not read the July issue of *Expression*, which is published by American Express. It contains an article by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), in which she said:

"A truly liberal banking system throughout Europe would help—as would greater private use of the ecu."

I am sure that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) would welcome greater private use of the ecu. The Minister continued:

"These are both things that we"—

that is, the Government—

"are encouraging in the move towards a single market."

There is a conflict between that clear position and the Prime Minister's equally clear position. The members of the Community have committed themselves to the free flow of capital within the European Community by 1990 and this is likely to be of major benefit to the United Kingdom, but the absence of a common bank and a common currency could produce large swings in interest rates as Governments tried to avoid harmful fluctuations in the value of their currencies.

Furthermore, from the point of view of the ordinary individual, the sheer cost and bother of changing money will cause more and more irritation as the single market develops. When my middle son, David, went on a school trip to Italy at the beginning of this year, I thought that he ought to have a few lire with him in case he had trouble changing money. I trotted off with my £10 note to the National Westminster Bank's bureau de change, where I was told, "We do not have any lire." Then I went to Barclay's bank where I was told, "We will change it, of course, but it will cost 70p. Are you a member of our bank?" When I said that I was not, I was told that it would cost me another £1. It cost me £1·70, not to buy anything but to change £10. That was immensely annoying. The Prime Minister's original dismissal of even discussions about a central bank was nothing short of ridiculous, and it bolstered Frankfurt's claim to house such an institution when it is established.

An unspoken side of the consequences of the Bill concerns democracy. I do not think that the Foreign Secretary was at the Hague conference earlier this year. He was represented by his right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey. Perhaps she told him of the remarkable speech by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Richard von Weizsäcker, who said:

"Europe needs democracy. The democratic process exists on a national level and direct elections to the European Parliament represent a significant step towards a European supra-national democracy, but we must go further in this direction. A European Union which aims to protect democratic values in the world can no longer be satisfied with a parliament whose powers are inadequate. As long as the road to Europe is bound up with a loss of parliamentary power there will be no progress, because our European aim is democracy and that means it is bound up with parliamentary legitimacy."

Such remarks would predictably raise the ire of a number of hon. Members who object to that kind of approach, but to me the logic is inescapable.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman said that to him the logic is inescapable. Does his party espouse Mr. von Weizsäcker's remarks, and are they similar to the remarks of Mr. Kohl and Mr. Delors?

Sir Russell Johnston: The short answer is yes. I shall refer in a moment to Mr. Delors.

Before making these points about European development, the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) made the kind of speech that one would not hear from the President of the Federal Republic of Germany or even from an ordinary member of the Bundestag, despite the fact that Germany's net payments to the Community far exceed ours. Germany's attitude is still very different from ours. I shall not weary the House with an extended rebuttal of the hon. Gentleman's tatty argument, in which he compared individual Government expenditures with our total net Community contribution. The last time that I remember that argument being trotted out ad nauseum was when Concorde was built. People said that if Concorde was not built we should be able to do this, that or the other. It was a poor argument.

I must comment, however, on the hon. Gentleman's strange remarks about the structural funds, which I did not understand. I presume that he agrees that the limited amount of money that is available for the structural funds, in particular for the regional fund, should go to the most needy countries in the Community, which are Portugal and Greece. Thereafter, one should look at the most needy areas and regions. Scotland has missed out considerably by not adopting earlier a more positive attitude to certain schemes that she could have implemented. However, because of enlargement, the position has changed.

Equally, when making such remarks, the hon. Gentleman ought to recognise that one of the failures of the United Kingdom's regional fund is that we have failed to operate the addionality rule and to a large extent have ourselves undermined the regional policy's effectiveness.

Mr. George Robertson: It is not a mean debating trick to point out the equivalent value of the payments to the European Community. I made those comparisons, but I make them more forcibly about the additional payments. The intergovernmental agreement will cover a one-off payment covering a hole in the budget about which there is severe disagreement. I know that it will appeal to the hon. Gentleman when I say that that figure is more than that for Scotland's housing programme in the current financial year. I refer to the additional payment and not to our net Community contribution, which can vary from year to year.

[Mr. George Robertson]

I will clarify my comment about the structural funds. Of course we are in favour of more money being paid, and we believe that it should go to the neediest countries and to the neediest areas within individual countries, such as our own. That can only sensibly be done if there is some curtailment of the money wasted on agriculture, which is a perfectly good area where savings could be made, so that the budget does not have to grow.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not want to engage in an extended argument, particularly because of pressures of time. The hon. Member for Hamilton must surely recognise, as do other opponents and, in some cases, justified critics of the Community's excessive agricultural expenditure, that one cannot turn that situation around suddenly and quickly. The degree of agreement now achieved gives promise that it will happen, but in a steady and organised way. If one tries to make that change suddenly, and in a draconian fashion, which certain hon. Members sometimes suggest, it would cause great social upheaval.

I return to the democratic component. First, it remains utterly disgraceful that the United Kingdom continues distorting the whole political composition of the European Parliament by refusing to allow election to that Parliament in proportion to voting support, as do all other member countries. I see no justification for that injustice, and I regret the absence of any reference to it in the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Secondly—I address these remarks to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—Jacques Delors is right when he says that we need to look now, as we reassess the basis of our financial contributions, towards what he called "an embryonic European government". That means looking actively for means whereby the European Parliament can play a steadily more significant part in overseeing Community policy and legislation; otherwise, there will be no directly elected democratic control. I say again that Jacques Delors is right and that the Prime Minister should congratulate him on his directness and foresight. What he suggests will not happen overnight, but that prospect must be faced.

Thirdly, it will also be necessary in the long term to examine direct finance-raising powers for the European Parliament.

I conclude by expressing disappointment at the thrust and style of the Foreign Secretary's speech.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): What thrust?

Sir Russell Johnston: That is a fair point—perhaps "thrust" is the wrong word, and I do not argue with that.

Mr. Budgen: The hon. Gentleman's speech could do with some thrust and style.

Sir Russell Johnston: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I believe that there was some form of abusive remark, which I shall ignore.

The greater part of the Foreign Secretary's speech was given over to trying to prove that the United Kingdom has single-handedly reformed the whole European Community, and has done so in the face of opposition, hesitation, obstruction and goodness knows what else. Apparently, we had no allies in that struggle, because none was mentioned. It seems that we thought of it all ourselves and won the day by logic, remarkable innovative ability, and will power. Not only is that an even greater caricature of reality than is our representation in the European Parliament a mockery of the way in which people voted, but it gives no encouragement that the Government yet understand the need to begin concentrating on political solutions and arguments and to cast aside the old nationalist prejudices and out-dated nationalist attitudes that still colour our debates far too much.

6.14 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) on the thrust and style of his speech. I know that the Labour party, such of it as is here at the moment, believes in open government, so I hope that it will not mind if I tell a little secret. Conservative Members have received a piece of paper from our Whips' Office, and under Monday night there are three black lines. Like most secrets, it is not what it seems. It is not a three-line Whip from the Government but a three-line Whip from Mr. Delors, that we should vote for this package tonight.

Let me explain what I am saying. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has throughout these negotiations done more than any human being could do, from the point of our national interests and from the point of view of the Community. Time after time she has to meet the same group of people. She has to sit down with them. She has to debate with them. She has to discuss with them. She has to take account of what is happening in Europe as a whole and what is happening in NATO as a whole. She does what is best for our country in those circumstances. But we are not the Prime Minister. We are the House of Commons —part of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It is up to us also to do what we deem to be best for the interests of the United Kingdom and for Europe.

I should also like to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary—I am sorry that he is not here at the moment—on the tremendous efforts that he has made on behalf of Britain and on behalf of the European Community. It is a question of damage limitation. He comes back here when the damage has been done. Perhaps we have been defeated, but not annihilated, and that is some progress. He comes back and says, as he is bound to do, that although it did not work last time —as he said last time—it will work this time. This time, he said that it did not work last time—it is going to work next time.

There is one point of criticism of my right hon. and learned Friend. The tax we are talking about and this financial package are complex. My right hon. and learned Friend said that of course it must be complex in order to be fair. He was for a time a very distinguished Chancellor of the Exchequer. When we have a system of taxation, to be fair it must be simple. People must be able to understand it. My constituents and the people out there do not have a clue what is being done on their behalf. One of the great criticisms of European Community finance is its complexity. People feel that they are being taken for a ride.

I shall be voting against the Bill for two reasons. The first reason is the less important. The two reasons are money and sovereignty. A haemorrhage of cash—that is important. But more important than that is the loss of sovereignty that is taking place, drip by drip, bit by bit, day by day—loss of sovereignty, the atrophy of a nation's soul. Take a commercial company. It can lose money. It can have a couple of years' losses, but it can still survive. But if it goes into liquidation, that is the end of it. That is what I am concerned about—the way in which we are moving in the European Community at the moment, our country is slowly, bit by bit, ceasing to exist as an independent national state.

We all of us in the House want control of expenditure. Community expenditure was up to a level of 1 per cent. VAT, then it went up to a level of 1·4 per cent. VAT. Now we are increasing the amount of money available to the Community by another one quarter—by another £1 in £4, I believe the Minister said; £5 where it was £4 before. But that is basically for the same group of policies. This time, we are increasing regional policies. We have been doing our best to cut down regional policies in the United Kingdom, but basically this additional money is buying us the same package as it did before.

There are two ways of looking at Community expenditure. First, there is the gross contribution—the amount of money that we spend on this fixed clutch of policies. We make a gross contribution to the Health Service and to the Ministry of Defence. Little by little, by 1, 2 or 3 per cent. a year, it goes up. But the Community gross expenditure for this area of policy controlled by the Community goes up by leaps and bounds, year after year. Surely what is good for financial control in Britain ought also to be good for financial control in the Community. If we can make it work here, why cannot they make it work there?

Secondly, there is the net contribution. The Community budget is a zero sum. Some people put money in, and some take it out. Why do we, even now, have to pay a vast sum into the Community budget, net, for nothing—our membership fee—when richer countries such as Holland, or those with overburdened levels of public expenditure but still richer than ourselves—such as Denmark—take money out? Countries such as Greece that do not even abide by the legislation and regulations that come out of the Community put their hands in the Community bowl and take out a lot of money. Why should we have that? There is no justice in it and no good reason for it. It is just history. Why should our people have to pay net vast sums into the Community budget?

We can control this expenditure. In an important speech, my right hon. and learned Friend talked about obligatory and non-obligatory expenditure. We can control all the expenditure in the Community. It is a simple matter. We do not have to have it on trust; we do not have to say whether the devices that my right hon. and learned Friend talked about today would work. All that we have to do is throw out the Bill today: no Bill, no money. The amount that the Community is allowed now is the amount that it would be allowed in the future. It would then have to cut its coat according to its cloth. When it has done that and we are getting value for money, we can come back to it again and see whether we want to vote it more money later.

Mr. Budgen: Why should we? There will be no need for it then.

Mr. Marlow: As my hon. Friend says so succinctly, if they have taken the medicine—taken the bait—got the message, they will not need the money. Let us do them a service. Let us vote against the Bill.

There is also the important question of sovereignty. The name of Mr. Delors has been mentioned. Mr. Delors, as we know—it must be so, as I saw it in an issue of *European Parliament–EP News*—said that before long 80 per cent. of legislation in the economic, financial and social spheres would be of a European nature and thus beyond the control of domestic legislatures. I think that we are a domestic legislature. I believe that we used to control 100 per cent. of the laws that affected the people of this country. In future, for every five issues that we control now —if I may return to the mathematics of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)—if Mr. Delors is right, we shall only have any control of, say in or influence over one. One fifth—that is how low we shall sink if Mr. Delors has his way.

Mr. Delors, of course, wants a united states of Europe. Do we want a united states of Europe? The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, who has just left the Chamber, wants a united states of Europe. But does the House want it? Is that what we negotiated? Is that what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) negotiated with the Community? If it was, why did he not tell the British people? Why should the British people be dragged kicking and screaming and by default into something that they have not been told about, when they were promised something else?

I do not believe that we want a united states of Europe. What we want—or what most of us want; some of my colleagues may not want it, but I am happy to have it—is a single European market. I am very much in favour of 1992, and of European co-operation in foreign and defence policy. We ought, with those with whom we have interests in common, to co-operate where we have those common interests. But to bring that about certain actions are necessary. Certain other actions are unnecessary, however, and those actions—those regulations, those directives—are being showered upon us day after day, week after week. Those unnecessary actions have nothing do do with a single European market or with co-operation between nation states, but they are very much to do with enmeshing us in a unified united states of Europe, which we have never requested or wanted.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Does my hon. Friend think that the country to which M. Jacques Delors belongs wants a united states of Europe either?

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend may have a point. The country to which he belongs may or may not want a united states of Europe. But given the way in which the institutions and powers are cast in the European Community at present, that is what it will get unless it does something about it. I hope that my hon. Friend will help me in taking the first slow step towards stopping it.

We in the House have slumbered to a certain extent while the legislation has been introduced. Because of that, we have been lumbered with various edicts with which we do not agree. Let me give a couple of examples of some of the things that have gone wrong. Recently, we were required by the European Court of Justice——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): These foreigners have no sense of fair play.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that my hon. Friend will make a very fluent and compelling speech later. In the meantime, if he will forgive me, I shall continue with mine.

Recently, we were required to put VAT on commercial construction. That is not necessary to a single unified European market. It is not necessary to free trade between free member countries of a European community. It is Europeanisation. How did it come about? On 29 November 1976, there was a debate in the House on a directive about VAT. Let me tell the story of that directive. That directive was scrutinised by the European legislation Select Committee and was referred to the Chamber for debate. It was debated late at night, and the vote finished after midnight. About 123 hon. Members voted—less than one fifth of the number in the House. The directive that was voted on then was not the complete directive; it then went back to Brussels and was changed significantly.

The vote that night was a vote to take note, not a vote to approve. If it had been a vote to approve, it would have been approval of something that was subsequently changed. The European Court of Justice interpreted that directive, which forced us to impose VAT on items on which the Government of this country did not wish to impose it. We were told that Parliament had had its chance, that Parliament had scrutinised it and that there had been parliamentary control over it. Nothing could be further than the truth. Parliament had no power and no control, and was not even involved in the final directive through which that VAT was raised.

There is a second way in which important things can go wrong. Part of the package of measures will be a directive that will measure the gross national product of each Community country, so that we can assess the amount that must go into the European kitty. That directive was to be assessed by the European legislation Select Committee. There is something called a scrutiny reserve. The Government should not reach an agreement on the directive until it has been debated in the House, if that is what the Select Committee wishes the House to do.

The Select Committee did not have an earthly. The Government overruled it. The directive has been agreed. This is an important directive: it decides how we are to assess exactly how much each Community country will have to pay into the Community kitty. There are good things in it. It is not bureaucratic. Each country will decide what is its own gross national product. Or is that such a good thing? What is Italy going to decide about its gross national product? How will we in the House be able to influence it? When will we be able to debate it? What Italy does not pay, we shall have to pay. That is it: that is the end of sovereignty. That is the end of our control over the issue.

Mr. Delors is right when he says that there is something called the democratic deficit. There is no democratic control over these matters at all. Vitally important issues that would in the past have taken weeks of legislative time are going through on the nod because of the lack of proper democratic control. What can we do about it? We are the only people who have a chance of doing anything about it. If someone feels hard done by, he can have recourse to the law. We can take the matter to the European Court of Justice. But can we? Is it a court of justice or is it a court of Europeanisation? It is not the former; it is the latter. The European Court of Justice is there to impose a centrally controlled European state on the member nations of the European Community.

What else can we do? We can give more power, influence and discretion to the European Parliament, but will it be objective? Is not the common characteristic of almost everyone who sits in the European Parliament that, individually and collectively, they all want a united states of Europe?

If we cannot rely on the Court or on the European Parliament, there is only one institution that we can rely on —the House of Commons. Slowly, the lifeblood of nation states ebbs away; the powers of the House are shorn just as surely as Samson had his locks cut. There is a solution, a cure to this near terminal disease. It is painful, risky and controversial. It is to throw out the Bill.

6.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I can answer one of the questions posed by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). He, like the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), referred to the gross national product directive: it is COM(88)176. It has been referred for debate by the Select Committee on European Legislation, of which I have the honour to be Chairman.

That document is notionally being included in today's debate, but the fact that such a sharp-eyed Member as the hon. Member for Northampton, North and such a well-informed person as the right hon. Member for Worthing were not aware that the document was being debated—I must admit that until just before the debate it had escaped my memory, too—shows the extent to which the House is already not even scrutinising the matters that its own Select Committee suggests that it should. I do not blame anyone in particular. It is the mass of paper that descends on us from Brussels that has put us in this parlous state. It is a little parable of the difficulties that face us.

The Paymaster General courteously wrote to me some time ago saying that it would be for the convenience of all to discuss this document in this debate, and my Committee acquiesced in that. Nevertheless, given the numbers of documents that we have it is easy for some of them to be overlooked, and it is hardly possible to discuss the document this afternoon——

Mr. Higgins: It would seem from the answer that we received after the Hanover summit about GNP statistics that the Prime Minister had also failed to realise that.

Mr. Spearing: That may well be so.

The Prime Minister and hon. Members have forgotten several things. As recently as Thursday last the Prime Minister said:

"the principal achievements of our forebears in 1688 remain and ensure that the will of the people be exercised through Parliament rather than by intimidation or pressure practised by any one group or faction."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1988; Vol. 136, c. 1231.]

Alas, I do not believe that is so. It is clear that Parliament, perhaps through its own choice in 1972, does not enjoy that power now. Sixteen eighty-eight is a reminder to us that, in respect of the intergovernmental undertaking of which this Bills seeks to approve, we are supplying the deficit in 1988.

Supplying the deficit is a fundamental piece of parliamentary language: we vote supply. Originally, that was to supply the deficit incurred by the Crown, I suspect that we are back in the waters of 1688, because we are being invited by the Bill to supply the deficit in the funding of the EEC which, under article 199 of the treaty of Rome, is illegal, because it states that the budget must be in balance, which it clearly is not. If it were, the second part of the Bill would not exist.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, contrary to what he has just said about the Prime Minister's remarks about the glorious revolution, we retain the power in this House by virtue of the fact that we passed the European Communities Act 1972? That is a crucial point, and it remains. Furthermore, if we used the procedures of the House, as I have consistently argued that we should, to enable us to scrutinise what is happening more effectively, we would be able retain the degree of real control represented by what is called sovereignty.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is confusing approval of a particular tax—VAT, for example—with our power of removing section 2(1) of the 1972 Act. But the real day-by-day control by voting money and creating laws has, to some extent, departed.

Mr. Dykes: Will the hon. Gentleman agree with two quick points? First, remarkably, in February last year the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee agreed that £150 billion of United Kingdom Government spending went through this place on the nod and unnoticed, much of it late at night, with most hon. Members paying not the slightest attention to it. On the other hand, a single pound increase in Community expenditure attracts monumental hysteria on the part of certain anti-EEC hon. Members. Is not that a reflection of double standards and hypocrisy?

As Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, would the hon. Gentleman agree that if there were a national Committee scrutinising every item of domestic legislation, it, too, would be swamped by the weight of legislation? So that is not a material point. Are not the hon. Gentleman's remarks tantamount to saying that he and his Committee are not doing their job properly?

Mr. Spearing: I shall not give way again; time presses. The House has the opportunity, through its own procedures, to call a halt to expenditure or legislation at any time. Whether hon. Members choose to use that potential adequately is a matter that we can debate. I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's remarks at the end of my speech, when I deal with the prospective value added tax. Unless the House takes further steps it does not have the same degree of potential control over European matters as it has over the things that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. However, I agree that it is desirable that the Scrutiny Committee, of which he and I are members, should be able to scrutinise more deeply and that there should be more glasnost about European matters in the House, because as has been shown, we do not have the proper means to ensure transparency in what is afoot.

I shall illustrate the degree to which we have already lost control by referring to the passing of the Single European Act, which the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) gaily voted for, whereas others, notably the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) were aghast when they discovered what they had agreed to.

Article 100A of the treaty of Rome stipulates that any legislation relating to the achievement of the single European market can be passed in the Council of Ministers by a qualified majority. It is possible for a law passed by the Council of Ministers which is a directly acting regulation to be imposed on the House even if the ministerial representative of the British Government in Brussels votes against it.

The hon. Member for Harrow, East has said that that is democracy, but I question that. The Council of Ministers does not meet in public; it is rather like Parliament was before 1688—or even further back. It does not yet have our democratic controls, and the debate in the House that precedes a Council of Ministers' decision has no control, as yet, over what the Minister does there. All that we can do is to have a debate brought about by the Scrutiny Committee and perhaps by the resolution, but we cannot control the Minister. The Minister goes away and decides whether the Government will vote yes or no. The Prime Minister decides whether under article 99 the new VAT excise proposed by Lord Cockfield will be imposed on the House.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman because he will have a better opportunity to speak about the matter in Committee.

I hope that I have illustrated to the House how we have lost detailed control of legislation from Brussels which even the Government opposed and of prospective VAT on such things as books, newspapers, water, public transport, drugs and charities. The imposition of that tax will depend on how the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whoever that may be, behaves in the Council of Ministers. The House will be able to debate only the general principle, and the Prime Minister or the Chancellor will negotiate.

During the election campaign the Prime Minister did not say, as she could have said, that the Government would object and use their so-called veto on unanimity voting—if that operates—to prevent any increase in value added tax. If she had said that, most people would have agreed that it was right, but she did not. She said that she would veto VAT on children's clothing and on fuel and power but she did not say that she would veto the items in the list that I have read out. When the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer or perhaps, appropriately enough, the Paymaster General, who is competent in these matters, goes to the Finance Council, he or she will have to take the Cabinet's decision on the matter and not the decision of the House.

There is a way out in respect of VAT and it is not by refusing to pass the Bill. I commend the method to the hon. Member for Northampton, North, who asked what we could do. It would be possible and appropriate this year when we are celebrating 300 years of the House's superiority over the Crown to tell the Ministers of the Crown that they can go to the European Councils only if they do or do not do certain things. It is quite within the power of the House to pass such a resolution and it is not outwith the treaty of Rome. That is what the Folketing in Denmark has done ever since Denmark has been a

[Mr. Spearing]

member of the Community. It is a matter of the internal constitution of our land. One of the steps that we could take to ensure that the House has control in future is to pass such a resolution.

I shall now pursue the Prime Ministerial cries. The Prime Minister is adept at persuading the British public that she somehow does not like the European Community. She reminds me of a person who loves to go racing and who perhaps spends too freely on the horses. Such a person says that he does not want to be dragged to race meetings but when he gets there he is in his element. Why is the Prime Minister in her element when she gets to the EEC? It is because she is a worshipper, as are Conservative Members, of the free market. If we are to have a single European market that is free of frontiers, as the treaty dictates, somebody must decide the rules on either side of what was a frontier. That presupposes a supranational authority and if one is not there one must be established. That is as plain as a pikestaff.

Conservative Members talk a great deal about education and one of the matters they talk about is the need for Latin. I do not think that Latin grammar is very good but Latin vocabulary is very important. There is all the difference in the world between inter and super and extra and ultra. If we are to be international there must be something to be international about. I think that there is some agreement about that in all parts of the House. But the treaty of Rome is not international. By intent, purpose, operation and structure it is supranational. I see that the hon. Member for Harrow, East agrees. The institutions are there. Mr. Delors and Herr Kohl are quite right. Those institutions were there from the origin of the Community. There is the Council, the Commission, the Parliament and the Court, and those four institutions are growing in power day by day.

My final point is that the House has added to the power of those institutions against its will. The Government have also done that and I shall prove it. When the Prime Minister was invited in Milan to agree to an international conference to revise the Treaty of Rome, she said that a new treaty was not needed and suggested progress by pragmatism. She was probably right, but what happened? There was an international conference and we had a new Single European Act, very detailed and full, which provides for the majority voting of which I spoke. That is in one of the important articles, article 100A. The Government did not want that Act and to some extent they managed to dilute it—or so they thought. I suppose that some people thought that it was not strong enough —people such as Mr. Tindemans and others.

The Act was brought to the House in 1986 and put through on the guillotine, even though we have proof positive that the Government did not want it at all. Since when have the Government brought to the House a Bill with which they disagreed, and put it through on a guillotine? That is the extent to which the Prime Minister is dragged hapless into supporting an increasing tendency for power in the EEC.

That brings me to my concluding thought, which is about 1688. In that year the monarchy was sent packing by the House because the House said that it would decide the finance and the law. Today we have a new proto-monarchy and a new proto-imperium which is growing daily in Brussels. It is time that the House cut off the air supply to Brussels.

6.47 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Members who have expressed concern about the Bill, none with more passion than my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) or with more remorseless logic than the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), were right to express fears. The agreement on finance in the Community to which the Bill gives the force of law is a major step towards giving the European Community an independent existence and a means to sustain it. I quite understand why that process is deeply upsetting to hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Faced with these fears and concerns, some Ministers, although not on this occasion my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, have sought to dismiss them as groundless or, at worst, as greatly exaggerated. People who adopt that attitude will lay up trouble for themselves in the House and in the country if they seek merely to quell those doubts by bland assurances. That will be all the more likely if those bland assurances are the reverse side of a coin, the front of which is a policy towards the Community that aims to secure all our national interests without being prepared in return to make any concessions to the national interests of others except as part of a very crude horse trade that refuses to accept that closer co-operation between member states is a good thing in itself and will bring benefits to all members of the Community.

To be communautaire is to be an effective champion of national interests. The kind of minimalist, apologetic approach to the Community that I have been decrying is not, in the fairly short run, the best way for Ministers to avoid trouble, although no doubt it will avert any possibility of their seeing their majority shrink too much at the end of the debate. Far less is it the way to derive maximum benefit for the United Kingdom and its people from membership of the Community.

Ministers would be far better advised to go over to the attack, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary did so conspicuously in the debate. They should demonstrate the gains that can come not only to the Community as a whole but to each of its members and to the United Kingdom by a maximalist and enthusiastic policy of co-operation.

It is true that national Parliaments are losing influence and power to the institutions of the European Community, although perhaps not to the European Parliament, which is not yet a proper Parliament in the sense that we understand it here, with the power to overthrow or effectively criticise Governments. However, even the European Parliament may have to become a proper Parliament if national Parliaments continue to behave like the Parliament of Lilliput and continue to fail so lamentably in their job of effective democratic control of the Council of Ministers, which is, of course, where power resides in the European Community, as the hon. Member for Newham, South pointed out.

This Parliament, by treating the European Parliament and its Members as some kind of lepers who have to ring bells before they can gain entry, has contrived to achieve

the worst of all possible worlds. National Parliaments are losing influence because they cling so pathetically to the illusions of national sovereignty after the reality has gone. Those illusions make no sense at all in these days of nuclear defence, worldwide pollution of the environment, the overweening powers of multinational corporations and the problems of footloose hot money and Third-world debts.

An example only the other day brought that home vividly. Our overcrowded air space is putting air travellers in danger because national air traffic control systems will not accept the overriding authority of Eurocontrol, so, as an aircraft passes from one airspace to another, it has to switch from one system of control to another.

Co-operation is very much in our interests in respect of the European monetary system—we should have joined the exchange rate mechanism long ago—and, above all, in the calls for a European central bank, which were so summarily dismissed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Of course we can dismiss those ideas as Utopian, but they do not appear Utopian to our partners. We once dismissed the idea of a Single European Act as totally unnecessary, but we now bless it as one of the few ways in which any decisions can be taken within the Community of 12. If we continue to block agreement on such matters as the European central bank, we shall find that we are losing one of our principal assets within the European Community—the vital role played by the City of London as the principal financial centre of the European Community.

I say to hon. Members who have expressed their doubts about or hostility towards the Bill that they were quite right. The measure is a step towards an independent, self-sustaining Community, although not, alas, towards federalism. If they can defeat it—my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North made no secret of his desire to do so—we could then preserve the tattered shreds of sovereignty and we could become a sort of proud, independent western European Albania. Is that really the way in which a great nation such as ours can play the part that it is called to play in one of the world's three superpowers? Is that the way to ensure the prosperity, safety and hopes of our people?.

6.52 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I am sorry that the Foreign Secretary is not with us, because he would have heard some interesting speeches—the great candour of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) about the reality of the loss of parliamentary sovereignty; the pure joy expressed by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) whenever he hears that this nation has been stripped of, and that this Parliament has lost, more and more powers; and some good suggestions from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) about how, if we have the will to do so, we can gain greater control over Ministers before they give their consent to propositions, resolutions, decisions and directives in the Council of Ministers.

I understand—I can hardly believe it—that the Foreign Secretary is appearing on the Terry Wogan show. I find it a strange discourtesy to the House and a strange choice of priorities that the Foreign Secretary, introducing a Bill seeking to tax the British people and hand over the proceeds to the European Commission, should leave this Chamber and prefer to be summoned into the presence of Mr. Terry Wogan in some studio, wherever it may be, in London. It is as though he himself believed the prophecies of those who say that, in a few years' time, we shall be reduced to nothing more than a provincial assembly. The Foreign Secretary owes the House an apology and I hope very much that we shall hear from his right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who will wind up the debate, that there is a reason other than a television interview to explain the Foreign Secretary's absence.

Mr. Budgen: Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that, even in a borough council, if an important speaker in a debate went off to appear on the local town chat show, even the borough council might take it amiss?

Mr. Shore: I have made my point, and the hon. Gentleman makes his point, which reinforces it.

That apart, I was going to say that I thought it extremely fitting that the Foreign Secretary should introduce this Bill and debate because, after all, it is a finance Bill. The Foreign Secretary is an ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, but this is a finance Bill of a special kind because it is a European finance Bill and the Foreign Secretary has quite a track record in that area. It was he who last introduced such a measure—European Communities (Finance) Act—in June 1985. We are now seeking to withdraw that Bill and to substitute the measure before us today. No one more than the Foreign Secretary can claim to be, if not the author, the co-author, of the original European Communities Act 1972, which first imposed the European Community's tax regime on the British people.

We knew then, at the end of those protracted negotiations with the EEC, that the terms of entry were heavily disadvantageous. That was shown nowhere more clearly than in the arrangements made for the British contribution to the EEC budget. Why was it so disadvantageous? The House probably knows why, but there are two clear reasons. First, EEC budget expenditure was, and still is, overwhelmingly in support of agriculture and was bound to be much less in Britain, with its comparatively small agricultural sector, than in other continental European nations.

Secondly, although our receipts from the EEC budget would be smaller, our tax burdens would be heavier. Levies on imported foodstuffs and customs duties on third country imports were bound to fall with exceptional severity on the United Kingdom, whose pattern of food and non-food trade was much more heavily geared to the Commonwealth and other non-European countries than was the case with out continental neighbours.

The problem that originated with the treaty of accession and the European Communities Act 1972 remain with us today. It is fitting, therefore, that the Foreign Secretary, like Sisyphus in Hades, is condemned and doomed to push up the hill the boulder of reform of the CAP and changes in the European tax system and to see it fall down again to the bottom of the hill, where he has once again to resume his labours.

To be fair, the Prime Minister has fought hard to reduce those original burdens. She negotiated a temporary refund on a year-by-year basis for the first three years of her premiership. Then, at the Fontainebleau summit in 1984, she secured what was described as a durable system for the abatement of our contribution. That was an abatement of

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two thirds of the United Kingdom deficit of budget payments to, over receipts from, the EEC, to be deducted from the United Kingdom VAT payment.

But to obtain that abatement, a price had to be paid. The previous ceiling on VAT contributions of 1 per cent. was raised to 1·4 per cent. To those who questioned that virtual 40 per cent. increase in the EEC's own resources only four years ago, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary gave specific assurances that CAP spending would be curbed by budgetary disciplines year by year.

Now, in the Bill before us today, we have a re-run of 1985. Once again, the EEC has been authorised to increase its tax take. But instead of increasing the 1·4 per cent. VAT contribution to a new ceiling of 1·6 per cent.—as had been envisaged in the 1985 Finance Act—a new formula has been evolved, to cap the VAT base at 55 per cent. of GNP in each member state, while maintaining the maximum rate at 1·4 per cent. In addition, a fourth own resources tax has been added. That is to take the form of a percentage of GNP at whatever rate is needed to make up the budget over and above the yield of the other three own resource taxes. In all this, the United Kingdom abatement is to be retained. It will still consist of 66 per cent. of the difference between our payments and our receipts.

Again, let us consider the price that has had to be paid. The Community, whose tax yield under own resources was increased by 40 per cent. only three years ago, is now to have a further increase of 25 per cent., with a new ceiling of 1·2 per cent. of Community GNP—equivalent to 1·9 per cent. VAT. Once again, we are assured that agricultural spending will be controlled by budgetary discipline, by the so-called legally binding mechanisms for each of the agricultural stabilisers.

Judging by the Bill and its predecessor in 1985, the British bargaining has amounted to this: the United Kingdom receives some abatement of its original intolerable and unsustainable net financial burden, and in return, abandons its veto, its one power to reshape the EEC budget, and is obliged to permit an increase in EEC expenditure and taxation. Each time, of course, the United Kingdom pays more.

What it has meant for Britain in terms of its net contribution since the Fontainebleau summit is a net contribution of £759 million in 1985, £943 million in 1986 and £1,125 million in 1987. The estimate for 1988 is £1,250 million and for 1989, £1,500 million. That is roughly a 100 per cent. increase in the United Kingdom's net contribution in four years. In the same period, the total spend of the European Community will have risen from 28 billion ecu in 1985 to an estimated 46 billion ecu in 1989 —a vast increase of some 64 per cent., but still significantly less than the increase in the United Kingdom's net contribution.

At the same time, we note that the draft general budget of the European Community for this year, 1988, within a total of 43·4 billion ecu, will spend no less than 30·7 billion ecu on all forms of agricultural expenditure. This is made up of the guarantee expenditure, the guidance section and, in addition, the new provisions to underpin the ecu-dollar exchange rate and the amount set aside for the depreciation and disposal of existing surplus agriculture stocks. The total commitment to agricultural expenditure is 30·7 billion ecu, or more than 70 per cent. of the total budget.

I have been listening to Ministers making speeches about reforming the CAP and reducing its share of the total EEC budget since 1964. When the first Macmillan negotiation took place, Mr. Marjolin and Mr. Mansholt produced great plans for reforming a then intolerably expensive and inefficient CAP. But in those days, it did not take more than 70 per cent. of the total. Throughout the 1980s, there has been only one year in which it has exceeded the 70 per cent. that we are committed to paying during 1988. If that is an example of how budgetary disciplines work, I am not at all impressed with them, and nor should any other right hon. or hon. Member be. So much for cost control of the EEC budget.

The House can easily anticipate within the next three years, if not before, another European Community finance bill raising still further the EEC tax ceiling and budget expenditures, and the British Government once again conceding it, and withholding their veto because of the fear of losing their abatement, in part or altogether. When the House makes its decision tonight, hon. Members should reflect on the fact that the Bill, to increase further the taxation of the British people and to transfer that tax yeild to the Commissioners in Brussels, is only a part of a continuing process of steady erosion of the rights of the House and of the British people, with a corresponding growth and extension of Community competence throughout taxation, legislation and policy decisions.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) cannot have enough of it, and mentions with regret the facts that we are not members of European monetary system, that we have not abolished altogether our separate financial institutions and that we do not have a common currency or a central European bank to look after our financial and monetary affairs. But that is not the view of most hon. Members. In the past 12 months, zero-rating provisions of our own VAT legislation have been swept aside unceremoniously by decisions of the European Court. We know, too, that the Single European Act, with its commitment to a Europe without frontiers by 1992, threatens an unprecedented harmonisation of virtually all United Kingdom indirect taxation, and a widespread extention of majority voting throughout the EEC.

We have seen the Government's plans for the disposal of Austin Rover to British Aerospace delayed and jeopardised by the intervention of the Commission. Only last Wednesday, Mr. Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission, before the European Assembly, told us that this House and the existing system of national Parliaments in Europe would have to give way to the embryo of a European Government within the next seven years.

I warn the House now—I address my warning to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench as well as to the Paymaster General—that the issue of Britain's membership of the EEC, now dormant, will remain so only so long as it remains basically a customs union, with sensible co-ordination of economic, environmental and other policies—in other words, a Europe des patries. But if the trend continues towards a European union, a federal Europe, a European Government, and if our democracy and our Parliament are to be stripped progressively of the powers that make us a sovereign state,

of that sovereignty that belongs inalienably to our own people, to future generations as much as to those who have the rights of citizenship today, there will be a tidal wave of protest and opposition. The whole bizarre, unnatural and flimsy structure of European Commission, European Court, European Assembly and the thousand and one treaties that have burgeoned forth will be swept away.

7.8 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I wish that I had made as fine a speech as that of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). For many years he has spoken for so many of us who feel the pull and the inspiration of British nationalism. His was a fine statement of that nationalism which is felt in every class and every section of the British community, and which, to a very large extent, is now denied even by the Labour party.

The main purpose of my speech is to give a sincere and unqualified apology to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). Four years ago, when we were debating the proposed increase in VAT from 1 per cent. to 1·4 per cent., the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber got up and said that his party, the Liberal party, was in favour of a very substantial increase in the take from VAT, up to 2 per cent. I remember rudely deriding all that.

On that happy note, the whole of the Tory party present at the time agreed with me. It was ridiculous to suppose that any party should be so ridiculously and fanatically in favour of the EEC as to want to increase the rate of VAT to 2 per cent. Not only that, but the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber explained that the Liberal party, and especially Lord Jenkins, who was then the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead, who was not often the flavour of the week with the Tory party, were in favour of a massive increase in the structural and regional funds.

On that note of abuse and rhetoric, I was able to find whole-hearted support from the whole of the Tory party, as I abused the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber. Now, of course, we find that these proposals are not quite the increase to 2 per cent. as the hon. Gentlemen wanted. Sadly, the increase is only up to 1·9 per cent.

Everyone who votes in favour of the Bill tonight should be aware that the Liberal party and Lord Jenkins have entirely converted all the Tory party, and they have subverted the Prime Minister, to their views. They are owed the deepest apology. They have won in every respect. The Government have become as ridiculously Euro-fanatic as we believed the Liberal party was four years ago.

Sadly, I am not authorised to apologise on behalf of the Government. However, I repeat my deep apology. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was particularly vocal about the measure some four years ago and I am certain that he will also want to apologise. We who derided the Liberal party and who continue to deride it are now a small and disgusting minority in the Tory party. Tonight, when the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber enters the Lobby with the bulk of the Government, I hope that he is greeted as the friend that he should be recognised for. Most of all, he should be applauded because he has won on the structural funds.

My right hon. Friend the chairman of the Tory party has been very helpful. He has given all of us who wished to apply at the Whips Office a most excellent Conservative research department brief, which is much more informative than any document that the Foreign Office gave my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. That brief emphasises in very clear terms that, as a result of the massive increase in the funds for the Community, the structural fund will be increased in real terms by 80 per cent.

That is a very useful figure. By increasing that part of the budget which is not spent on the CAP, it enables the Government to say that they have kept the CAP down as a proportion of overall expenditure to the derisory amount of only 70 per cent. or whatever it is. That is plainly a sign of the fundamental reforms that were promised four years ago, which are promised now again today and which will be promised again in three years' time. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said on Wednesday, we are taking concrete steps towards reforming the CAP and we will continue to take concrete, but not dramatic, steps towards reforming it.

While a massive extension of the structural funds may pose little philosophical doubt in the minds of Labour Members, with the exception of those splendid British nationalists who want to rely on the membership of the House of Commons and the concept of sovereignty even before they are Socialists, I would have thought that for a Tory Government who are alleged to be totally dominated by Thatcherism—whatever that may be—there must be at least some explanation for the 80 per cent. increase in real terms in the structural funds before we vote.

The structural fund is designed so that the EEC may progress towards economic and social convergence. In short, it is a practical expression of EEC Socialism. The concept of the structural fund means that, if we go to the toe of Italy and happen to notice that people there seem less economically active than people in Stuttgart, or if they have less money than people in Stuttgart, we may say to them, "My friends, we are going to shake you into economic and social convergence. We shall either do it by directive or by showering money on you. But in some way or another, you've got to become the same as the people in Stuttgart."

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman's speech is going off course. I thought that he was redeemed.

Mr. Budgen: I do not think so.

When the great and the good go to the toe of Italy and try to shake the Sicilians into becoming like those people who manage the Scottish Widows' Fund in Edinburgh, they may find that the good people of Sicily simply take the money, but do not want to converge. They may want to use the money for greater leisure.

It is extraordinary that the Prime Minister can say that she welcomes the extension of this vast social fund because she believes that we will get some kickbacks from the money that we put in. Perhaps we shall, but what has the Prime Minister to say about the handling costs? What about all those gentlemen in Brussels who will be signing the cheques, receiving the money and deciding whether Tom, Dick or Harry should receive this largesse? She does not seem to recognise that the costs will be great.

Before the House votes for this vast increase in the structural funds, I hope that hon. Members will

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understand that there is a fundamental ambiguity about the way in which the EEC handles its funds. That ambiguity is raised constantly whenever we debate the reports from the European Court of Auditors.

I remember some years ago accompanying my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) to talk to the splendid gentlemen who run the European Court of Auditors. We sat for half a morning listening to them. I was feeling rather tired, so I was able to contain myself for nearly an hour. I listened to a story about the number of olive trees in southern Italy. I was told that if there were that number of olive trees, there would not be one house, one field or one runway in the south of Italy. I heard all about cows in Bavaria.

Eventually, I decided that it sounded as if there was gross fraud in the way in which money was distributed in the EEC. I asked the gentleman a few unkind questions. After that, my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham straightened his Rifle Brigade tie and asked me to go outside. He gave me the worst rocket that I had received since I was late as a national service subaltern. I stood to attention and mumbled that I was very sorry. It made me reflect even more on the ambiguity that we shall never have an EEC system for policing expenditure in the EEC.

If, for the sake of argument, we arranged for the Metropolitan police fraud squad to go to Sicily, there would be a major uprising there against the assertion that there was some form of central control in the EEC. In the same way, I have no doubt that if a gentleman from Italy came to inquire about the amount of quota that was or was not being used on a dairy farm in Britain, there would be a strong resurgence of English nationalism and the Italian would be invited to leave the farm.

Therefore, there will be no accountability for the bulk of expenditure on the structural fund. The House will not have proper control and there will be no philosophical agreement, because the proposal is based on a belief in equality and in social, industrial and pan-European convergence. That is completely antipathetic to everything that Conservative Members have been taught to believe in during the past 15 years or so. The Prime Minister used to oppose the extension of the structural fund, yet she comes back to the House and mouths words which imply that she approves of it.

We should remember that, if the EEC institutions had been reformed, the Bill would be unnecessary. If we want to extend the policy of regional development, we can do so through our own national policies in the House. The Bill is unnecessary; it is, most of all, an affront to anybody who has any sense of the history of this House.

7.22 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): When we debate the Bill we are examining the priorities within the EEC and, in particular, the British Government's priorities in the European negotiations in which they take part. Having listened to the Foreign Secretary, it seems that the Government's European priorities do not appeal greatly to the Opposition and I had the strong impression that few Tory Members were convinced by his remarks. The reaction was—to put it mildly—somewhat mixed.

It is clear that the much-trumpeted budget agreement on spending and on the way ahead leaves much to be desired, especially for the citizens of the United Kingdom and it does not give a particularly good deal to most of the other citizens of the EEC. The priorities of agricultural reform and control of agricultural spending are priorities which we all share, but progress seems to have been almost non-existent. We seem to have been marching in the wrong direction in the past year, as there has been an increase in agricultural spending.

The system of export refunds and the huge gap between world and EEC prices persist, and little seems to be being done about that. We are still far from a fundamental reform of the agricultural policy or agricultural spending. We are told that the great priority for the Government is the creation of the large single market in 1992. Every time we switch on our televisions sets we are assailed by glossy advertisements telling us of the benefits that will accrue. That naive trust in the automatic benefits of a large, free market is unjustified.

I should like to suggest four priority areas for the Government to consider in their EEC spending and policies. They are regional, industrial, social and environmental priorities and I should like to deal with each briefly.

I do not believe that the budget settlement gives a good deal to most of Britain's regions, despite the increase in the structural funds. We have learnt that the regions will be divided into two categories. Category 1, which is basically for agricultural, underdeveloped countries of southern Europe, plus Ireland and Northern Ireland, will get by far the lion's share. While I accept that those areas have real needs and I would not like to deny them any funds, I am worried that the second priority, which is the money given to declining industrial regions, will be severely downgraded as a result of the agreement. I do not want to see that happen.

Coming from the northern region of England, I fear that that region, which has the highest level of unemployment of any region in the United Kingdom, apart from Northern Ireland, may receive much less from the European Community budget in the future. I should like the Government to give us a commitment tonight that that will not happen and that in their continuing negotiations in the coming months they will do their utmost to promote the profile of the northern region and the other industrial regions of Britain.

It does not help regional policy when the Prime Minister keeps telling other European countries how well we are doing. That masks the reality of Britain as we know it and the dramatic regional divisions which persist. Regional policy means more than just funds. I am concerned that unless some compensatory measures are taken, the creation of the internal market will be bad news for the regions and will simply increase the prosperity of the already prosperous areas to the detriment of the needy parts of the country.

I should like the Government to give us a commitment that there will be a proper detailed study of the likely effects of the internal market on our least prosperous regions. The Government should not move towards the internal market unless they can come up with some detailed figures to show the benefits to the regions. No such detailed regional study has been undertaken.

The Government's lack of commitment to regional spending and regional policy could not have been made clearer to me today with the announcement that the Marconi radar factory in Gateshead will close. The other

Marconi factory, in Chelmsford, is situated in an area where there are job vacancies for that type of employment. That shows on both a British and an EEC level the Government's total failure to stand by those regions that most need help and positive policies.

On industrial policy, the United Kingdom Government have failed to provide any EEC funds to help older industries such as steel, shipbuilding and textiles to renew themselves and have woefully neglected to provide research and development money on an EEC level. In fact, the United Kingdom Government are well-known for blocking money for EEC research and development. They took a great deal of time to agree the research framework programme, and in 1986 the amount of EEC budget that was spent on energy research was only 2·1 per cent. That was lower than the amount given to support tobacco growers, who managed to get 2·3 per cent. of the budget.

The third area of priority for the Government should be social measures. Again, they need to be considered in conjunction with the whole debate about the internal market. In the Government's desire to see common standards and freedom from barriers on trade—I concede that they sometimes have beneficial effects—there has been virtually no discussion of other matters such as the common social benefits of policies that could improve people's quality of life. That has been conspicuously absent. *European Report* states:

"The Prime Minister argues in favour of deregulation on all fronts even in the social sphere. She apparently expressed her desire for no new rules in the realm of company law relating to worker participation in company structures. This dampening down of any commitment to regulate economic and social equilibrium in the Community was greeted with disappointment, notably by President Mitterand who said 'It is shocking that progress has been made to free the movement of capital but workers have been left by the wayside.'"

The Government have taken a cheeseparing, penny-pinching attitude to environmental issues and have been unwilling to campaign for or agree to an increase in moneys to fight environmental pollution which threatens us all and seems to be one of the most important issues on which EEC countries can co-operate. I am thinking of money to fight the threat of acid rain and to prevent more of it from being produced, to combat the depletion of the ozone layer, to clean up our beaches—our performance has been disgraceful—and to improve the quality of our drinking water, which still fails to meet EEC standards in many areas. The Government should have given a much higher priority to those issues.

What are the Government trying to create? Is it a European Community which will help people or simply a Europe for big business and capital? Surely the pursuit of profit should not be an end in itself but a means to an improved quality of life for all. In terms of improving the quality of life for the general population of the EEC and particularly for those in the least prosperous regions, the Government's EEC policies and their spending priorities have been an abject failure.

7.31 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) seemed to favour an increase in the European Community budget. If that is the case, she is the only hon. Member, except for one or two of my hon. Friends, who has so far done so in this debate.

I thought twice about putting my name down for this debate and if I had known that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) would refer to me in the terms that he did, I would have thought three times. My recollection of the incident differs markedly from his and the only resemblance is that I have my regimental tie on today, just as then, in order to give him a similar rebuke.

I have not spoken in a European debate for some time because I have felt that the arguments were much the same. I approach this subject as an EC supporter, but one who is entirely cynical about the assurances given on every occasion when budget measures are introduced.

First, as the House will know, we are invited to vote for a Bill which increases our net contribution to the Community budget by £200 million to £300 million a year. Our share under the intergovernmental agreement is some £765 million at a particular rate of exchange with the ecu. How does that square with the estimate in the public expenditure White Paper on total expenditure for 1988-89 of £1,780 million? If there is a difference, it will undoubtedly come from the contingency reserve, but I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to define what he thinks the net difference will be.

The increase has arisen because of the increasing expense of the common agricultural policy. I was delighted to hear my right hon and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary say that he wanted to convert ploughshares into golf clubs. As the parliamentary golf champion I welcome that suggestion, but it shows the extent to which our policy has changed so that we are talking about supporting, not farmers and their production, but an agricultural community. That is important not only for internal budgetary reasons or European budgetary reasons, but for the real danger that exists of forming a tariff wall against imports of agricultural products from other countries, particularly the United States of America.

The House will know that the United States Congress has passed a trade Act. If conditions become more difficult for the United States as they find further difficulty in reducing their budget deficit, they will certainly take countervailing measures against the EC. The best way we can help the United States and, indeed, other countries is to reform the common agricultural policy and allow more imports of agricultural products. That would do a great deal to help our cost of living and it would improve and increase efficiency, of which we stand in need.

It is absurd that so much money has been spent on agriculture for so many years, and further work needs to be done. That not only has a serious impact on the United States and other countries, but has its worst impact on developing countries which are unable to export their agricultural surpluses to us.

I am not an opponent of the European Community. I have watched developments with interest for some time and we must admit that we do not possess the clout within the EC that we should. We are in danger of becoming too much of an observer. Never an enthusiastic member of the EC, always thinking about the snags and difficulties, there is a risk of finding ourselves in a halfway house, neither a full member of it nor prepared to accept the progress that is going on, and at the same time jibbing at and finding fault with almost every aspect of it.

I used to be agnostic about the European monetary system, but recently I have come to believe that it would be to our national advantage to join it. It is time that we examined our attitude and policy. It is not a question of whether one is sufficiently communautaire to join the

[Sir Peter Hordern]

EMS. When one talks about being communautaire I always feel that that is best left to the prandialists. It is vital to our internal economic policy that we should now become a member of the EMS. I say that not from any particular enthusiasm for Europe, but because in recent times we have shed our ability to control our monetary aggregates internally and we now rely almost entirely on the interest rate to control inflation. We are placing too much weight on a rather slender instrument and we need the additional strength and resources which membership of the EMS could bring.

That important point is nowhere more important than in the current debate which appears to be taking place openly—I should like to say, behind the scenes—between the Prime Minister and other members of her Cabinet. We are not a member of the EMS—or, more accurately, we have no formal link with the deutschmark—because my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is against it. The reason is that her advisers feel that the turnover in the foreign exchange markets is far too high for our slender reserves. If we were members of the European monetary system, most of the speculation—most of the dealings are speculative—would disappear so long as there was credibility that we had a firm policy of alignment with the deutschmark. So that is not a good argument, although it is a natural apprehension to have.

There is also the argument that an interest rate differential would occur between the deutschmark and sterling, which the Germans would take advantage of. The only way in which they could do that would be to buy sterling in sufficient quantities. That would put up the price of sterling and then it would not be necessary to have such a high level of interest rates. So that argument is answered as well. There is also the possibility of a run on sterling that would leave us with no power to devalue.

I do not decry any of those reasons as being entirely wrong or illogical in themselves. They all contain much force, but they fall down in that they are essentially short-term negative lawyer-type considerations—it is the views of lawyers mixed with those of academic economists of the sort who write in that admirable journal produced by the Institute of Economic Affairs. The time to read that journal is on a very long, wet railway journey when one has run out of one's other newspapers.

It appears to me that those academic economists have more power than they are expected to have and than they properly should have. I am sorry that that should be so. It must come as a great surprise to them that anybody reads, let alone acts upon, their work. They appear to have extraordinary power to influence the course of events.

I regret that the good, common sense approach appears to be lacking. That is the approach adopted by business men. A business man would ask what the alternative would mean, if we remained outside the European monetary system. The European countries would get closer together in some form or other of European monetary union. That is inevitable. The question is whether we should do better to remain outside or within the European monetary system. In essence, that is the argument for membership of the European Community itself.

I any business man were asked what would happen in the European Community—the idea of a single European market commends itself—he would guess that in the long run there would be closer monetary union. If that is so, surely it is much better for us to be a part of it, a full member of it, rather than standing on the sidelines, criticising the operation of the European monetary system and insisting on having what we strongly call our independent sovereignty.

But in this issue, independent sovereignty means that we would be an offshore island of which little notice was taken by the European Community or still less by our old partners, the United States. What business would the United States have with a special relationship with an offshore island when there was a real community of nations to deal with in the European Community? So the present attitude, apparently held at the highest level, is mistaken and in the long run damaging to our interests. Therefore, I sincerely hope that it will change.

I do not believe that we shall have the luxury of selecting which bus we shall catch in future. It would be of great importance to us, for our own internal monetary discipline reasons, to align sterling with the deutschmark as soon as possible. For the wider reasons that I have given, we should catch that bus now and help to drive it.

7.44 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that it is a matter of some regret that the Foreign Secretary, having opening the debate, could not stay and hear some of the contributions on the Floor of the House. I understand how pressing the desire can be to share the evening with Mr. Wogan. If the Foreign Secretary's contribution on "Wogan" is as unconsciously amazing, amusing and entertaining as his contribution in the House, we shall see "Wogan" rocketing in the viewing ratings.

The only word to describe the speech by the Foreign Secretary is "incredible". He presented us with a veritable catalogue of victories that we had won in Europe on EEC funding over the past few years. I think that some of us can be forgiven for asking how it is that on EEC funding we seem to go from victory to victory to final defeat each and every year.

The Bill would be the latest of those defeats, the latest in a long line of mechanisms for attempting to finance the European Community. It addresses problems raised at Fontainebleau in 1984 and at various other summits over the past few years. The fundamental problems when we entered the Community many years ago are patently getting worse. It is obvious to most people and to most hon. Members that the minutiae of the Bill do little to conceal what is happening to the EEC budget. The Opposition have tabled a significant amendment to show that little has changed since Fontainebleau in 1984 and even since 1979. The fundamental imbalances, excesses and, some would say, almost iniquities of the EEC budget have worsened and there is little hope that anything that the Government have done or are likely to do will be of significance in changing that.

The problems addressed in 1984 at Fontainebleau and again today are nothing new and should elicit at least some frustration, if not embarrassment, from the Government Front Bench because the continuing excessive common agricultural policy spending, which seems to be on an almost inexorable rise under this Government, shows

nothing less than incompetence. No one would pretend that the scandalous rise in agricultural spending and the under-allocation of the social and regional funds—all we have is promises—is anything new or unique to the Government. The problem goes to the heart of our membership of the EEC.

What is galling is the image presented by the Foreign Secretary, and by the Prime Minister on other occasions on her skirmishes in Brussels and elsewhere. We need little reminding of how many years the Prime Minister has had to fight Britain's case. We need little reminding of how many volumes of Churchillian rhetoric have been expended in attacking the EEC before she goes off to the various summits, which she presents as victories when she returns.

Of all the quotations from the Churchillian volumes, perhaps the one that describes best the Prime Minister's attitude to the EEC in practice is that she has been "resolute in her equivocation" over the EEC budget. If I were to paraphrase an ex-leader of the Labour party, it seems that the Prime Minister is prepared to "lose, lose and lose again" to preserve her antipathy towards the Common Market budget.

We need little reminding that as 1992 and the open market come upon us, we have hardly been able to shift the debate towards common sense in the Common Market. The Government have failed consistently to fight our case and win real concessions. How many years will it take for the Government to make real progress? Where do we stand today? We have a CAP budget which is out of control and a social and regional fund which is merely papering over the cracks of industrial decline and inner city decay in Britain.

The Government have constantly stood by and watched the worsening imbalance between revenue and expenditure which lies at the heart of the Community's financial mess. There are two causes of that imbalance —first, a failure of budget discipline controls to check excessive expenditure, especially on agriculture, and secondly, revenue ceilings, which the Court of Auditors believed were artificial and took insufficient account of the Community's financing needs.

The collapse of internal EEC financial control is scandalous. It is also scandalous that agricultural spending has increased two and a half times since Fontainebleau —not since the initial agreement when Britain joined the EEC, but since 1984. Many right hon. and hon. Members have already said that the waste must stop somewhere. When the treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, one in four of the working population of the then EEC was employed in agriculture. That is clearly not so now. Today the total working population involved in agriculture in the original six nations is down to about 5 per cent.; for the Community of Ten—before the accession of the Mediterranean countries—it is roughly 10 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) made a comparison of the amount spent by Britain on the EEC agricultural budget and the amount spent in Britain on the National Health Service. It is worth enlarging on that comparison, and to put the runaway agricultural spending in its grim perspective, we need look no further than the NHS. When the Government refuse to find £1 billion needed to get the NHS out of the current decline from which it is suffering so badly, they should remember the sickening immorality of the £11 billion a year that is spent solely on dumping, destroying and storing food surpluses within the EEC. Such spending must appear increasingly beyond the control of any democratic body. What have the Government done about that imbalance?

I notice that the Foreign Secretary has returned from addressing the masses through the medium of light entertainment. May I remind him of the fifth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on EEC finance, which was especially instructive on the imbalance? It shows that the gap between the regional and agricultural budgets is widening. The agricultural budget for 1986 amounted to two thirds of Community spending, while the regional fund amounted to 7·6 per cent. of total spending.

In a previous debate on this matter the Paymaster General pointed out something that he thought had gone unnoticed by me—the fact that the expansion of the social fund was agreed in Brussels by the European Council. But it was agreed as a prediction and promise, and those of us who are interested in the Common Market know that past promises and predictions from Ministers rarely bear much relationship to the reality of EEC funding.

During a sitting of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), who spoke so eloquently tonight on the need for the extension of programmes on industrial, social and environmental matters, pressed the Paymaster General to come clean on the imbalance. She managed to extract from him the information that 72 per cent. of this year's budget will be for agricultural guaranteed expenditure, which represents an overall increase. The tone of that question and answer session must have been embarrassing for the Government. They seem to be taking steps in the wrong direction.

No matter how much the Government try to belittle the annual increase in agricultural spending, it is clear that each little step forward in agricultural spending is one huge leap backwards for Britain and the British economy's contribution to overall EEC spending. We cannot rely on the Government to reduce the CAP budget and it is also depressingly clear that that budget is on the increase and out of control.

The Chairman of the Select Committee put the matter succinctly to the Paymaster General and said that the House was

"told some time ago . . . that the proportion on agriculture was going to go down, and that was the part of the original budgetary discipline package".

On that occasion, the Paymaster General had to admit —as the Government should admit to us today—that it is common knowledge and an embarrassment for Britain that the arrangements that were secured in 1984 to restrain agricultural spending were completely ineffective. That appears to be the real story behind the sabre rattling that accompanied the return of the Prime Minister from the Brussels meeting.

The Government are all talk and no action, just like the £7·9 million advertising circus surrounding 1992 and the open market. There is a worrying aspect to that advertising, because, although it is beneficial to alert the British public to the 1992 open market, the nature of the advertising is in grave danger of becoming the tip of a corrupt iceberg. The advertising for the open market and the advertising for the Department of Trade and Industry and the Scottish Office smooth over distinctions between the state, the Conservative party and the largest benefactors of the Conservative party, who are now

[Dr. John Reid]

appearing nightly on our television sets glorifying the free market. Ministers may smile, but those smiles may disappear when they realise that the smoothing over of the distinctions between the state and the Tory party appears to be worrying one or two other people.

Tonight I learnt that Mr. Alex Pagett, who left his job at the Scottish Office only three months ago to become the director of publicity for the Conservative party, has resigned his post. He has informed us that he is now going to work for the Reo Stakis organisation. I also understand that he informed the press that his decision is the result of his

"taking advantage of the enterprise culture".

Some of us suspect that he has found the blurring of distinction between the state and the Tory party too strong to take.

The Paymaster General told the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that, this year, much effort has gone into reinforcing the 1984 arrangements. Why should we believe the Government when the financial forecast for CAP spending is that it will continue to increase in real terms by 2 per cent. per annum? We have been let down by the Government, not least because the corresponding loss to this country's declining regions and inner cities will be keenly felt while the farmers of France, Germany and Benelux will receive their usual annual boost.

How can anyone deny the stark contrast between the House of Commons agreeing to increase, once again, the massive subsidies to inefficient French farmers and the fact that I have to go back to my constituency and to the county of Lanarkshire, where the steel men and the steel mills, particularly Ravenscraig, are breaking record after record, heightening efficiency, increasing output and delivering quality goods on time, and tell them that, although there is a threat over their heads, the Government cannot and will not find the money even to convince the British Steel Corporation that it has a right to survive on its record.

That same Government, however, can find money by the barrelload to plough into Europe's inefficient agricultural sector. That contrast is so stark as almost to boggle the imagination. The Government cannot expect anyone to swallow that. They must break out of the dogmatic straitjacket that has suppressed and guided their previous actions on Europe.

We need a certain pessimism of the intellect when we study the Government's past actions. We need also some optimism of will, which the Government seem incapable of achieving. It is possible to make a leap of the imagination and to define measures that could be taken within the EEC that would assist Britain and the rest of Europe to overcome some of our greatest industrial and financial problems.

Some comments and criticisms have been levelled at Mr. Delors, and we need not accept everything that Mr. Delors says. For example, he said recently that he looked forward to a European Government in 10 years' time. However, there are many developments for which he has been fighting which we could usefully take on board as being beneficial to Britain. He has called for a social market, including the opening of the books by, and industrial democracy within, European big business. He has proposed new rights for European trade unionists, an increased budget share for social spending and a European recovery programme, all of which would be suitably enhanced if the Government were to direct their attention to them.

These proposals are opposed by the British Government, but not by the other member state Governments. The British Government are committed to deregulation in Europe on a scale that has not been supported even by Chancellor Kohl.

The message to the Government should be that co-operation does not necessarily imply integration. A co-ordination of effort by sovereign states on a European scale does not necessarily imply the undermining of national sovereignty. Indeed, if it is to be a co-operative approach rather than an integrated one, the national sovereignty of the states involved could be reinforced.

The Labour party has made it clear that it would take such initiatives and stop the trend of budget allocation being decided at the centre. A Labour Government would be involved in co-operative and co-ordinated efforts.

Once more, we have been asked to acquiesce in a failure by the Government to secure reasonable terms for Britain. They have failed to show sufficient imagination in approaching the problem. This is a failure for Britain's industrial and social base and for the future of the EEC.

8.3 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) began his speech with a few good-natured digs at my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary for leaving the Chamber to appear on the Terry Wogan show this evening. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend delighted his viewing audience of millions. I am only sorry that some of us were unable to see him and enjoy an interesting experience.

Those of us who have sat through four and a half hours of this debate have had a remarkably interesting time, too. From whatever viewpoint a speech has been made, there has been a sense that this debate takes place at a time that amounts to something of a watershed in the affairs of Europe. It is no ordinary Bill that we are debating. It is no run-of-the-mill piece of EEC legisation, even though my right hon. and learned Friend sought to present it as a routine measure, suggesting that everything in the garden was rosy and successful.

The Bill is a significant revision of the EEC fundamental treaty rules. It gives the House an important opportunity to take a real decision on the hitherto highly unsatisfactory spending arrangements of the Community. It should be said at the outset by way of warning that our scope as a Parliament for taking such decisions in future may be extremely limited if some Euro-enthusiasts get their way.

As several hon. Members have warned, the debate is taking place against a background of much arrogant muscle-flexing by the EEC, especially by the Commission's President, Mr. Delors, who has emerged as the villain of the piece, according to many of those who have contributed to the debate. I see Mr. Delors in that role. He appears to be assuming the mantle of a latter-day Louis XIV, complete with a spending record that displays a consistently extravagant folie de grandeur. Some of his speeches embody the Sun King's notorious dictum, "L'etat c'est moi." We have heard repeatedly——

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that he might add to these famous epigrams, "Apres moi, Delors."?

Mr. Aitken: I hesitate to contribute further to this game of French quotations. There has been a deluge of criticism this evening and it is apres that that I am speaking.

Criticism has been rightly directed to the remarks of Mr. Delors. Many hon. Friends, including the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), have referred to Mr. Delors' speech in which he said that within 10 years 80 per cent. of legislation in economic and social areas will be taken from the House of Commons and put under the control of European institutions. That gauntlet having been thrown down, many parliamentarians, quite rightly, would wish to take it up.

Whether we share Mr. Delors's vision or whether we do not, it is certain that the EEC juggernaut is rolling in the direction that he is suggesting. If he and his fellow visionaries have their way, in 10 years this House will be no more than a glorified county council. It is certain that there would be a massive erosion of sovereignty. It would mean the loss to our Parliament of even the minimal controls on EEC expenditure that we are debating this evening. We must see the EEC treaty revision that is enshrined in the Bill not as a small rule change, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary tried to present it, but as representing an important preliminary battle in the coming political war of survival, in which the issue will be whether to surrender to Euro-federalism or to retain the independence of member nation states and their national legislatures.

From the big picture, I turn to some of the details of the Bill. One of the most worrying aspects of the Bill is the contrast between the tight way in which we control the spending of taxpayers' money at home and the loose rein that we are giving to the EEC to spend the same taxpayers' money on our behalf in Europe.

Almost every nook and cranny of public spending in Britain has felt the threat, and sometimes the lash, of Thatcherite discipline, and rightly, too. District council treasurers, hospital administrators, DHSS managers—almost everyone in a public responsible position—have learnt to live with cash limits, budgetary restraints, ceilings, cappings and all the other instruments of Treasury torture that are handed down from the modern Court of the Star Chamber.

This smack of firm Government has not been felt on the bottoms of the EEC bureaucrats. The big spenders of Brussels must feel that they are living in the court of King Midas. Whenever they have touched a budget limit in the past, even a so-called legally binding one, it has exploded into an El Dorado of overspending.

Let us consider the figures that lie behind the Bill. Under the IGA, the United Kingdom taxpayer has to start by coughing up £765 million to pay for past EEC overspending. Perhaps what is past is past; there is no point in crying over spilt wine lakes today. But will overspending stop with this legislation? I think that the case for pessimism is much more convincing than that for optimism. For a start, they have mighty generous budgets over there in the EEC. At home, Ministers go before the Court of the Star Chamber——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The hon. Gentleman has been stressing the amount of money that we pay into the EEC budget. What percentage of our gross national product do we pay into that budget?

Mr. Aitken: I am coming to that. It is a somewhat misleading figure. In measurable terms, we were paying 1·4 per cent. of VAT, and we are now paying 1·9 per cent. That is a more measurable statistic than the GNP statistic, which I shall come to later.

There is a great contrast here at home with our Ministers appearing before our domestic Court of the Star Chamber, cap in hand, to try to get an extra 4 per cent., 5 per cent., or, if they are really lucky, 5·5 per cent. increase for their domestic budgets. But the European Parliament has recently approved an increase in the EEC budget of 20 per cent. The Bill envisages an increase in EEC resources of 25 per cent.

The only good thing to be said about that is that it is only half as much as Mr. Delors wanted for the own resources ceiling. He wanted an increase in own resources of 50 per cent., which is equivalent to 2·3 per cent. of VAT. The awful thing is that I expect that he will get it by one method or another in the foreseeable future. After all, we were told that the 1·4 per cent. limit would be unbreakable. There is spirit over there in the EEC—in the words of the late Mr. Wilfred Pickles—of, "Give him the money, Mabel."

Every Commission seems to be able to get out of national Governments more and more money by all sorts of methods, some of which have been no more than conjuring tricks in creative accountancy. Those tricks and devices have many labels—the negative reserve, the reimbursable advance and the carryover. Tonight we heard about the 10-month metric year that has been invented to give a favourable statistical comparison with the previous 14-month year.

The new conjuring trick is that, instead of an own resources limit of 1·4 per cent. of VAT, which is upgraded to at least a measurable 1·9 per cent., we have something called the fourth resource, which is a levy of 1·2 per cent. on the gross national product of member states. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said, the trouble with the fourth resource is that the GNP calculations are notoriously difficult to measure. Even in the United Kingdom there are different ways of calculating it—the income method and the expenditure method—and after reading the EEC draft directive, I have grave doubts whether the statistical basis of the Greek or Italian GNP take into account the black economy and whether we are using the same methods of comparison.

The fourth resource is a recipe for obscurity, and obscurity in financial figures is usually the mother of indiscipline. That is a worrying aspect of the calculations on which we are asked to base our approval of this measure.

The message from the Foreign Secretary was, "Do not worry, this time we really have the big spenders under control, because their spending limits are legally enforceable." We have had legally enforceable limits before. They were enforceable by the Council of Ministers, which did not take a blind bit of notice, so the limits were never enforced, and spending soared. On this occasion, we have heard the Foreign Secretary say that the spending conrols will be written into the regulations, thus making

[Mr. Aitken]

the budgetary limits strictly legally enforceable. That phrase is somewhat contradictory, because the European Court has no penal sanctions with which to enforce them.

However, it sounds good—at least until we look at the small print. As I said in my intervention to my right hon. and learned Friend, the categories of EEC expenditure, broken down between obligatory and non-obligatory expenditure, are not on the same basis when it comes to those legally enforceable limits. Whereas obligatory expenditure is covered by the regulations, which are pretty generous, allowing agriculture to grow by 74 per cent. of Community GNP—which seems extremely generous to those who believe that agriculture has grown quite enough—the non-obligatory expenditure category is not covered by legally binding regulations.

The budgetary discipline for the non-obligatory expenditure category depends not on law, but on what are called "inter-institutional discussions" among the European Council, the Commission and Parliament. Those inter-institutional discussions sound like one of the softest touches known to political life. Imagine Zorba, Jacques and Franz all going off to have lunch together and having an instant inter-institutional discussion on whether to have potato soup or caviare. I bet that they will end up buying the caviare.

On the basis of the track record, who really believes that those inter-institutional discussions will mean more firm and effective spending limits for our taxpayers? The whole culture and thinking of the European Community these days is focused not on budgetary discipline, but on dreams of glory, of federalism, of 1992 and all that. The much more prosaic but essential requirements, such as spending controls, are being brushed aside as the grand designs for the future political state of Europe take priority.

I make no apology for returning to the need to envisage the Bill in the context of the coming struggle between national sovereignty and Euro federalism. Apart from the futuristic pronouncements of Mr. Delors in favour of a European Government, we already have contemporary and concrete proposals on the table for a European central bank, a European common currency and a European economic and monetary union. There are even discussion papers circulating in the Commission with ideas on how to introduce a common system of direct European taxation. If those plans are anything like the experience of direct European expenditure, they are not likely to be beneficial to the British taxpayer and the British public, and they will put our Chancellor of the Exchequer out of a job.

Before we vote on the legislation, which substantially amends the EEC treaty rules on expenditure, we must pause and reflect for a moment on the direction in which we are being led. In the history of the American wild west, there used to be a legendary bar known as the Last Chance saloon. I believe that that establishment was traditionally located on the edge of the frontier where the good and bad guys mingled together before going out to fight over how the west was going to be won and by whom. We are now in or close to the Last Chance saloon of the European future.

As a sovereign Parliament, very soon we must decide whether we will slither into President Delors' vision of a federal Europe, with all the financial and legislative laxity that that implies, or whether we will take a stand and fight for our national sovereignty, for the rights of our national Parliament and, on the positive side, for a different vision of Europe. The one that I prefer is General De Gaulle's "Europe des Patries".

That Gaullist vision of a Europe of independent nation states is enshrined in the person of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I have the greatest confidence in my right hon. Friend's ability to resist the worst of the current EEC proposals leading us down the primrose path of Euro-federalism. Despite some signs to the contrary, my right hon. Friend has not yet been conclusively proved to be either invincible or immortal, so her fine words and instincts need to be backed up by parliamentary action and support.

Small in number though we may be in the Division Lobby, some of my hon. Friends are determined to sound the tocsin of alarm about the rising tide of federalism in Europe. A vital factor in reasserting some national parliamentary resistance to the federal big thinkers and big spenders is the retention of effective levers of control on EEC spending. Those effective levers of control are lamentably absent from the legislation, and that is why I shall vote against a Second Reading for the Bill.

8.17 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I shall preface my remarks by mentioning some of the constitutional issues that seem to have played a great part in the debate—the lament about the loss of sovereignty through our membership of the European Community.

The problem is far wider than the effect on our constitutional processes since we became a member of the European Community. It is the far more fundamental one of the roles of the Executive and the legislature. Conservative Members who complain about the European Community must examine the roles of the legislature and the Executive as they have developed especially in the past decade, when measure after measure has been steam-rollered through without much opportunity being given for the real will of the House to be heard.

I dare say that not a single word of any of these agreements will be changed as a result of this debate or any of the debates that we shall have when we go into a Committee of the whole House. Conservative Members should think about that. We have become puppets of the Executive, who pull the strings as they desire and bring us agreements that have been made in secret, which they have no intention of changing, and which they want us to rubber-stamp. I look forward to the opportunity in Committee to try to make some major changes.

There is a reference in paragraph 3(iii) of the explanatory and financial memorandum of the Bill to a new fourth resource. Do the Government accept that, if the House agrees, it should be deleted from the Council's decision of 24 June? Why do the Government feel that a fourth resource is needed? Do they believe that the budgetary agreements on discipline will not hold and that this safety net will enable them to provide more finance for the Community without having to return to the House and suffer embarrassment here? How large a part of the budget will the new fourth resource be? Will it be 1 per cent., 2 per cent., or 10 per cent.? Or might it be 20 per cent. of revenue? The Government do not have much idea, but they probably inserted the proviso to overcome any future problems over budgetary indiscipline.

We are told that the intergovernmental agreement provides for contributions to a monetary reserve, but that such contributions would be triggered only if the dollar depreciated against the ecu. Only last week we were told by the venerable scribes who write in *The Economist* that that is likely to happen. They forecast that, because interest rates in America are coming into line with world interest rates and because of the uncertainty caused by the presidential elections, the dollar's rally is likely to be short-lived. They predict that over the next 12 months the dollar will touch new lows against the yen and sterling. It will not necessarily depreciate against the deutschmark, but it might still depreciate against the ecu. Any substantial downward movement in the dollar will affect the amount of money that we spend on the common agricultural policy.

The Foreign Secretary nailed the Government's flag to the mast of the Single European Act and to the budgetary agreement. According to the Commission's preliminary draft general budget, which has the title "General picture", the Single European Act will strengthen the Community's decision-making capacity and will set several fundamental goals. The first is

"the completion of a large internal market by 1992."

The Government are well and truly committed to that goal. It has been rammed down our throats in glossy television advertising every night of the week. However, whenever we ask the Government what they think the impact of the internal market will be on employment in the regions, the Government say that they are encouraging business men everywhere to grasp this opportunity, that they expect extra jobs to be created in the United Kingdom but that there is no way of telling what will happen in the regions and that they do not intend even to attempt to find out.

In the light of the way in which the Common Market has developed, the regions are likely to suffer from the creation of the internal market. A minority of high-tech companies are located in the regions. The Japanese factories in south Wales will no doubt prosper, but the distribution of high-tech companies cannot be better illustrated than by a Hewlett Packard advertisement that appeared in several newspapers during the past fortnight. Hewlett Packard claims that it covers the nation with its high-tech services. It has 19 centres in the south-east. In Wales it has one, and in the north it has two. That is the kind of involvement that the regions have in high-tech industries. The Government are committed to the internal market, but they are not committed to employment in the regions.

The second goal provided for in the Single European Act is

"greater economic and social cohesion between the Member States."

However, the United Kingdom Government have been doing exactly the opposite. There is no greater economic and social cohesion between the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. There are great disparities. The wealth gap and the employment gap are growing all the time, to the detriment of the regions.

The third goal is

"speeding up the development of a common policy on research."

The Government have had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into supporting European Community research programmes, which in financial terms are chickenfeed.

The fourth goal is the

"development of social policy, monetary integration and environment policy."

However, the Government have been hopelessly dragging their feet over all those aims. Because of their failure properly to apply the equal opportunities directives, they have been taken to the European Court on several occasions. They have blocked the parental leave directive. They helped to torpedo the famous Vredeling directive that would have allowed for greater consultation with workers if there were major changes in the company's activities, or if it was proposed to close it.

Whatever we may think of monetary integration, we know that the Government want no part of it. They have declared their opposition to joining the European monetary system and the creation of a European central bank. The Prime Minister continues to refuse to countenance the United Kingdom joining the EMS. The Government have reluctantly agreed to implement the directives on bath water and tap water quality, on sulphur emissions from large industrial plants, on lead in petrol and on the ozone layer only after immense pressure from other member states.

The Government do not support the proposal to alter the basis of the European Community's revenue. It was amazing to hear the Foreign Secretary speak about the Government's consistent approach to the structural funds. When the Prime Minister reported to the House on 8 December 1987 after the European Council meeting in Copenhagen, she said:

"On the second aspect, structural funds, the Commission had proposed a doubling of the resources devoted to those funds by 1992 . . . I made it clear that this was out of the question."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 167]

A few months later, an agreement was signed that will lead to an 80 per cent. increase in real terms by 1992. By 1993 there will be a doubling of the structural funds.

I welcome the Prime Minister's conversion to a regional policy for the European Community. What worries me is how Britain will benefit from a doubling of the structural funds. We know that in all likelihood 80 per cent. of the regional fund will go to the southern states and only 20 per cent. to the north. On the basis of the projected figures for 1992, that will mean about £2·6 billion at the very most being available to help in priority two assistance for helping traditional industrial regions suffering from major job losses. Even if we receive one third of that money, we will be lucky to get the £1 billion that the Prime Minister said at one time she hoped we would get.

The Government themselves have already halved the amount of money available for regional policies in the United Kingdom and there is a real possibility that the Government will reduce that figure even further. The regional fund contributions are on a shared basis, and there must be a commitment by the Government as well as from the Community. Even if that money were available to us, I foresee that our own spending on regional policy may be insufficient to enable us to take up all the available money. I shall be interested to know whether the Government have considered the possibility of that imbalance occurring in the future.

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

I fully endorse the Opposition's amendment, and I hope that it will receive the support of Conservative dissidents who are unhappy about the way in which their Government are moving. However, from the tenor of their remarks, I gather that they would prefer to put up some kind of iron curtain around the United Kingdom anyway.

We need to underline the fact that the Bill will lead to a major increase in Community spending that is likely to find its way, without much diminution, into the agricultural sector, leaving the very real needs of Britain's industrial areas not being met. If the Government want to see Community spending increase, they must ensure that the balance is more towards that part of the budget that is described as non-compulsory expenditure.

8.32 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): It was inevitable that this debate would take on the tones of a constitutional argument, yet that is to disfigure it. We are not facing a choice between nationalism and federalism in the European Community. We signed a treaty, the first indent of which stated that its signatories are

"Determined to lay the foundations of an ever-closer union among the people of Europe."

Both the Conservative and Labour Governments spent many years travelling around Europe getting the right to sign that treaty. What is now happening flows from it. It is true that in Britain we have often made the mistake of pretending that there is a distinction to be made between economic and political development; as if one could have greater economic integration without concomitant political moves as well. Perhaps that is catching up with us.

Tonight, we should be debating the Community's practicalities, recognising that in heading for the 1992 target, we are saying that we shall let the market be the motor. Well, the market may well lead us into directions that entail political decision-making. It may be that we shall move more in the direction of pooling our political activity, but to argue that it is a question of sovereignty against federalism is to be a generation behind the debate.

I pay tribute to those hon. Members who have tonight made emotional speeches, many of which have been tours de force. However, they have said nothing to me intellectually, because they have not offered any vision of where we will take this island—I yield to nobody in being proud of being born a Briton in these islands—when we have a few miles away a continent that is undergoing the process of political and economic unification. That is the strategic context in which tonight's debate must be placed.

I wonder whether the Opposition will divide the House, because I noted that the Leader of the Opposition wrote recently to the European Parliament's Socialist groups subscribing to the notion of a common manifesto for the next European elections a year from now. It has also been observed that almost all the European Parliament's Socialist groups have endorsed the deal from Brussels. I fail to see how the Labour party can square its adherance to the notion of a common manifesto with its opposition to the measures that underpin it.

Mr. Holland: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman would like my reply to that point now or later.

Mr. Curry: Let us hear it now.

Mr. Holland: Then I can tell the House that my intervention will take some time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be kept fairly brief.

Mr. Holland: That is why, Madam Deputy Speaker, I suggest that the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) stays for the end of the debate.

Mr. Curry: I look forward with keen anticipation to the hon. Gentleman's reply, and I am happy that he has given himself time to work it out.

In judging the measures that are before the House, we should not look for an absolute and perfect solution, because all of us know that such is not likely to present itself. We are all rather tired of talking about the Community in terms of absolutes. It is not that kind of organisation. Instead, we need to know whether the Brussels deal is materially better than that which went before it. First, will there be a discipline in farm spending? Secondly, will it offer the Community a period of stability and an end to what seem to be interminable demands for yet more emergency funding? Thirdly, is it a good deal for the United Kingdom? Finally, is it a good deal for the whole of the Community, in the sense that it will open the way to those developments that have been endorsed, promoted and demanded by the United Kingdom? I believe that we can make a positive response on all those counts.

The Brussels deal plugs the deficiencies of Fontainebleau, and we must be honest and admit that it did have deficiencies. Also, it introduces medium-term planned expenditure, and the inter-institutional agreement deserves rather more credit than it has been given tonight. It also reinforces the rebate mechanism and improves upon it in certain respects. It also opens the way to 1992, by establishing the political balance—which is where the increase in the structural funds comes—that will clear the way for decision-making towards that goal.

What were the faults of the Fontainebleau agreement? It was not legally binding on the European Council or on the Commission. There was nothing to prevent the Commission from making proposals that contravened Fontainebleau's guidelines. Finally, it was not translated into specific and binding controls on the individual agricultural support programmes.

The Brussels deal provides legally and formally binding control over agricultural expenditure, because the Brussels commitments had to be passed into legislative texts, which went their course through the European Parliament and Council and were then legislated into existence during the course of last month. They both fix an overall limit on farm spending and define it as a percentage of the growth in Community resources. Those provisions are in texts that can only be overcome by a unanimous vote of the Council, and there is no organisation in the world that will bind itself in all circumstances whatsoever and not leave the possibility of unanimity changing the situation.

Whereas Fontainebleau was riddled with special circumstances, the Brussels deal permits the single special circumstances of the dollar-ecu relationship. It does so both ways. If the dollar starts to rise—the recent pressure on the dollar has been upwards—those economies are realised, just as, if the dollar declines, the funding will be made available, I recommend that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) reads the text, where he will find

that provision. Secondly, the Commission must never make proposals exceeding the guideline. Thirdly, we have in the agricultural regimes about 20 specific measures for legally bound stabilisers.

It is easy enough to say that this is nothing but yet another rerun of Fontainebleau. The fact is that it is a radically different animal. Let us not denigrate Fontainebleau: it laid the basis for our rebate arrangements, and they came under intense pressure. It is difficult to exaggerate the unpopularity of the rebate provision at the time, but they have now been reinforced and enhanced by the Brussels agreement. Fontainebleau was a milestone along the road, although it did not provide the certainties for which many hoped at the time.

Will the arrangement work? That is a perfectly legitimate question. I have been examining some of the agricultural sums for this year. In this year's farm price review, we have had a Council compromise, which is still hanging on the Greek distinction between points and percentages in monetary compensatory amounts, and which added 289 million ecu to the cost. That has been entirely compensated for by reduced aid for incorporation of skimmed milk powder, for milk to be fed as a liquid to calves and for liquid to be used for casein manufacture, and by savings in export subsidy. The total savings are 285 million ecu.

The Ministers went into the negotiations saying that they would chop the green rate and play on the level playing field. What happened? They were told, "No." As a result the changes in the green rate are deferred until next year. They could not drive a coach and horses through the settlement as they had done in the past.

Let me make a forecast for next year: I think that it will be impossible to spend the money in the agricultural guideline. I think that we will end up 1 billion ecu in the black in both 1989 and 1990. We have a 350 million ecu margin in the preliminary draft budget before we reach the guideline; the slight increase in inflation in the Community gives us another 50 million ecu to play with; the savings in the dairy sector are substantial; and the drought in the United States will have a dramatic impact on the amount that we need to subsidise production of oilseed rape and soya, and on the lower restitutions on the cereal harvest.

That extra 1 billion ecu will permit the full depreciation of stocks and, if it is what Ministers want, the dismantling of MCAs. The importance of such an automatic depreciation is difficult to exaggerate. It introduces a step of budgetary integrity that did not exist in the past. The overvalued stock represents a disfigurement of the budget, and that is now being tackled.

We can argue that the CAP is now palpably coming into balance, albeit slowly. There is no skim milk powder to be had. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary gave figures for stocks at 1 April. A telephone call to Brussels would have obtained the figures for 30 June, which show that there is no skim milk powder to be had, and that the butter stocks, which peaked at 1·4 million tonnes in 1986 and were 1·18 million tonnes a year ago, stood on 30 June at 378,339 tonnes. That is a very significant decline. What is important is that that is not reaccumulating: it is not going into stock now. It is a net decrease in the level of stocks.

There is a good argument for saying that, although some sectors remain difficult, the general shape of the CAP is very different from that of five years ago. I invite those who regard quotas as merely a tinkering with the system to visit my constituency—a dairy-producing area with many small farmers—and to propose their thesis in front of the Craven tenant farmers association. I should like them to see what response they would receive.

The second important gain has been what can only be described as the medium-term expenditure plan incorporated in the inter-institutional agreement, which limits expenditure on a scale to 1992. Many hon. Members have said that that means that there is no budgetary discipline in the non-obligatory sector. Having lived through the negotiations with the committees of the European Parliament that wish to spend the money and having told them that the limits that were now to be enforced, I believe that there is an effective discipline, although it is different from that in the obligatory sector. It is worth noting that the only part of the non-obligatory sector in which there is any prospect of significant expansion is research. That line in the budget is the most favourable to the United Kingdom.

The third gain is the rebate, which has been safeguarded. That was by no means an obvious achievement. It has been taken outside the framework of the budget, which gets us away from the difficult problem of the "dead money" that the rebate imposes on the budget. The gross national product scheme will benefit the United Kingdom, possibly to the tune of 500 million ecu a year.

In a sense the most important criterion is whether the deal relaunches the Community as a growing and dynamic concern. There is striking evidence from the past six months that it does. We have had the agreements on capital movements, road haulage, the mutual recognition of diplomas and the controls on large combustion plants. The Community will always go in fits and starts; we shall never achieve a great consistent movement. The history of presidencies shows that each tends to start as a period of stagnation, with a great rush towards the end. I do not think that there is anything wrong with that. I feel that we have political lift-off, and commercial lift-off as well.

I invite hon. Members to read the *Financial Times* day by day and to note the extent to which industry is positioning itself ahead of its 1992 market. The 1992 objective is a British objective. We claim that we invented it. But the Community is enlarging the horizon as it emerges as a world power. It has always been a world power waiting to be invented: now it is taking material shape. We see that in the reactions to the Reagan-Gorbachev detente on security measures, which imposes on the Community the heavy political burden of demonstrating its capacity for unity.

The states of eastern Europe are now queuing up for Community recognition. How long will it be before Mr. Gorbachev pays a visit to the Commission headquarters in Brussels, and until the President of the Council goes to Moscow? We have already seen the first agreement signed with Hungary. The frontiers of the Community are, in a sense, extending towards the East. The Community is alereadly an economic magnet to those countries. Already we begin to see the new candidate states lining up. In Norway, Austria and even Switzerland, politicians are asking, "What is the relationship with that greater Community? Can we not be a member of it?"

A politically strong Community, competent to handle its worldwide relations as an ally of the United States, is a major British objective. What would happen if we said no —for the House could vote against the measure? First, we

[Mr. Curry]

would continue the long period of disunity and internal warfare that has so characterised the Community, just when we most need to present a united visage to the world. I apologise for the French: the word means "face".

Mr. Holland: I om abliged to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me, but, first, I do not need lessons in French, and secondly, several hon. Members still wish to intervene, although we have postponed the wind-up.

Mr. Curry: I am drawing to a conclusion. The hon. Gentleman will know that I have sat through every second of the debate.

Secondly, we would throw away our gains in budget discipline—the rebate and expenditure control. Thirdly, we would dislocate the whole movement towards 1992. The rest of Europe will not say, "What are we going to do to accommodate the British? How can we get round the problem?" They will not come galloping to us when they have just agreed one of the most difficult political compromises in the history of the European Community. The damage would be done to British objectives.

We are no longer behind the rest of the train. We have caught up through our efforts and our negotiating skills in Brussels. This marks a new stage in Britain's full, sensible and pragmatic participation in the development of the Community, and I commend it to the House. It is part of my vision of the future.

8.50 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I hope to catch Mr. Speaker's eye on Wednesday in the debate on short speeches, so I shall just ask six questions, five of which are friendly and may be answered by letter.

First, the Foreign Secretary spoke with approval about the reduction of stocks—beating ploughshares into golf clubs, as he put it. That has something to be said for it, except that we have all seen the dramatic pictures from Iowa and Nebraska. What is the Government's estimate of the effect of the American bread-basket weather conditions on policy towards European stocks?

The second question concerns European action on the environment, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) quite properly asked. When reducing stocks, is there any policy of increasing habitats that might well be put to other uses? I think in particular of the wetlands and of the dramatic figures published only last week by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds showing the likely decline and possible elimination of many European species. Has that been taken into account in policy-making?

I am glad to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science here. Last Thursday week we had an interesting debate in Committee during which the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs spelt out policy on the ozone layer and on chlorofluorocarbons. I pay tribute to the work that has been done by British civil servants in the Foreign Office, who are internationally distinguished and who have a great reputation in Europe and around the world for their expertise on the Antarctic. In answer to a specific question the Prime Minister replied that the Secretary of State for the Environment was the lead Minister in all matters relating to the ozone layer. The problem of the Arctic and the Antarctic should be handled on a European basis. Are the Government coming around to that view?

A third matter that should be handled on a European basis—if it is not, we shall not have much effect—has to do with the rain forests. It is no good turning around to the Brazilians, the Indonesians and Laotians—my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) knows a great deal about this—and telling them that the responsibility is entirely theirs. It is an international responsibility and a matter of self-interest. Is it Government policy that this should be dealt with on a European rather than a British basis?

My third question is much shorter. The Under-Secretary will remember this from a previous incarnation when he was responsible for these matters as a Minister of the Department of Education and Science, and I believe he has a continuing interest in the issue. Clause 8 of the Bill contains a great deal of money. What is the policy towards Ispra and Karlsruhe and the other European institutions that we have debated but about which no final decision has been reached? There are certain tasks that are probably better performed on a European basis if the institutions function properly. One such task is waste management and the storage of toxic waste. For example, all the toxic waste arriving at the mouth of the Mersey creates enormous problems. Surely it would be rational to deal with that on a European basis?

Fourthly, what is the policy towards setting aside money for a disaster fund? When I was a Member of the European Parliament I was also a member of the budget sub-committee which was responsible for going to Friuli after the earthquake. I was impressed by what the Commission did. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science will recall the disaster from his days as assistant to Sir Christopher Soames. At any rate in the early stages, the Commission did an extremely good job, whatever happened later on.

Should not disaster operations come more and more to be done on a European basis? I am consumed by constituency problems arising from the Piper Alpha disaster, which was extremely harrowing for all concerned. Should not oil slicks, for instance, be a matter for European action rather than action by those whose rivers are most affected?

Fifthly, as an NUR-sponsored hon. Member I ask again about policies on customs. We have trains travelling at 47 miles an hour; the French trains travel at 165 in the Pas de Calais. An all-party Channel tunnel visit takes place tomorrow and as a member of it I shall know a little more in 24 hours' time, but the briefing that NUR sponsors had from Sir Robert Reid fills us with alarm. Someone must tell the Home Office to get its act together. I believe that the Department of Transport is doing its best, but Scotland and the north of England must not be disadvantaged by inflexibility of the customs.

My final question will be received less well. At the Hanover and Toronto summits we saw pictures of the Prime Minister. In Hanover, we saw her going up the Herrenhausen steps—that beautiful palace of Hanover—flanked as usual by Mr. Charles Powell. If Mr. Powell was so inefficient at the crucial time in January 1986 that he failed to tell his Prime Minister anything about what she should know about the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, how is it that he remains such a crucial and powerful foreign policy adviser in the tradition

of Sir Horace Wilson? I surmise from the chuckles of Ministers that they know exactly what I am on about, thereby giving the game away. Enough said.

8.57 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Of the many speeches by Conservative Members I noted two in particular with some sadness. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) got stuck on his worries about sovereignty—rather painfully stuck in the swing doors of the Last Chance saloon to which he referred.

I also noted the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), which I felt was notable for its wit, style and complete lack of facts. He addressed the central problem of whether we Conservatives want the Community and are prepared to take the consequential decisions arising from our membership of it. Those of us who believe that what the Government have achieved with the Community partners is to be lauded are not uninterested in the control of expenditure. I wish that debates on other areas of Government expenditure were treated with the same enthusiasm, pound for pound, when we scrutinise parts of our domestic budget.

It is not surprising that the European Community budget has grown. After all, we are now in a Community of 12 member states and 320 million people. The budget, even this year after the increases, is approximately £29 billion. In relative terms, that is nearly one fifth of the United Kingdom budget. If we look at it another way, we see that our contribution to the EC budget is running at about 1 per cent. of the total United Kingdom budget.

These are vital sums and it is important that we control them. I ask hon. Members to review them in the context of the Community that we are trying to build and the benefits that we have derived from it. The Community is leading us towards a single market, which is very much Government policy, and I suspect that it will have to be part of the policy of the Opposition if they go as far as signing the common manifesto about which my hon. Friend the Member for Shipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) spoke. Therefore, it is not so much the magnitude of the budget that we should be discussing as the discipline required to control it and the direction that the expenditure has now taken.

The Brussels summit in February was a notable success and showed the strength of the negotiations led by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. What did it achieve, and what are we considering? It achieved a degree of budget discipline which has not before been practised within the Community and led to a control of the common agricultural policy which has not previously been seen in the Community. It led to a shift in balance in the budget progressively away from agriculture, and that also has not previously been seen in the Community. It retained the Fontainebleau agreement and our abatement system which is of such great importance to us.

The concept of legally binding expenditure is written into the agreement. I endorse what was said earlier. This is a new departure. There was nothing comparable in the Fontainebleau agreement. That is why we are effectively amending the treaty of Rome, an order of magnitude which gives strength to the nature of the agreements and their legally binding character.

Perhaps the Paymaster General will go a little further into the ways in which Britain will ensure that those legally binding measures are enacted. How will the legal options be used and what recourse will he consider having to the Court of Justice if there is a variation? Greater understanding here of the procedures would lead to a great deal more confidence about the nature of the agreements that have been reached.

Budget discipline will also be helped by other factors in the Community, not least that France has become a net contributor to total funds. For example, if we look at the intergovernmental agreement that we are being asked to approve and at the order of magnitude of this year's contributions, we find that West Germany will contribute £1·16 billion, France £967 million and the United Kingdom £741 million. However, the United Kingdom position is even more favourable than that.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) did not give way to me earlier. If he had, I would have advised him that the IGA figure that we are discussing is an advance on own resources. We shall receive additional receipts as a consequence and,, of course, the differential amount will be treated under the abatement procedure. The arrangement is of great benefit to Britain.

As I have said, under own resources the United Kingdom's gross contribution to the Community is little more than 1 per cent. of GNP after abatement, and that is well below the contribution of the other member states. Having secured our relatively favourable position, we find that the toal agreement derived from the Brussels summit has established the revised basis of own resources in the Community. It enshrines the reform of accounting practice, such as the ending of the old hoary accounting measures that are used to distort figures, such as the carry forward of unused budget appropriations and negative reserves. It has enforced budgetary discipline, especially in agriculture, by way of the guideline limits and the removal of exceptional circumstances through which under previous agreements the Commission regularly drove a coach and horses. It has established price proposals in the guidelines and automatic stabilisers and new rules for depreciation and treatment of agricultural stock.

The results are a signal success for the Government. They show that when the Government give leadership in the Community they win support and are able to make significant progress and major changes. We are now talking about major changes in the budget and the common agricultural policy.

Through our leadership we have encouraged the other countries in the Community to abolish capital controls on a phased basis. That is a remarkable event, which has not received sufficient appreciation in the House. The French Minister, in particular, has already acknowledged that the cost to France in 1990 of removing capital controls and liberalising exchange controls could be a net outflow of 200 billion francs, but he is still prepared to take the measure in the interests of moving the Community forward. We cannot have a single market with the capital controls that currently exist in member states other than Britain.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) that the problem is that this country so often treats the European Community in a half-hearted way. We are in, but we are not terribly enthusiastic. However, I urge the Government to build on their successes at Brussels and Hanover, to take advantage of

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

the agreements that are now to be ratified throughout the Community and to get stuck in and assume a proper leading role within the community.

That will entail our deciding how the EMS is developed by becoming a member of the exchange rate mechanism. It is an incredible oversight for the Government, having succeeded in encouraging other member countries to give up capital controls, not, at the same time, to take the consequences, go into the exchange rate mechanism and take up leadership there and in the inevitable discussions about monetary policy. Moves forward are not just driven by the Commission, as if we have to fear members of the Commission as ogres. Some of us talk to businesses around the country. When they start to appreciate the benefits of the European Community, they say, "Why is it that, with those benefits, we do not take the consequences further, join the exchange rate mechanism and take the lead rather than having those questions decided by the Germans and the French?"

If we do so, we can ensure that the Community develops on a basis of deregulation rather than on one of more and more regulation. I fear that we shall have to address that matter carefully in the next few months, during the Greek presidency, when we will hear old favourites under the new heading of social dimensions, which should be resisted.

Finally—it is appropriate that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is in his place—if we take the initiative in the economic area of the European Community, we can also continue and strengthen our role as the leader in foreign policy. This is a particularly vital period when we are beginning to open up towards the Eastern bloc and when there are many signs that that will perhaps be the key area of policy development in the next few years.

It is not a question of giving up sovereignty; it is a question of redefining it. It is a question whether we are to be a mere outpost of a Community of 320 million people or take the leadership of that Community and ensure that the sort of policies that we as a Government would endorse will be accepted by our 11 partners.

9.8 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Whenever I see the Government twisting and contorting over the insatiable alien that is the EEC budget, I cannot help wanting to say, "I told you so." It could not happen to a more deserving Government. The tragedy is, of course, that the Governent and the people whom they represent are not paying the full price. The full price is being paid by the skilled workers languishing on the dole. We have lost over 1 million jobs in manufacturing since we joined this expensive club. The low-paid workers in my constituency are paying a high price for food.

I do not want to waste too much time talking about the ills of joining the Common Market because I am aware that time is short and that, whatever speeches may be made by Conservative Members, the rebellion will fizzle out when we go into the Lobbies. I want to concentrate on who will get what from the new structure and, to that end, I shall address my remarks mainly to the proposal to enlarge the structural funds.

Those funds are important to areas of unemployment, particularly those areas of high unemployment and deprivation, because they are still contributing to that increase in tax. My constituency lost assisted area status in 1981. Because we do not have assisted area status, certain EEC grants are not available. Halifax is in a textile closure area. Until the end of March, local firms can benefit to some extent from the regional fund, but the local authorities do not present such a cosy picture. What is the good of grants being available from Europe when, because of their spiteful attitude to local government, the Government have prevented councils from taking advantage of such grants? The councils have also lost out heavily on regional grants because of Government policy towards local government.

In Haifax, there is to be a major factory closure, KP Foods. Conservative Members who talk about the benefits of 1992 should listen carefully. When the KP Foods factory closes in 12 months' time, it will cost nearly 1,000 jobs. In answer to a question from a colleague about the internal market in 1992, one of the directors of KP Foods said:

"Internal market 1992.

You are right to wonder if this had been considered in our appraisal of the future biscuit-making capacity and efficiency because it certainly has. There is no doubt that there will be increasing competition from many sources in the EEC for a share in the United Kingdom Market. This is happening now and imports from the continent are already rising".

That is clear confirmation.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that that internal market will lose us jobs in 1992? My hon. Friend will be interested to learn that I sent a copy of that letter to Lord Young, and asked him to use it in his advertising campaign—on which he is spending £3·5 million—extolling all the alleged virtues of the internal market in 1992, to explain to people that the internal market will lose jobs in Bradford, South and in Halifax.

Mrs. Mahon: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and I welcome his intervention. Halifax has also been subjected to the Nestlé takeover of Rowntree. I attended both meetings in the House and questioned the directors of both companies in detail about the effects of the takeover. I have also received replies to letters which have confirmed that part of the reason for the takeover and the subsequent rationalisation is 1992. It will be quite devastating for towns that have already lost out because of Europe.

Under the European regional development grant, Halifax has been caught in a Catch 22 situation. We do not have assisted area status, but in March, we shall also lose out under the European social fund. The KP Foods factory would have gained grant under the European social fund, but will now lose assisted area status in Europe also.

It is particularly hard for the employees of that factory in Halifax because it employs mainly women and we shall now lose retraining grants which would have been available for those women, because of the changes in grant allocation. The work force is 70 per cent. women, and 80 per cent. are part-time. Approximately 550 women will lose their jobs but will not appear on the unemployment figures because of the way in which the Government calculate figures. The Government are presenting unemployment statistics that will be detrimental to our own people, because they will lose grant. That is

disgraceful. The Government are denying our own people the right to funds which are, after all, all that we are getting back for a very huge payment.

I have listened to most of the debate and what I have heard does not convince me that things will get any better. I believe that things will get much worse. There is a crisis in the regions and what I will call "invisible" unemployment. The "disappeared" exist. They know that they exist and hon. Members who represent towns like Halifax know that they exist. I challenge whoever replies to this debate to come to my constituency and see the real problems caused by our being in Europe. In particular, he should come and see the "invisible" women at KP Foods who will not show up in the Government's statistics. I assure hon. Members that those women exist.

9.11 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I welcome the Bill primarily because it is an opportunity for us, within the procedures of the House, to control legislation. Unlike so much other legislation which passes through the Select Committee on European Legislation, of which I am a member, this Bill gives us an opportunity to comment upon and consider the implications. That point has been made when we consider the wide variety of views that have been expressed on the Bill's merits today.

When we talk about the percentage of money involved in relation to the overall United Kingdom budget, we see that, although the Bill would increase the resources available to the Community by 25 per cent., in terms of the overall volume of money passing through our economy, that is still a relatively small sum. I am far less concerned about that than I am about the other aspects of the Community and what I refer to as "creeping federalism", expressed best in the views of Mr. Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission, only some 10 days ago.

I wrote an article in *The Times* shortly before that in which I warned about creeping federalism. It is naive and absurd for us to ignore the fact that there are people in the European Community and elsewhere who would like to see a federal Europe.

The other day I was on a television programme with a Conservative Member of the European Parliament. Quite expressly, he said that he was a federalist and that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had got it all wrong. He said that the Conservative party would have to come round to his point of view.

Recently we dealt with the liberalisation of telecommunications. Despite our Government's protests and those of most member states, the European Commission is determined to ignore those protests and introduce that measure on the basis of what it wants rather than to consider the views of the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee—ECOSOC—and the national Parliaments. We should take very seriously what Mr. Delors is saying.

There are other signs of creeping federalism. I am in favour of a European Community which can provide opportunities that are exemplified by the Single European Act. It is possible to ensure that we gain the benefits and create a mutual and reciprocal Europe and at the same time retain greater effective control over what is happening in the House.

We had a debate on the glorious revolution the other day. We would not want to throw away the advantages that we have accumulated over the past three centuries in return for inverted control over our affairs. We must accept the opportunity to maintain the rights of the people who elected us and speak for them in this House on matters that increasingly affect them.

Mr. Delors is right: about 80 per cent. of the industrial, commercial and social legislation affecting the electorate is increasingly being moved into the European domain. It is up to us—as I tried to point out in my article in *The Times* —to ensure that we are truly involved. It is through that involvement and representation that we shall be able to demonstrate our commitment to the greater purpose and to represent the electorate more effectively.

9.20 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make one or two remarks that follow from the Foreign Secretary's introduction to the debate. He said that one purpose of the change in the budget system was in the increase in the structural fund required in the context of 1992. I hope that I have quoted him correctly. He implied that the gap in the standard of living between the south and east and the north and west of this country is likely to remain a serious problem for public policy. I assume that he did not mean the alternative interpretation, which is that the regional differences within the Community, between the Mediterranean regions, which have never been industrialised, and the industrial regions, will remain wide.

If the Government had represented the whole country, rather than being dominated by the south and the east, they would have effected a different compromise between their desire to see discipline brought into agricultural expenditure and the need to explain the structural funds to solve the north-south, east-west gap in this country, as well as the problems of the Mediterranean regions.

This is a compromise; it is not a victory. The Government love referring to victories, and Back Benchers have been falling into that trap tonight. Every time Ministers return from a Council of Ministers meeting, they are like slightly cultured football hooligans, always talking about victory, success, and leadership, but never about compromise, which is what they have just made. Obviously, the legislation is a compromise, and it is a Tory compromise. It does not take sufficient account of the needs of the regions.

However, the Foreign Secretary said that, in the context of 1992, the north and west of this country—Wales, Scotland and the northern region, not just Northern Ireland, which he emphasised—will have serious problems. Therefore, we need a greater emphasis on the regional and structural funds. We need them to be oriented to solving the problems in the industrial regions and to addressing the question of how those regions will catch up with the south and east, which have all the geographical advantages of being next to the Channel tunnel and the centre of the Community as an economic market.

I hope that the Paymaster General will give us an explanation of what he will do to bend the Community and its policies towards a solution of the problems of Wales and the other disadvantaged regions of the Community.

9.22 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): We have had a wide-ranging debate, which is appropriate because the Bill is concerned with the Community budget until the early 1990s and the allegedly magic date of 1992. We have covered major issues, including sovereignty and whether the Community brings about a loss of sovereignty rather than its extension. We have discussed internationalism, federalism, confederalism and regional interests, and it is clear that there is division on many of those issues. Government and Opposition Members have different views on those matters and that is understandable.

The Community itself is not an unchanging institution and has changed dramatically over the years. When the Coal and Steel Community was founded in the early 1950s, it was described by Maurice Schumann, the then French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in glowing terms. He said that the Coal and Steel Community would mean that war between France and Germany would be not only morally unthinkable, but materially impossible. Sadly, that forward-looking initiative was nonetheless retrospective. The main issue facing Europe was not a possible war between France and Germany, but future relations between east and west Europe, to which some hon. Members, notably the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) referred. They asked how the Community should now respond to the recent overtures of Comecon, the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) made a telling point. When we talk about sovereignty and effective parliamentary democracy, just how effect is the democracy in this Chamber on this Bill? I am advised by those with experience of this matter that it is virtually impossible to amend the Bill. In one sense this reflects the Government's majority, in that, despite the dissenting voices of some Conservative Members, they can use it to get the Bill through. But in any effective democracy it should be possible to amend a Bill both in Committee and on the Floor of the House. It should be possible to use the scalpel rather than the steamroller. Otherwise, we are applying double standards in saying that the European Assembly is an ineffective talking shop which cannot restrain the increase in agricultural spending when it is not clear whether we can do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) also made some telling points, such as we have become accustomed to from him. He spoke about the considerable significance of the Bill, especially as it reflects the Single European Act which, in terms of public perception, has quietly transformed the long-standing Gaullist veto agreed at the Luxembourg compromise in January 1966 into the reintroduction of majority voting. It is argued that increased payments will be made which have not yet been approved by our Parliament and which may have been opposed by British Ministers in the Council of Ministers. We shall have a 25 per cent. increase in real terms in EC expenditure.

Hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), have already pointed out that commitments at Fontainebleau have not been realised and we have not managed to restrain spending on the common agricultural policy. One of the most effective ways of reducing spending under the CAP would be to do something not yet mentioned in the debate, which is to achieve a reduction in prices inside the Community. That should include threshold prices, and commodities which are produced by other countries, particularly the least developed countries, which can achieve no comparative advantage in the modern and advanced technology industries open to the Community. They are highly, if not completely, dependent on such access for an increase in their income and standard of living. The European Community has not addressed that sufficiently, just as its aid disbursement has been notoriously slow and ineffective.

The Community has further problems with the regional fund. It may be said that the structural funds, including the regional fund, will increase by x, y or z per cent., and some of those percentages look dramatic. But we should bear in mind how ineffective the Community regional fund has been to date. In recent years it has varied between one twentieth and less than one fifteenth of the total EC budget. Since total EEC spending itself for most of that period has been less than 1 per cent. of GDP, this amounts to a very minor fraction of the Community's GDP as a whole. Granted that only one tenth of the regional budget changes hands between member countries, one then has about one two hundredth of 1 per cent. of the Community's GDP changing hands, so one is talking about one which comes within the accounting errors of virtually any well-managed international agency.

So I am not terrified, and I think that other Opposition Members are certainly not terrified, by an increase in the spending under the regional fund. What we want to see is effective spending under that regional fund and we should get some social indicators for that spending. The issue of juste retour should be addressed in a new sense. Jacques Delors has argued for a social market and social criteria inside the Community and if we are talking about that we should make certain that there is a net shift of resources towards the less privileged people in the lesser and least developed regions of the Community. However, it does not make any sense to have such a spending programme if, as has traditionally been the case in the Community, it is only to be on infrastructure rather than on enterprise.

It is absolutely classic to say, when in doubt, build a road. When doubly in doubt, build oneself a free enterprise zone, which is an elaborate form of the advance factory building programme that we have in the United Kingdom. We have learnt through our experience in this country and as introduced by the Labour Government in the 1970s, that one needs a much more public entrepreneurial approach. That is what we argued for in the case of the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies. The Government have not scrapped those agencies—they have not dared to do so.

Yet when the Community comes forward with a reasonable proposal for local and regional government sponsorship of entrepreneurial ventures to strengthen the regional fabric of the Community, as we learnt in the most recent debate touching on those issues in May, the Government will not support that. If I may say it to the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon, that is one difference between our position and that of the Government.

The other aspects of such difference are certainly easy to elaborate. I can illustrate them by what the Foreign Secretary said in the opening debate. I was entertained when he said that the Government would seek finance on a sound basis, that some progress had been made at

Hanover, and that we would find the best way of doing this. He then claimed that the agenda had been set by the British.

I say to him and again to the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon that that agenda was not in fact set by the British. It was set by Andreas Papandreou at the December 1984 summit in Athens and echoed by Francois Mitterrand in June 1985. It was there, when the Community was stuck in the mud of the common agricultural policy and could not set a serious agenda on any major issue affecting either the recovery of the European economy, the restructuring of European industry or our relations with the Third world, that it was put by a Socialist Prime Minister and a Socialist President that we needed fundamentally to rethink the institutions of the Community. They proposed a new Messina conference. That conference has the same relation to the Rome treaty as, for example, Bretton Woods has to international monetary affairs. It was from their arguments and their pressure that much of the recent change that we have seen has been realised.

Jacques Delors has been mentioned more than once during the debate. The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon argues that the proposals coming from the Government or the Community are not accepted by us and asks how our position is different. It is very different, as is Jacques Delors' position. He has argued that the liberalised internal market must be complemented by a social market, that there must be a raising of practices at work to the best standards available in the Community, that we have to achieve an opening of the books, with accountability and industrial democracy in leading enterprises in the Community, and that we have to take measures to promote small and medium firms and enable them to network and gain the advantages from mutual size through joint ventures in Community. For many years Jacques Delors has notably argued that we need a recovery programme in the European Community.

Our Government are identified with none of those proposals. Yet such proposals could make 1992 of real interest to working people throughout Europe. At the moment all we have is the proposal for the harmonisation of passport covers, but not the abolition of tariff barriers. A harmonisation mania has taken over without the willingness for joint international action to co-operate on some of the urgent issues that face Europe, especially joint action for jobs and joint accountability of the new multinational companies that are dominating the Community.

When I first raised the matter of multinationals with the Government I stressed the major increase in the market share held by the top 100 companies in the Community from the early 1960s to the 1980s. They have doubled their share of the market. That increase is coming home to the public, through the press, because of bids made by multinational companies for British companies. I would not say that all of my hon. Friends are against such bids, but they want a means of accountability for such bids and a public policy framework that countervails the power of multinational capital in Europe. My hon. Friends want work practices safeguarded and workers rights extended. Within that framework our position differs from the Government about what 1992 is or should be about.

We believe that the GDP base is a better foundation for budget assessment. It is interesting to see from the proposals before us that there will be a working party of the Commission, which will constantly evaluate what GDP is about. I was quite amused when one hon. Member said, almost spitting the words, "the Italians". By implication he was talking about the Italian black market and meant that the Italians' GDP would be understated and therefore their contribution would be less than it should be.

As it happens, one reason for the increase in the growth registered in the Italian economy is precisely because the Italians have made estimates of their black economy and their shadow economy and included them within their assessment. By and large such things can be sorted out provided that we can break into the private language game between the professional economists and get some sense into the argument.

If we are to have a new committee for accounting within the Community, we should implement articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome. We should gain transparency on the activities of the octoploid multinational enterprises, which are presently not accountable to any Community procedure—they are accountable to virtually nobody but themselves. If we were to do that we would discover a lot more public interest in what is happening in the Community.

The position that we argue is not federalist, it is internationalist. We argue for joint international action within the Community, but, in contrast with some hon. Members on both sides of the House, I would not argue that this denies one's sovereignty. Effective joint international action can extend one's sovereignty and it is a collective expression of it. The contrast therefore is not between nationalism and supranationalism. The case must be made for changing the political agenda of the Community and for putting on its agenda and of our Parliament the issues that concern not only our people, but the peoples of Italy, Spain, West Germany and elsewhere. The tragedy is that our Government will simply not join or extend that debate.

The Prime Minister has dismayed her counterparts abroad—and I am not just talking about Socialist Prime Ministers or Heads of State. When the Prime Minister kept on about the rebate and only the rebate, Mr. Chirac made a remark that was something like "I've had enough of this cracking of nuts." It is quite clear that the Prime Minister could not co-operate with the then Prime Minister of France. She cannot even co-operate with the present Chancellor of West Germany.

In coming to a conclusion in supporting the reasoned amendment that the Opposition have put forward, I draw attention to a report by Patricia Clough in *The Independent* on 8 July. I have never met Patricia Clough and I do not know her views on Community matters, but she wrote:

> "Highly influential German politicians, who wish Britain well, are intensely irritated by the way Mrs. Thatcher has been built up in Britain as the senior and most prestigious European statesperson who can speak for Europe on a world platform. They are staggered that this can be claimed of a person who has been, and is still, obstructing progress to European unity. 'She does not speak for Europeans. She does not think like a European and she does not even try to understand them' said one. 'She only speaks for Britain's narrow provincial interests.'"

That is the bottom line of the weakness and limitation of the Government's position. It is one reason why we have argued for an extension of the structural funds—for spending on the social fund, the environment, regional

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

development and the developing countries. It is one of the reasons why I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will join me in supporting the reasoned amendment in the Lobby this evening.

9.40 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): This has been a colourful debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) talked about Louis XIV and the Last Chance saloon. My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) played a role as the parliamentary golf champion. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), not disagreeably, but irrelevantly, introduced Mr. Charles Powell into the debate.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), in opening the debate on behalf of the Opposition, spent an enormous amount of time on the presence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, a presence which all of my right hon. and hon. Friends welcomed. I can assume only that the time that the hon. Gentleman devoted to that was designed to conceal the absence from the Opposition Front Bench of the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

I shall comment on several of the subjects that have been raised and I shall take them in the order in which they were raised. The structural funds were spoken of initially by the hon. Member for Hamilton, the hon. Members for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen).

I would never describe my hon. Friend as a member of a small and disgusting minority, as he did. I thought that he was a little less than generous in his remarks about the Whips' Office and the documentation that is available there. I sensed that he might not be supporting the Government. I am sorry that he is not subject to the same military discipline as that which he described when referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham at an earlier stage.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East raised a number of subjects when talking about the structural funds and I shall respond to the general topics. In that process, I hope that I shall deal with the contributions of other hon. Members. The United Kingdom can be expected to benefit from all of the five priority objectives which were agreed at Brussels and enshrined in the framework regulations.

As the hon. Member for Gateshead, East said, Northern Ireland has been included in the agreed list of less-developed regions, in recognition of its special political and economic difficulties, although it does not meet the standards or criteria for inclusion under the objective. Most of the United Kingdom assisted areas should continue to be eligible for support under the second objective, which is to help with the problems of industrial decline. That includes the major areas of decline. Help for the peripheral areas, such as the Highlands and Islands, rural Wales, and many parts of south-west England, will be available under the fifth objective. The third objective is to combat long-term unemployment and the fourth is to improve training, especially for young people.

The social fund will continue to be focused on activities that are priorities for the United Kingdom, such as youth training and assistance for the long-term unemployed. In 1988, social fund commitments for the United Kingdom totalled over £400 million, and the funds as a whole total £750 million.

As I have said, the fifth objective is to promote rural development. It is important that a link has been made between the operation of the funds and the reform of the CAP. There will also be commercial opportunities for British companies and employers in other parts of the Community in terms of the application of funds there.

The hon. Member for Halifax invited me to her constituency. I may have to go in my capacity as chairman of the Conservative party rather than as Paymaster General, but I gladly accept her invitation. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East and other hon. Members referred to research. I stress that it is necessary to ensure that we get value for money in research and development expenditure and that we do not fund bad research.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) was the first to mention GNP statistics, and he was followed by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. It is precisely because our statistics and those of others are not good enough that the European Council decided in February that a directive was needed on the harmonisation of GNP statistics.

The directive's aim, which has been agreed by the Council, is to guarantee the comparability and uniformity of national GNP statistics and to provide for them to be verified and revised as necessary. The directive explicitly provides for the scrutiny of member states' GNP estimates by a management committee containing national experts of all member states. In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, I should say that hon. Members must be aware that many of the weaknesses that apply to GNP statistics apply to VAT statistics, too.

The hon. Member for Hamilton mentioned the IGA and implied that it is on top of the increase in own resources provided for in the Bill. Total payments to the budget for 1988, including the IGA and own resources payments, will be within the new ceiling of 1·15 per cent. of GNP. He seemed to forget that the IGA is a gross contribution that will give rise both to extra receipts by the United Kingdom and to extra abatement next year. Expressing the IGA contribution as a percentage of our net contribution is not comparing like with like.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing joined the hon. Member for Hamilton, and was joined by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), on the subject of legal enforceability. The Council can limit the exercise of its powers over obligatory expenditure, on which it has the last word, but it cannot limit the powers of the European Parliament over non-obligatory expenditure, on which the Parliament has the last word. We could not have obtained the agreement of other member states to amend the treaty to limit significantly the budgetary powers of the Parliament—nor was such a treaty amendment necessary. But by imposing own resources sub-ceilings, we can limit the amount of

resources available for total spending. Given the limits on agricultural spending, that limits the resources for non-obligatory expenditure, too.

The hon. Members for Hamilton and for Newham, South mentioned the effect on our gross contribution of the increase in the own resources ceiling. On the basis of the 1988 figures, the increase in the own resources ceiling 1·2 per cent. of GNP will increase our gross contribution, before abatement, by up to a maximum of a little under £1 billion. However, that will be greatly offset by additional receipts and some extra abatement.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) may have misunderstood the effect of moving from 1 per cent. VAT to 1·4 per cent., and described it as a 40 per cent. increase in own resources. Other aspects of own resources need to be taken into account, so the overall effect was less—some 15 or 20 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham mentioned the public expenditure White Paper projection of net payments to the Community institutions in 1988-89. That projection was £800 million, not £1,470 million. The £1,470 million related to 1989-90. The Brussels package will increase our net payments by £200 million to £300 million a year, but I fear that my hon. Friend will have to wait until the Autumn Statement for a more detailed projection, giving revised figures year by year.

The hon. Member for Bridgend referred to the fourth resource. On the basis of the 1988 figures, GNP contributions could amount to up to 25 per cent. of the budget, if expenditure were at the 1·2 per cent. of GNP ceiling. The Government could not accept amendment of the Bill to exclude GNP contributions from own resources: that would be tantamount to rejecting the new own resources decision. The Government support the introduction of GNP contributions, as they bring own resources more into line with relative prosperity.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) apologised to me for having to leave the debate early to go north. He referred first to what had been said by Mr. Delors. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who also apologised for having to leave early, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South also referred to Mr. Delors.

I am aware of the statement by the President of the Commission to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 6 July. It reflected Mr. Delors' personal view. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who has been here for only part of the debate, will excuse me, I have read the speech in French. Mr. Delors explained that he was speaking personally. It is important to remember the audience that he was addressing.

Mr. Delors' views do not reflect those of Her Majesty's Government. We do not believe that in 10 years' time 80 per cent. of economic, social and fiscal legislation will originate in the Community. Mr. Delors' statement was more indicative of the audience that he was addressing than of the true facts. I suspect that his intervention was intended to stress the need for national Parliaments not to accept uncritically what is happening in Brussels. He did not include this House in his remarks.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing referred to the monitoring of agricultural expenditure and sought an assurance that agricultural expenditure would be properly monitored. I am happy to give him that assurance. Under article 6 of the budget discipline decision, the Commission will submit monthly reports on the development of agricultural expenditure, sector by sector, both to the Council of Ministers and to the European Parliament.

Mr. Higgins: Many hon. Members are puzzled by what my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said, and my right hon. Friend has just repeated that obligatory expenditure will be subject to binding legal restraints, or budgetary discipline, but that that will not apply to non-obligatory expenditure. My right hon. and learned Friend also said that none the less there is an overall legally binding budgetary discipline and that therefore we need not worry about the fact that it does not apply to non-obligatory expenditure. We are puzzled by that. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will spell it out. If it means merely the GNP ceiling, that is not an effective measure.

Mr. Brooke: The inter-institutional agreement that was approved by the Ecofin Council on 13 June, and by the European Parliament on 15 June, is a political agreement on the procedural and financial framework for implementing the conclusions of the Brussels European Council on budgetary discipline and the level of expenditure. The reference framework for the agreement is the financial perspective for 1988 to 1992, drawn up in accordance with the Brussels conclusions. The perspective will be subject to technical adjustments—for example, to update it to current prices. Other revisions to individual elements can be made only by agreement between Council and Parliament and then only within the overall expenditure ceiling, plus a safety margin for unforeseen expenditure of 0·03 per cent. of GNP. The payment ceilings in the inter-institutional agreement, together with the safety margin, constitute the annual own resources sub-ceilings, set out in the own resources decision. The ORD also includes for the first time a ceiling on commitments.

It would not be possible to have such a legally binding instrument on budgetary discipline for non-obligatory expenditure, because it would fetter the powers of the Parliament that I have described. The inter-institutional agreement is a political agreement between the institutions, and the sub-ceilings in the ORD are a legally binding constraint on both revenue and overall expenditure. Given the legally binding limit on agricultural and on other obligatory spending, the sub-ceilings necessarily limit the amount available for non-obligatory expenditure.

My hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), for Horsham, for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) all made speeches that varied between the eloquent and the pithy in supporting the Community.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked me six questions, the first five of which were rather more relevant and serious than the last. Nevertheless, he indicated by the tone of his questions his basic support for the Community. As for his question about the American drought, it is too early to assess its precise impact on the Community budget. If the recent increase in world prices for many commodities is sustained, expenditure on Community subsidies should fall. I do not accept that occasional adverse weather justifies a policy of maintaining large food stocks in the Community. I have seen a recent report that

[Mr. Brooke]

the United States has in store six months' supply of food, and there is therefore no reason to expect any serious disruption in food supplies.

Dr. Reid: Can the Minister explain to the House what he meant by the Government continuing to monitor agricultural expenditure? Once, there was a Scottish goalkeeper named Frank Haffey who, in retrospect, could be said to have monitored the ball going into the net behind him at Wembley. Is that the kind of monitoring that the Minister has in mind?

Mr. Brooke: I congratulate the hon. Member for Motherwell, North on his analogy. The monitoring takes the form of reporting by the Commission to the Council. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that reporting process places an obligation on the Commission and on the Council to respond to the situation in which they find themselves.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) referred to the amendment which the hon. Member for Hamilton moved on behalf of the Opposition. Going back into history, there was a speech made by the now noble Lord Callaghan, in the heartlands of the Labour party, in Islington, on 26 April 1975, when he said:

"In the matter of the Budget, we made a flat request that Britain's share should be reduced in certain circumstances . . . Long and arduous negotiations produced a satisfactory result. Britain will now pay less."

The effect of those renegotiations in 1974-75 was that they did not save us a single ecu.

By comparison, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Luxembourg on 18 October 1979:

"Britain cannot accept the present situation. It is demonstrably unjust. It is politically indefensible . . . the balance is not compatible with the spirit of the Community. Its continuation would undermine the sense of solidarity and common obligation which lies at the base of Community endeavour."

As a consequence of the Government's actions, we achieved negotiated refunds of more than £2·5 billion between 1980 and 1984, and the Fontainebleau abatement has been worth £3 billion since then.

The hon. Member for Newham, South quoted Latin. I have long been conscious that the Latin word for left is "sinister". I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, who placed Mr. Delors in the Last Chance saloon, that Conservative Members will recall that Mr. Delors is a Socialist.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 330.

Division No. 403] **[9.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Warsing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 195.

Division No. 404] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Rob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moate, Roger
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When I came out of the No Lobby, two Tory Whips, led by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) whose rather menacing bulk can now been seen at the Bar of the House, were taking down the names of those Tory Members who voted No. That could be regarded as besetting and intimidation and, as you know, Mr. Speaker, by law that cannot be carried out by trade unionists. If the law is good enough for trade unionists, it should be good enough for Tory Members and should stop them intimidating their hon. Friends. If there is any intimidation, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to carry out an investigation to see if there is a serious breach of privilege by those Tory thugs.

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of any intimidation. The Whips might have been inviting those hon. Members to dinner.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Ryder.]*

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered;

That, at this day's sitting, the Court of Session Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.— *[Mr. Ryder.]*

European Communities (Finance) Bill
[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Communities (Finance) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums to be charged on and paid out of the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund, or payable out of money provided by Parliament, under the European Communities Act 1972; and

(2) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

10.33 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The money resolution, which represents an increase in expenditure of at least £200 million to £300 million net and, according to the Minister earlier, as much as £1 billion gross, should not be allowed to pass unchallenged. That is against the background of some £4·7 billion in net expenditure to the Common Market. After all the grants, repayments and gains from rebates which the Prime Minister alleges, since 1984 we have paid out more than £4 billion, and we shall continue to do so. That money could be used for the excellent purpose of helping to rejuvenate and regenerate the National Health Service or in providing long-term jobs and stopping the continuing erosion of jobs to which the Common Market has led.

Membership of the EEC has been a millstone around our necks. We have a deficit in our balance of trade of manufactured goods of some £11 billion. The Minister said that some of the payments in this money resolution —between £200 million and £300 million—would go to the structural funds in order to offset the adverse impact of the development of the internal market by 1992. It is patently absurd for our Government to hand to another organisation money which it then scrutinises and from which it takes a hefty percentage for administration, only to hand some, but not all, back to us for some sort of remedial action in the regions. It is no longer in the province of the elected Government.

While I disagree with virtually everything that the Government do, they are elected and are to some degree accountable. Certainly, they will be accountable at the general election, which is not true of the Commissioners. It is largely the Commission and its machinery which decides where the money will be spent. The Council of Ministers, which meets in secret so is not publicly accountable as we are in this House, lays down only general spending guidelines. The Commission and various directorates-general decide where the money will go.

It is absurd for us to hand over an additional £200 million to £300 million only for many local authorities to spend large sums going in good faith to Brussels to plead their case cap in hand because, continually pressed by the Government through rate support grant cuts and so on, they are short of money. It is wrong, inefficient and undemocratic to hand money over to another body only to receive a relatively small proportion of it back.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I am more than uncommonly grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is it not time that he straightened out his argument? Is it not a fact that most Socialist member states and Members of Parliament and the British Labour group argue for an increase in the structural funds which the hon. Gentleman is attacking? Why is he out of line?

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman, as usual, is badly misinformed. The vast majority of the Socialist group in the Common Market happen to be pro-Market fanatics. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".] They are chosen on a list system based on proportional representation which a majority in this House would reject and which gives great power to the party ladership. In most Socialist parties in the EEC, if anybody steps out of line, he is immediately knocked off the list for that political dissent. I do not take too much notice of the hon. Gentleman's views.

The fact is that those of us in the British Labour group are critical of the maldistribution of Common Market funds—70 per cent. or therabouts goes to the common agricultural policy. Ever since we joined in 1973 members have been claiming that reform is round the corner or will come next year, but it never comes. The proportion of expenditure that goes on the CAP has been increasing, with one or two ebbs and flows, virtually since we entered the Common Market. I shall come to a report from the Select Committee which very much substantiates my claim.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend said that in the Common Market countries other than Britain have a list system in which Members of Parliament are picked off according to how they fit in with their party. My hon. Friend raised a point of order about the Tory Chief Whip standing outside the Division Lobby ticking off the names of those Tory Members of Parliament who had voted with us against the Bill. One is bound to get the impression that Tory Members of Parliament are getting ready to operate their own list system.

Mr. Cryer: It sounds very much like that, as my hon. Friend says. I am worried about what shreds of democracy are left in the Tory party, judging by the way in which two brutal-looking thugs stood outside the No Lobby looking menacingly towards those who had voted with the Labour party.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has just been talking about thugs. There is an article in today's edition of *The Independent* about Sergeant Bob Cryer. Will you clarify, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether the hon. Gentleman is the Sergeant Bob Cryer referred to in *The Independent?* He is talking about thugs——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. What appears in a newspaper is not a matter for me.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful. I am best able to decide which Bob Cryer is represented in *The Independent* or any other newspaper.

I should like to finish my comments about what the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) said. There is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that it is contrary to our practice to read newspapers during debate.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker for scrupulously carrying out the Standing Orders of the

House and preventing Tory Members who who do not seem to know much about it from driving a coach and horses through them.

Let me get back to the hon. Member for Darlington. There is a pro-Market uncritical majority of all the parties in the Assembly, so anybody in the House who claims that the Assembly, called by some a Parliament—but it is in fact a consultative Assembly, that and no more—will act as some sort of check, is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

Mr. Fallon: I am grateful, and I undertake to the hon. Gentleman, who has been most courteous, not to intervene again if he will answer this specific question. He referred to the proportion of agriculture expenditure increasing. I should have drawn his attention to the fact that throughout that time not only was there a Socialist majority in the European Assembly that he despises, but he was a member of it. I shall not labour that point, but I ask him this specific question. Does he now still perceive that Socialist majority, including the British Labour group, to be uncritical, and if so, will he vote for it in next year's elections?

Mr. Cryer: The Socialist majority that the hon. Gentleman talks about is an illusion. There is not a Socialist majority in the Common Market Assembly. The Socialist group represents about 150 out of 450 and on anybody's calculation that is a minority. When one couples up all the European democrats, the Le Pen Fascist group and the rest of the Right wing, they have a majority. When one couples up those who are Euro-fanatics and totally uncritical, there is an even bigger majority.

As I mentioned, the Assembly does not represent a critical body. There are strong strains and pressures for federalism, and for even more power to be taken away from bodies such as this and put across to the Assemblies in Brussels and Strasbourg. Jacques Delors does not represent an isolated strain, talking to a particular audience. His view is representative of the majority of the Commission and almost certainly the majority of the Assembly.

The Single European Act started out as a campaign by Alteiro Spinelli, a member of the Communist list in Italy, and his campaign was supported by the European Democrats, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Democrats, but not, at any stage, by the British Labour group. That campaign by Spinelli was to wrest power from the member states and transfer it to the EEC assembly.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West) *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: We are discussing the money resolution, and I shall resist the temptation to give way.

Sir Jim Spicer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman does not intend to give way.

Mr. Cryer: I just wish that some of the Tory hooligans were better behaved. They set a poor example when they stand up against your express wishes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well as mine.

Sir Jim Spicer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: No.

The fifth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee was referred to in the debate. It is a Committee with a Conservative majority, and on page 7 of its report, it states:

"We are not convinced that an inter-institutional agreement is the equivalent of a firm and legally binding text. Given the Community's failure in the past to control its expenditure and notwithstanding the many significant improvements which were agreed at the Brussels summit, we believe there are still grounds for remaining sceptical about the prospects for proper budgetary control in the future. We believe the Government should press the Community to adopt the most rigorous forms of budget management."

Although the Government may press the case, our experience from 1973 onwards is that there is little or no budgetary control. The Select Committe, which has a Conservative majority, sets that out lucidly. Therefore I believe that we must have strong reservations about a money resolution that hands over between another £200 million and £400 million to a body that experience and its proven record has shown to be incapable of budgetary control.

We may suppose that some of that money will come back, but to hand money to another body, which has proved itself to be inefficient, in the hope that we will get a tiny share of it back, is an extremely inefficient way in which to deal with the matter. The money resolution, in common with the Bill, is much misplaced.

10.48 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has an honourable record in opposing the expansion of European expenditure.

When I came in to listen to the hon. Gentleman I thought that he might say something that I could support. I then discovered that he was objecting to an increase in European expenditure on the grounds that the European Parliament—or "the Assembly" as he has described and criticised it—would be assenting to that expenditure. Back in 1984, he offered himself to the European electorate as a member of that European Assembly and for five long years he sat as a member of it. Had the same argument come from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), we would have treated it with slightly more respect. Instead, it came from an hon. Member who took European money, air tickets, jobs, junkets and expenses. He now has the nerve to lecture us on increases in European expenditure.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: I am so shocked that I can only give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

Mr. Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) voted in favour of taking note of the sixth VAT directive, which he has been so busy criticising in recent weeks?

Mr. Fallon: That directive is outside the scope of the resolution that is before us.

We must not disregard the fact that the hon. Member for Bradford, South was a part of the European Assembly, and voted time and time again for increases in the European budget and increases in the structural funds—the philosophy and the theory of social space, which we now hear so much about on behalf of the poorer member

[Mr. Fallon]

states. The hon. Gentleman voted for the extra moneys. Yet he has the nerve to lecture us about increases for the funds.

We know that we have a far greater chance of controlling the funds and regulation expenditure through our Ministers at the Council of Ministers than the Ministers that the hon. Member for Bradford, South would have supported. There may be other financial resolutions on which the hon. Gentleman and I will agree, but he should be the last person to lecture the House on European expenditure. I have one piece of advice for the hon. Gentleman before he tells us what view we should take of the resolution and before we come to vote in the European elections next May. If I were the hon. Gentleman, I would keep very quiet.

10.52pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): I owe an apology to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for not giving way to him in the concluding minutes of the Second Reading debate. I am delighted to have the opportunity of rendering that apology. I think that I have the general purport of what he would have said if he had intervened at that stage. I apologise also to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for not saying that I would answer the questions which he asked subsequently to the one to which I responded. I understand that he intended his final question to be broadly rhetorical.

Mr. Dalyell: The final question on Mr. Powell is the most interesting.

Mr. Brooke: There was one question not asked of me during the Second Reading debate which would have been relevant to the resolution and to which I should like to allude. No one asked me what would happen if we were asked for intergovernmental agreement payments before the Bill has been enacted. It is likely that IGA payments will be requested from 1 August. If the Bill has not been enacted by then, the Government envisage making payments from the contingency fund, given that the House has signalled its approval of the principle of making IGA payments by giving the Bill a Second Reading.

This would be in accordance with the purpose of the contingency fund to meet urgent services in Anticipation of provision for those services by Parliament. At the same time it would take account of the key tests on the use of the fund, including, as explained by the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1974, the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert):

"No Government of either party would be reckless enough to incur expenditure on any subject by using the fund if they thought there was any possibility of Parliament's later rejecting the substantive proposals when placed before the House."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1974; Vol. 873, c. 1250.] The advances from the contingency fund would be repaid through the Consolidated Fund once the Bill had received Royal Assent.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Why should the Paymaster General be so presumptuous after the Bill has received a Second Reading? The Bill has two separate and distinct components and I should like to know why he presumes that the House will approve it in Committee and on Third Reading. Why was this not part of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, or that of the Foreign Secretary, on Second Reading? The House should have been told at that stage that this strange, perverse and, I would suggest, probably unprecedented procedure would be followed in the circumstances that have been outlined by the Paymaster General.

Mr. Brooke: It is not unprecedented, because I alluded to the guidance given by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in the Labour Administration in 1974 as to the use of the contingency fund.

As to the likelihood of the Bill being defeated, I draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) the fact that the majority on Second Reading exceeded by a substantial majority the Government's natural majority in the House. Even the presence of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) would not be enough to make up for that deficit.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The question was not asked, at least in one quarter, because the contingency would not appear to arise. The Paymaster General will know that the undertaking is not given to the Commission or to the Council, but is an undertaking of member states outside the treaty. He has just told us that there may be a request for the money to be paid, but who can legally make such a request? The undertaking is outside the terms of the treaty of Rome and formally nothing to do with the EEC.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) knows, because of the procedures through which we have been at various stages, including evidence that I have given to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, that the procedures relating to the budget for 1988 contained an assumption that in the fulness of time there would be an IGA. That IGA has now been agreed by the member states, but I agree that it is subject to the approval of both Houses and to a request for payment. That contingency may arise on 1 August.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 50.

Division No. 405] **[10.56 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bowis, John
Allason, Rupert	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Amess, David	Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Amos, Alan	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Arbuthnot, James	Brazier, Julian
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bright, Graham
Ashby, David	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Atkins, Robert	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, David	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Baldry, Tony	Buck, Sir Antony
Batiste, Spencer	Burns, Simon
Bendall, Vivian	Burt, Alistair
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Butcher, John
Benyon, W.	Butler, Chris
Bevan, David Gilroy	Butterfill, John
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Boswell, Tim	Carrington, Matthew
Bottomley, Peter	Cash, William
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Chapman, Sydney

Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Flannery, Martin
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Primarolo, Dawn
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Communities (Finance) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums to be charged on and paid out of the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund, or payable out of money provided by Parliament, under the European Communities Act 1972; and

(2) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

11.8 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, dated 11 May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19 May, be approved.

The order has three main purposes. As a result of local authorities' planned overspending this year in comparison with their guidelines, the first purpose is to reduce the amount of grant payable in respect of 1988-89 by £140 million and to determine revised grant payments accordingly.

The second purpose is to adjust the rate support grant payable to Scottish local authorities in respect of the previous financial year, 1987-88. That involves the return of substantial grant penalties totalling £89 million in respect of that year in response to lower overspending by authorities at provisional outturn stage.

Thirdly, the order implements minor adjustments in grant in respect of earlier years in the light of more up-to-date information. The effect is to decrease grant for 1986-87 by £0·1 million and to increase grant for 1985-86 by £3·2 million.

I shall deal first with the reduction in grant for 1988-89. Let me begin by setting the issue in context. Last July my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced, in respect of 1988-89 and for the second successive year, a rate support grant settlement based on local authorities' own budgets for the year then in operation—1987-88—uprated for inflation and certain other specific costs that were expected to arise. Provision for local authority relevant current expenditure in Scotland in 1988-89 was set at £3,640 million, or broadly 4 per cent. over authorities' total budgets for 1987-88. The grant percentage was maintained at 55·5 per cent., and aggregate Exchequer grant was fixed at £2,372 million. The provision and grant figures were respectively 9 per cent. and 8·2 per cent. above the corresponding figures for 1987-88—at a time when the projected general level of inflation was under 4 per cent. All that, and detailed proposals for grant distribution, were set out in the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 3) Order 1987, which the House approved on 18 January this year.

In his announcement last July my right hon. and learned Friend described the settlement as "realistic and fair". That is a modest understatement, and it was clear at the time that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities thought so too. In fact, the level of provision came very close to the figure of £3,677 million that COSLA was seeking for the year—within 1 per cent.

We felt that with that settlement we had done our bit, and hoped that the local authorities would respond by careful budgeting, with low rate increases, for 1988-89. Many authorities did so: the number budgeting within guideline has increased from 28 last year to 34 this year. Further evidence of the reasonable response of many authorities is to be found in the low rate increases that large numbers of Scottish households have experienced this year. I think that it is very satisfactory that 50 per cent. of Scottish households have experienced rate increases no higher than the going rate of inflation.

On the other hand, the extent of rate increases is not in itself a fully accurate indicator of underlying trends in expenditure, as rates are only one way of financing expenditure. Another is, of course grant, but authorities also have at their disposal receipts, reserves and balances. Some authorities, even with low rate increases, have still approved budgets well over guidelines for the coming year, and authorities' planned expenditure as a whole in 1988-89 is 2·9 per cent. higher in volume terms than was their provisional outturn expenditure for 1987-88. In total, there is a planned expenditure over guideline of £136·5 million, or 3·8 per cent. It is particularly worth noting that Strathclyde and Lothian regions alone account for £116 million, or 85 per cent. of the overspend, while £130 million, or 95 per cent. of the overspend, is accounted for by only six authorities.

That is the background against which we must consider the grant penalties. They are the consequence of high budgeted overspending. Local authorities were well warned before they drew up their budgets—not least in my speech in the House on 18 January this year—that the Government would respond to overspending with grant penalties.

In considering the detail of the penalty proposals set out in the order, my right hon. and learned Friend and I have listened to and considered carefully the representations that COSLA has made to us, both in writing and through its officials, and a meeting which we had with the convention on 29 April. I acknowledge, of course, that COSLA opposes grant penalties in principle. But I would like to address myself to two more detailed comments which it made.

First, COSLA disputed the effectiveness of penalties in persuading authorities to revise their expenditure during the year. That is not the conclusion that I draw from the provisional outturn figures for last year, which give rise to the grant now being returned in respect of that year. Many authorities' provisional outturn expenditure, by the end of the financial year, will be somewhat below their budget proposals. But I simply do not believe that, for example, Strathclyde region or Glasgow district would have reduced its spending so substantially last year were it not for the prospect of recovering £33 million and £12 million respectively, as they will do as a result of tonight's order.

We are abandoning grant penalties after 1988-89, in recognition of the greater accountability to which local authorities will be subjected as a result of the community charge, but I believe that the efficacy of grant penalties in reducing expenditure during the year was amply demonstrated last year, and I am confident that the same will happen again.

The second point that COSLA made was to point to the potentially damaging effect of grant penalties on community charge levels next year. The obvious first rejoinder to that is that there are no penalties for authorities that spend at or within guidelines. The fact is that authorities that consciously plan to overspend, knowing the consequences, cannot properly claim that the consequences for their taxpayers are the Government's fault. The main purpose of grant penalties is to encourage authorities to reduce their expenditure in the course of the year, and to the extent that they do so the grant will be returned.

As I see it, therefore, this last year of grant penalties should be an effective instrument for lowering local authority expenditure and hence the baseline against which the first community charges will be calculated. Ratepayers should see the penalties in that light; I hope

[Mr. Ian Lang]

that the local authorities will do so too, and that all hon. Members representing overspending authorities will encourage them to maximise their eventual grant entitlement by reducing their expenditure as the year proceeds.

Quite apart from these specific points which COSLA put to us on 29 April, there does appear to be a general view that local authority services are being cut to the bone. My hon. Friends who look around themselves in their constituencies will not recognise this view, and they would be right. Local authority budgets for 1988-89 have increased by 4 per cent. in volume terms over actual local authority spending in 1978-79, without there having been any significant increase in authorities' statutory burdens or responsibilities in the meantime. If, rather than adjusting for local authorities' own inflation rates, which include some excessive pay settlements, we compare local authority spending with the general rate of inflation, we come up with a real increase of 22 per cent. in council spending. That is to say that local authorities are costing the economy 22 per cent. more than 10 years ago. So it is no wonder that we have had to take action.

I should now like to turn to details of the order. First, it reduces rate support grant for 1988-89 for authorities which have planned to overspend. The needs element of rate support grant has been reduced by £140·1 million. That reduction is concentrated entirely on the 31 overspenders.

The grant reduction is related directly to the individual authority's degree of overspending by comparison with guideline, on the basis of a formula which is explained in the accompanying report. In arriving at the detail of our proposals, my right hon. and learned Friend and I have paid particular heed to the pattern of overspend revealed by authorities' budgets. The main features of the penalty tariff to which I would draw attention are, first, the low starting point, so that authorities planning to spend up to 2 per cent. over guideline attract a penalty rising only to 10 per cent. of their guideline excess; but there is a maximum penalty tariff of 110 per cent. for overspends of 5 per cent. over guideline and above.

That compares with a penalty tariff last year standing at 70 per cent. and rising to 175 per cent, for spending of 3·5 per cent. in excess of guideline or above, and the reduction in grant at budget stage is broadly equivalent to the budgeted overspend. By comparison with last year, it is tailored specifically to the pattern of budgeted overspend this year. There will be limited burdens for authorities with low overspends, which may in any case be most disposed to reduce their spending to guideline as the year proceeds; but at the same time the penalty is high, with a correspondingly high incentive to economise, on those few authorities with major overspends.

I offer the House only these two examples. Lothian region now plans to reduce its spending to 4·2 per cent. over guideline, which is the average excess over guideline for all regional councils, and as a result it will recover at the end of the year more than £33 million of the grant it is now forfeiting. If Strathclyde reduces its overspend to, say, 4 per cent. it will recover more than £47 million. These are powerful incentives to reduce spending in the course of the year, and when authorities do so, the benefit will be in reduced community charges next year.

I have mentioned Lothian region's decision to make a voluntary rate and budget reduction. As a result, we have less business to debate here this evening than would otherwise have been the case, and I shall say no more on the subject other than to welcome the sensible and realistic decision that Lothian regional council has now taken.

In terms of previous years, the order contains grant adjustments to take account of provisional outturn and final outturn expenditure figures. In 1987-88, at budget stage, 28 authorities kept within guidelines and the total overspend was £123·2 million. Provisional outturns show that the number of authorities within guideline has increased to 30 and that the total overspend has come down to £74·6 million. The effect of this is to bring penalties for that year down from £202·3 million to £113·1 million, a saving of £89·2 million.

Details of the 1987-88 penalties are given in annexes 3 and 4 to the report. For those authorities affected, the revised penalties are shown in column 7 in annex 4 with the adjustments that will be made to grant payments shown in column 9. I draw particular attention to the amounts of grant being returned to Strathclyde and Lothian regions and to Edinburgh and Glasgow districts.

For 1986-87, final or near-final outturns show a small increase in spending. The effect of this is to increase penalties by £0·1 million. Details of the adjustments to penalties are shown in column 6 of table II of annex 5 to the report. For 1985-86, final outturns show a reduction in spending which has the effect of reducing penalties by £3·2 million. Details of the adjustments to penalties are shown in column 6 of table II of annex 6 to the report.

There will be a continuing need to adjust grant in the light of up-to-date information in respect of 1988-89 and previous years, but this will be the last occasion on which grant penalties will be imposed. I hope that when grant, particularly in respect of 1988-89, is further adjusted, the news for local authorities will be good, reflecting a sensible response by local authorities to the order. I commend the order to the House.

11.21 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Some of us occasionally think that the economics of the European Community is obscure, obtuse and perverse. We now find ourselves looking at the rate support grant settlement of a Conservative Government and it is no improvement on what has gone before. I should make it clear that we oppose the order.

I do not think that Conservative Governments never work; they sometimes achieve great things. I am indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) for the information that Mr. Alex Pagett, the important capture from the public sector, has just fled from Scottish Conservative party headquarters in Chester street. I am told that when challenged by the press about his reasons he said that he was taking advantage of the enterprise culture. I suppose that that proves that in this case it is not so much an alibi as an escape route. We ought to make it clear that taking Mr. Pagett was not a quid pro quo for Mr. Rio Stakis's knighthood.

The order is offensive in principle and it is on principles that I want to start. The order and the clawback represent an arbitrary judgment based on questionable guidelines that have been manipulated by Ministers with political advantage in mind. The whole attitude of the Minister to

local government was well instanced in his speech. He talked about local authorities being "well warned" as if they were a collection of recalcitrant schoolchildren being reprimanded by a particularly inflexible dominie.

The Minister talked about local authorities "costing the economy". I fear that he has the impression that any expenditure by local government is essentially wicked and can be allowed only in very special and grudging circumstances. I do not like the basis of the system. I remember on one occasion in the days when we had a Scottish Select Committee a senior official in the Scottish Office talking about objective factors subjectively applied. It might have been the other way round, but in any event it became very clear that the basis on which these guidelines have operated are anything but satisfactory and are based on expediency and not on principle.

The global total for 1988-89 is based on the budget of the previous year plus 4 per cent. I think that there were one or two minor adjustments for the teachers' pay settlement and for the ever-burgeoning costs of administering the poll tax. It is interesting to note that the total is based on the budget for the previous year which does not suggest a vote of confidence in the basis on which the £202 million was clawed back in that financial year. It is not so much the total global figure with which we are concerned as the remarkable variations in the guidelines for individual local authorities.

There are, for example, increases among the regions as high as 11 per cent. for Dumfries and Galloway and 10·7 per cent. for Grampian, down to 3 per cent. for Strathclyde and 3 per cent. for Lothian region. There are substantial variations among the districts. The figures vary between 3 per cent. and, in Sutherland, 44 per cent., which I concede is out of line in every sense.

However, it is interesting to note that the authorities that have run into trouble are those whose increase in guidelines has been well below the going inflation rate and who are at the bottom of that list. Grampian, with a substantial increase in guidelines, is out of penalty altogether. Dumfries creeps in at 0·11 per cent.—that is a rather esoteric figure, if ever there was one—but Strathclyde and Lothian face the maximum penalty of 110 per cent.

The whole matter turns on Strathclyde's position. It is being hammered for another £82 million and no one could seriously imagine that the 3 per cent. increase in guidelines this year, as against last year, could accommodate, for example, the problems that it has had and the factors to which I have already referred, such as poll tax administration and increases in teachers' salaries.

It is simply a chaotic, artificial, vindictive and often illogical system. The Minister says that, last year, £202 million was clawed back, but some £89 million of that is now being returned. He says that as though it was a virtue, but it underlines the folly and complete irrelevance of what has been happening. The authorities have had to lie out of that money for up to a year. I am told by COSLA that the interest charges alone amounted to about £9 million. The fact that Strathclyde is getting back £33 million is not necessarily a success for common sense, although it may be a success for the Minister's spleen. That authority has had to struggle bravely to try and protect the ratepayers and has done so probably at the cost of dismantling some services and certainly of undermining financial stability. We should not applaud that or suggest that the Minister should encourage it.

Lothian region is in a particularly bizarre position. There has been an agreed reduction of £23 million, as the Minister said. That will come out of this year's expenditure, but the grant penalty is still being calculated on the basis that that £23 million will be spent. In addition, a penalty of 110 per cent. is being paid. Again, Lothian will have to wait for a whole year for that money to be returned, and interest charges and other expenses will accrue. How can that be in the ratepayers' interests? If the Minister is grateful for the fact that a common-sense solution, as he sees it, has been found and if, in some way, agreement has been reached with the Lothian region, surely the sensible course is to recognise what has happened and to take that £23 million out of its budget for grant calculation. I do not understand why that has not been done.

I have no doubt that the Minister of State will argue that the penalties this year are less than they were last year. The sum of £202 million last year has been replaced with a sum of £140 million. The top rate penalty has come down from 175 per cent. to 110 per cent. I must make it clear that we believe that a clawback is wrong. There is no case for that during a financial year, and particularly in a year in which the average rate increase in Scotland is as low as 5 per cent.

This is a very inappropriate order because, as the Minister pointed out, this is the last year of the old system and we face the Minister's brave new world of the poll tax. If we are to close the chapter, draw the line and start again, there is no case for carrying forward deficits into next year, the first year of the poll tax. In any event, it is a basically unsound system that has been foisted upon us without our consent and without any sort of wisdom or appreciation of the needs of Scotland or of the wishes of the Scottish people.

However, be that as it may, there is a practical argument that I should have thought would appeal to the Minister. It is not just the theory of the clean break. Inevitably, to some extent the penalties will be carried forward into the following year, and will fall specifically on the poll tax.

No doubt the Minister will argue that if authorities cut expenditure, they will cut the deficit and relieve the additional burden on the poll tax. But many authorities have come down to the bare essentials. Some, such as Strathclyde last year, managed to meet their targets in reducing expenditure in the face of the Minister's threats and sanctions by one-off savings that will be difficult to repeat.

I do not know anyone who denies that if the Minister goes ahead with the order and imposes the full penalty that is allowed, at least there will be an irreducible core of deficit that will have to be shifted into the following year, and into the calculations that make up the poll tax.

It will be particularly serious because the burden will have to be borne not by the entire rating base, but by the poll tax payers alone. The commercial and industrial ratepayers are now linked to the RPI and cannot take a share of that increase. As a result, the burden will be carried by about 40 per cent. of the rating base and that will be entirely to the disadvantage of the poll tax payer.

The Minister has said or implied that it is an advantage that the top rate of penalty has come down from 175 per cent. to 110 per cent. But allowing for the fact that the penalty will fall only on that 40 per cent. of the old rating base, to preserve parity, the penalty should be 70 per cent.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

The impact of the order on the poll tax will vary from authority to authority. Those that are out of penalty will not be affected. However, COSLA tells me—and I have no reason to believe that it has not calculated carefully—that the impact on Strathclyde if the full penalty had to be met would be equivalent to £50 on the individual poll tax. Perhaps the Minister will say whether he accepts that figure. Even if Strathclyde manages to reduce the penalty that it has to pay, and even if it manages to cuts its expenditure, there will still be a significant push to poll tax levels for half Scotland's population. That is a practical illustration of a well-known and well-advertised consequence of the system that the Government have introduced.

During our debate on the poll tax legislation, the very factors to which I am referring were explained to the Minister. It was pointed out to him by people from the press that there was a gearing effect and, inevitably, the poll tax would rise sharply to levels which the Scottish public would consider intolerable. The Minister's answer was that local authorities would not dare to do it. That says a great deal about his attitude. He is constantly expecting local authorities to respond to his wish to dismantle services and to cut provision, when, from his point of view, no doubt, perversely, but in my view very sensibly, people vote for councils that follow other policies and want the Government to follow other policies.

It is unsatisfactory that in the last year of the present local government financial system, we will lumber local authorities and poll tax payers next year with a burden that is unfair and is a heritage from the past. The Minister knows that it is an unacceptable policy, not simply because it is the view of Opposition politicians, local government and any member of the public in Scotland who is aware and has thought through the system, but because it has been proclaimed as unacceptable by his colleagues south of the border. The Minister will be aware that when the Secretary of State for the Environment made his statement about local government finance in the House on 7 July, he made it clear that he would not follow that example. He said:

"Under my proposals for closing down the system, grant payments to authorities will not be affected by their level of spending in 1989-90."—[*Official Report*, 7 July; Vol. 136, c. 1200.]

The Secretary of State for the Environment was saying very sensibly that the Government have enough problems —and, good Lord, he is right—in trying to get the crazy poll tax system off the ground without burdening it and handicapping it by enforcing a series of punitive penalties in the immeidiately preceding year which will force up the levels of poll tax. Why cannot the Scottish Office take a similarly sensible decision? We want the Minister to answer that question before we vote on the order.

I suggest that the Minister should follow the English example on this occasion, take the same sensible decision and make it clear that he will abandon this series of punitive measures, this foraging expendition into local government finance. He should draw the line behind the present rate support grant system and start afresh next year. That would at least give the hard-pressed poll tax payer in Scotland some chance to come to terms with the unpleasant new system that has been foisted upon him.

This matter relates to a fundamental principle. I believe that the Government are still thirled to the idea of control, restriction and depression of local government expenditure for the sake of depression. They really look forward to inadequate services at an inflated price. We know that in 1981-82 the rate support grant settlement met 68·5 per cent. of agreed expenditure. That has now fallen to about 50 per cent. COSLA estimates that that has cost local government in Scotland about £3,000 million. Against the enormity of that disaster over recent years—a disaster for the ratepayers, despite the Government's rhetoric, and for the provision of services—the present £140 million may seem a paltry sum. This is a matter of principle and of practical importance. If the burden is passed on, it will be concentrated on those who will pay the poll tax for the first time and it may affect people who will be in the local government taxation net for the first time. That is wrong. We want none of that, and we will vote against the order.

11.36 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): This important debate, regrettably, has been delayed. It should be recorded for the benefit of the people of Scotland that that delay was entirely due to the fact that a bunch of English Labour hooligans delayed the debate by forcing a completely unnecesary Division.

The case that my hon. Friend the Minister put to the House——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May not the comments of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) be regarded as a very serious reflection on the Chair, of which you were the occupant, when my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was called to speak on the money resolution? Is it in order for the hon. Member for Eastwood to criticise your selection of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South to speak on the money resolution? Is that not a very serious and scurrilous attack on the occupant of the Chair?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The comments that I heard may be judged discourteous, but they were not out of order.

Mr. Stewart: In no way was I criticising the Chair. It is a matter of regret that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has delayed further the proceedings of this important debate.

The case made by my hon. Friend the Minister was reasonable. It sounds generous almost to the point of excess. There is absolutely no doubt that the increased provision of 9 per cent. for 1988-89 over 1987-88 represents an increase of 4·7 per cent. on last year's budget. The penalty scale is significantly more generous than it was previously.

The system under which the order operates has worked under successive Governments. Hearing the comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), one would have thought that Labour Governments had never passed rate support grants that were unpopular with Labour-controlled authorities. Indeed, the reverse is the case. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) in his place, because he has an unprecedented record of voting against rate support grant orders, irrespective of which party forms the Government.

The system has worked increasingly effectively and there is no doubt that it has been effective in Lothian and Strathclyde. It is necessary because of the lack of accountability to the electorate under the rating system. I am delighted that 1988-89 will be the last year of guidelines and that they will, in effect, be stopped by the changeover to the revenue support grant and the community charge.

I followed my hon. Friend's reference to the real terms increase in council spending since 1978-79. I think that he said it was an increase of 22 per cent. Will my hon. Friend break down that figure because I understand that it varies considerably between different expenditure heads and that the figure for police expenditure has increased by only 10 per cent. compared with significantly higher figures for leisure and recreation, and social work?

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his comments and those of the Minister have ably demonstrated why Mr. Alex Pagett has preferred to move on to the exotic offices of the Stakis organisation rather than defend the system of gomeril nonsense that we are hearing about tonight?

Mr. Stewart: That is the level of the intellectual attack on the order. That is all that Opposition Members can say. Mr. Alex Pagett can answer for himself—[HON. MEMBERS: "Can you?"] He has moved on and has said that his decision was made because he supports the enterprise culture, and so do I. It is absolutely right that people should move on when they wish to do so. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is trying to divert me from my reasoned appreciation——

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that none of us would be Members of this House if we had not at one point in our lives decided to change our employment? Therefore, it is humbug to criticise an individual for changing employment.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, as always. He may agree that it is a pity that some Opposition Members chose to change their previous occupations.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister of State confirm that Strathclyde is still pursuing a unique policy of keeping its police establishment below the authorised level? Such a policy is not pursued by any other police authority in Scotland, including Labour-controlled regional authorities. As I understand the position in Strathclyde—perhaps my hon. Friend can confirm or deny this—the excess in Strathclyde's 1988-89 budget is about 5·1 per cent. If the regional council reduced that to 3 per cent., I understand that that would yield a major saving to the regional council of between £65 million and £70 million, which would be of great benefit. Such a target is not unreasonable for Strathclyde.

Furthermore, if the authority had pursued a policy of school reorganisation instead of bringing in political factors such as absurd opposition to single-sex schools which are popular with Catholics and ethnic minorities, even if unpopular with Opposition Members, it would have fared a great deal better.

Finally, speaking as a Glasgow district ratepayer, I should like to ask my hon. Friend two questions about Glasgow district council. First, it is interesting that the director of finance of Glasgow district forecast a community charge level of £529 before the district elections and subsequently revised it downward after the votes were counted. Secondly, can my hon. Friend comment on the widespread reports that Glasgow district has a substantial cash reserve, which has been put at between £30 million and £40 million? Clearly, it must have a contingency reserve, but, as my hon. Friend may know, that has been controversial and criticised not only by Government supporters but from within the Labour movement.

Finally, next year we shall see the introduction of the community charge and an end to these orders. Will my hon. Friend confirm that over 90 per cent. of community charge canvasses have been returned and that the various assembled and spurious campaigns from the different Opposition parties have failed?

11.45 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): There appears to be a general welcome that this may be the last time we debate the system of clawbacks. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has just stated the basis of his support and the House will undoubtedly draw its conclusions, and I have little difficulty in welcoming an end to these debates. The system of clawbacks has been deeply damaging to local government and offensive to local democracy. I say that to some extent invested with authority from the fact that the district council whose boundaries exactly coincide with those of my constituency did not until 1984, during the time when it was Conservative-controlled, contrive to produce a budget within guidelines. Only when the administration changed in 1984 and since then have budgets within guidelines been produced.

What is deeply offensive about the present system is that it allows the Secretary of State to override the decisions of elected local councillors. The proper course is for those who make budgets and are responsible for expenditure to face the consequences of those decisions when they meet the electorate.

The truth is that the political purpose of clawbacks has not been realised because the public in general have responded adversely to centralisation and appreciated that a substantial part of the discretion of their local councillors is being taken away. The measure of the public's adverse reaction is found in the fact that not a single council which has been penalised under the clawback provisions has been reclaimed by the Conservative party. If anything, in authorities which have suffered most, the majorities against the Government party have increased substantially.

The community charge is about to become part of local government finance in Scotland.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): The poll tax.

Mr. Campbell: I accept that it may now be called the poll tax. The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, referred to it in those terms during Scottish questions, and on such matters he must for this limited purpose at least be regarded as something of an authority.

I welcome the fact that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities was consulted on this occasion and that the clawback has been less severe than in previous years. But that may not be unrelated to the fact that the poll tax is coming into operation. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out, the

[Mr. Campbell]

higher the penalty this year, so much higher may be the effect on the community charge next year. The burden will fall largely on those who pay the community charge or poll tax in the domestic sector, and I wait with interest, as I suspect does the House, to find out why there is to be this distinction in principle between Scotland and England. The distinction is hard to understand and I suspect that the Minister will find it even more difficult to justify when he winds up.

The effect of clawback is to withdraw £140 million from the economy of Scotland. Its immediate effect must be a reduction in services and many of the services that will be adversely affected are those relied upon by the poor, the elderly and the disadvantaged. It is not the rich, the young or the gifted who are the beneficiaries of the services that will inevitably require to be cut. One listens to the Government explain their position, but it is notable that absent from the advice that they seem willing to give local authorities is advice on precisely what services should be cut. In a matter of responsibility, the Government seem willing to leave that problem to the duly elected local councillors.

This is a Government who are supposed to be concerned about local government finance, responsibility and accountability. The truth is that they have presided over more centralisation and less accountability. The clawback has been an unhappy chapter in local government funding in Scotland. It has not achieved what the Government intended and it has weakened and had an adverse effect on local democracy. No tears will be shed when it comes to an end. Likewise, when the order is put to the vote, I doubt very much whether it will command support in the House other than that of the vast ranks of English Tory Members who have contrived to find compelling obligations outside the Chamber and who will troop into the Government Lobby and pass the order, just as one might expect. I wonder whether they would be as keen to pass it if the Secretary of State for the Environment had not made the announcement that he did last week.

11.51 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) clearly showed why his party has been so long out of government and looks likely not to be in government in future years. His speech was typical of his party. It was full of aspects about what life should, could and may be, but not about good management and organisation, with accountability and responsibility.

The hon. and learned Gentleman said that the clawback system was unpopular. I agree. It is unpopular with individuals in local government who knew full well that under the rating system there was not the accountability that the hon. and learned Gentleman talked about because under that system too few people paid and the majority did not pay, so those individuals were able to vote for expenditure, knowing full well that they would not have to pay for it. That is why there there was lack of accountability. So I am delighted that this is the last of the orders that we shall deal with.

One of the great advantages of the community charge will be the responsibility and accountability that the hon. and learned Gentleman seems to imagine existed under the rating system. He called it local democracy. There was nothing democratic about people passing massive expenditure that they knew their supporters would not have to pay for. That is what happened so often. It is gradually coming to an end, and not too soon.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I am delighted to give away to the hon. Gentleman who represents a party of one in the House.

Mr. Brown: When we speak about the rate support grant, we must understand one thing. That contribution to local government does not come from the Tory party; it comes from the people, the working class, who pay into a kitty that should go into local government. That has been cut repeatedly by the Government. Millions of pounds have been diverted towards other areas, particularly armaments, Trident and so on. So it is dishonest of the hon. Gentleman to suggest that it is simply a matter of the rating system being discredited. Who discredited it? The system has been discredited by the hon. Gentleman's own party. If his Government owned up and made sure that the moneys were available to local government, the rating system would not be so bad.

Mr. Bill Walker: We now know why the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) is a party of one at the moment. He has clearly illustrated that he does not know how taxation works, or that the income tax reductions given by the Government have gone to ordinary people, the taxpayers. He may not believe that the people have welcomed that, but I know of no one who has given their tax refunds back to the Exchequer under any pretext.

The Government have pursued a policy of attempting to control local authority expenditure. I stress "attempting" because it has not been possible to control it as one would wish. To suggest that, somehow, there has been a massive reduction in the services provided locally is nonsense. In my part of the world, services have improved in recent years and have not been decimated as the Opposition have sought to suggest. There have been substantial improvements in many of the sectors covered by local government and that has largely occurred because of the additional sums that have been made available to it. The money can only come from the taxpayer; there is no one else. Central Government have no money and local government has no money—it is provided either from central taxation or from local taxation. It is nonsense if the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith believes that there is a pot of gold that can be got at.

I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister may have been over-generous in his approach to this matter, but whatever reason the Opposition believe lies behind my stance, I still believe that there are authorities that plan to spend much more than the guidelines. The guidelines were introduced by a Labour Government and it was a Labour Government who first ran into trouble with the local authorities about planned overspending.

How lovely it is to have the selective memory of the Opposition, who forget the years between 1974 and 1979 and all the accompanying traumas. The only time there were massive reductions in local government expenditure was during that period. Since that time there have been substantial increases and it looks as if we are budgeting for a 9 per cent. increase. By any measure that is generous.

11.57 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Tonight we experienced the long-awaited moment when the Minister said something memorable.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): About Alex Pagett;.

Mr. Worthington: It was nothing to do with Alex Pagett, it was when he said that, in the past three years, local government had been costing the economy more. The Government's attitude to local government has never been expressed more clearly.

If one spends any money on local government the implication is that that is parasitical on the economy and dragging it down. Therefore, one must stop building roads. One must stop flushing the lavatory because that it is damaging the economy. One must stop running the tap because it is costing the economy. One must stop asking for a home help because that is costing the economy. One must not have a police or a fire service because that is costing the economy. If my son or daughter says that they want to continue to go to school they must be stopped because that is costing the economy. Nothing has exposed more clearly the Government's attitude to the local authorities, and it is the most insulting one that they could have. It is especially insulting to local government staff, many of whom are especially fine people doing a fine job. The same can be said of councillors. But the Government consider that local government is a cost to the economy. The Minister will suffer for his comment because it reveals clearly the Government's view of local authorities. There will be no end to the restrictions placed on local authorities because any local authority expenditure will be seen by central Government as a cost to the economy.

We are told that this is the last time that we shall have the rate support grant farce. Is that right? Under the poll tax, there will be a similar debate next year when the Government have decided how they will distribute money among local authorities. There will have to be a formula, and the debate will be the same.

I should like to know whether my conclusions on the Government's policies are correct. I estimate that in future about 80 per cent. of local authority expenditure will be controlled by central Government grant and that the business rate will be controlled also by central Government. I assume that about 20 per cent. of local authority expenditure will be controlled by local authorities. It is my experience in local government—I am sure that it was the experience also of my right hon. and hon. Friends—that the Government never provided adequately for inflation. The technique of control has been to say that inflation will be lower than it has turned out to be.

If four fifths of local authority expenditure is controlled by central Government and one fifth by local government, and if the inflation level is 4 per cent. and the Government provide for 3 per cent., the poll tax will have to increase by 8 per cent. for inflation alone. Is that correct? If the level is 5 per cent. and the Government provide for 4 per cent., is it correct that the authorities will have to find 9 per cent. extra in poll tax? If the level is 6 per cent. and the Government provide for 4 per cent., will the poll tax have to increase by 14 per cent? If inflation is 6 per cent. and the Government provide for 3 per cent., will the poll tax have to increase by 18 per cent? The answer to my questions is yes because it is easy to make the necessary calculations. That being so, how can we talk about local accountability? The behaviour of central Government will determine local government expenditure.

In the settlement for this year, Lothian, Strathclyde and 11 district councils had a provision for inflation of 3 per cent. Inflation for local authorities is running at 6 per cent. If the pattern continues, the poll tax will have to increase by 18 per cent. The gearing effect is such that a local authority region such as Dumfries and Galloway, which this year was given provision for an 11 per cent. increase in its expenditure—that was arranged for it by a local and convenient Minister—would have to find some money for the poll tax in the circumstances that I have postulated.

After repeated attempts to obtain an answer from the Government, I now want an answer on the uniform business rate. According to the Tory argument, high local government expenditure has driven jobs away from areas, and one reason why they control the business rate is to protect businesses. However, in Scotland, we have the worst of all possible worlds. They have said that they will take the existing business rate set by Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway or Lothian and index-link it. They said that they will not harmonise it within Scotland, but they will maintain it in perpetuity.

What is the logic of that? The logic should be that one would seek to harmonise within Scotland and have a uniform business rate for Scotland, but we will not get that. Why? Dumfries and Galloway would lose—its rates would increase by 40 per cent.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): It is rigged.

Mr. Worthington: As my hon. Friend says, it is rigged. However, the much bigger issue is when will the Government come clean about when they will introduce a uniform business rate for England, Wales and Scotland. It is not just the Opposition who are concerned about that, but the CBI, the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) and the chambers of commerce. They see Scotland losing substantially because, when a uniform business rate is introduced in England and Wales, there will be a transfer of resources from the south of England to the north. The substantial advantage that is already enjoyed by the north of England in comparison with rates in Scotland will become even greater.

In Scotland, businesses pay between two and two and a half times as much in business rates as they would in the north of England. To compare the midlands with Scotland, the national exhibition centre, which is five times the size of the Scottish exhibition centre, pays the same rates. That disadvantage will be made even worse.

When the Minister was questioned, he said that he could not anticipate what will happen, because the revaluation has not been carried out. Other sections of the Government have done that. A Treasury Paper called "Running Costs Guidance: Location of Work", issued in March 1988, said:

> "The effects of the uniform rate poundage in England are expected to include a reduction in average rates bills in much of the North and Midlands."

That is official.

The Scottish Council (Development and Industry), the Scottish CBI, the chambers of commerce and the Opposition cannot obtain an answer from the Government on why there will be a £300 million disadvantage to Scottish industry, starting in 1990. The

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chief executive of the Scottish Tories, John MacKay—of beloved memory—admitted that there would be a period of at least 10 years from 1990 to the year 2000 when Scottish business would be disadvantaged to that extent, and the Government appear to be taking no note of that. Why will the Minister not tell us why a different rate of taxation is to be imposed on Scottish businesses as compared with businesses in the north of England?

12.9 am

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I note that the Conservative party has run out of speakers. I shall speak briefly to allow the maximum number of speakers from the Opposition, because it is important that the voice of Scotland in opposition to this disgraceful measure is heard as fully as possible.

The point of the order is to withdraw about £140 million from the local government system in Scotland—money that could be used to provide services, create employment and allow local authorities to maintain and increase their standards of service. The people of Scotland will be the losers from the order, because it will affect the provision of services to individuals, families and the business community.

The Government have a clear and consistent policy of withdrawing financial support from local authorities, which has the inevitable consequence of poorer services or higher rates bills, and, as the Government also operate a clawback penalty system, the inevitable consequences of the order will be poorer local government services for the people. It is yet another example of how central Government are destroying Scottish local government. By this order they are removing £140 million from local authorities' budgets, but at the same time they load new legislation and new financial burdens on the system. The idea of runaway local government spending is a myth, and apart from a few maverick exceptions, the reality is of a highly competent, professional and effective local government system in Scotland coping daily with myriad needs.

The real culprit in rates increases—demonstrably so if one studies the excellent academic work by Dr. Arthur Midwinter and others in our universities—is the withdrawal by central Government of rate support grant funding, and with this order the Government are at it again. They have presided over a massive deliberate withdrawal of funds from Scottish local authorities. Between 1978-79 and 1988-89, the cumulative reduction in local authority grant, calculated at 1988-89 figures, was £1,930 million. Government policy has impoverished local government services at district, regional and island council levels. No national organisation can readily absorb such punishment, and the victim of the Government's policy of loading new responsibilities on to local authorities at the same time as withdrawing their funds is the provision of services to local people.

The Government have acted unfairly towards Scottish local authorities, and their policy must affect every ratepayer. COSLA says:

"The Secretary of State has already agreed that the penalty system will be withdrawn as from 1 April 1989 and the imposition of the £140 million penalty in the current year will create a situation whereby community charges will require to be considerably higher than would otherwise have been the case. Unless service levels are reduced penalties will be carried over into 1989/90 and rest solely with community charge payers."

We should contrast the Scottish Office treatment of poll tax payers with the position in England, where no penalties will be applied in the final year. No wonder that COSLA feels that a similar arrangement should apply to Scotland. We are entitled to ask the Government—and to receive an answer tonight—why Scotland should be treated less fairly than England over the poll tax.

The order is typical of the cavalier and unfair treatment meted out to local authorities by successive Governments. It is unfair and it will create massive and unnecessary problems for the local authorities. It should be rejected.

12.15 am

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Once again I intend to respond to the disgraceful attack on the integrity of the director of finance of Glasgow district council. This person has been accused of telling the council, and thereby the Glasgow public, what it suits the Labour administration to hear. I worked closely with Mr. English for several years. I know from direct experience that he would not shirk telling the council what it did not want to hear. He is not a person who seeks to curry favour. That attack says much more about the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) than about Mr. English.

The hon. Member for Eastwood said that he thought that the clawback of rate support grant was justified, on the peculiar ground that Glasgow district council carries a large contingency fund or surplus. That is pretty strange reasoning. The Government say that it relates purely to overspend. They would be delighted if councils amassed funds and did not spend them on services, but according to the hon. Member for Eastwood they are being punished for doing so. He knows that Glasgow district council held its rate steady for several years and that this year there was a slight decrease. It is not about vastly increased rates or about holding a surplus; it is supposed to be about excessive and unreasonable expenditure.

As the average increase was only 3 per cent., do the Minister and the hon. Member for Eastwood think that 3 per cent. was excessive and unreasonable? *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Eastwood wants to intervene, I might allow him to do so, but I do not intend to respond to stupid interruptions from a sedentary position. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. There are too many sedentary interruptions from both sides of the House. I should very much like to listen to the hon. Lady's speech.

Mrs. Fyfe: But the sedentary interruptions on this side of the House are supportive.

I shall put some questions to the Minister, not in the hope that he will answer them but to have them on record. I fully expect the Minister to do what he has done on previous occasions at the Dispatch Box and to avoid answering my questions. Does he accept that inflation, poll tax administration and teachers' salaries account for the majority of the budgeted excess that the order intends to penalise? If so, does he think that that is fair, or will he admit that it is a blatant attempt to force real cuts?

Does the Minister think that a 3 per cent. increase on the previous year's budgets was excessive and unreasonable? If so, does he think that anybody else thinks that it

was excessive and unreasonable? If not, why is the majority of the penalty falling on those authorities whose budgets have increased by only 3 per cent.? What justification can there be for the top level of penalty exceeding more than a pound for pound loss of grant? Does he intend to impose £100 on two adults in a household in the first year of the poll tax, or does he hope that those councils will make drastic budget cuts and thereby provide a worse service than the people voted for in recent district elections, in the previous regional elections and in the general election?

Does he believe that the domestic sector—we are talking local government jargon here, but everyone in the House ought to know that "domestic sector" means ordinary families and not business ratepayers—should bear the burden, when they represent only 40 per cent. of the total rating base?

Finally, how can the Minister explain the imposition of this penalty on Scotland, when the Secretary of State for the Environment dare not impose any such penalty on England?

12.19 am

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The order concerns £140 million that is being withdrawn from 1 April 1989, but £136 million of that—over 97 per cent.—is a result of the Government's negligence in refusing to reflect the rate of inflation in rate support resettlement grants over the past six or seven years. Only £4 million is a consequence of local authorities' actions. That means that poll tax levels will have to be higher than they would otherwise have been, as the penalties will have to be carried forward.

During the past six months we have heard that the Scottish legislation and that for England and Wales will come into line in defining such categories as the severely mentally handicapped. Why, then, can the Minister not pledge that these penalties will not be carried forward for 12 months, as the Secretary of State for the Environment did in his statement of 7 July in regard to England and Wales? Otherwise, next April, Scotland will have the poll tax along with rate capping, and it will be unique in that respect. If the Government want to be fair, why cannot they give us the same pledge that the Secretary of State for the Environment gave to England and Wales?

The penalty figures suggest that an average coupie in Strathclyde region will have to pay an extra £100. That will destroy at a stroke the so-called link between spending and accountability to which the Government have referred during the past six, 12 or 18 months. It will also destroy the link between spending and the poll tax charge.

In future the Government will provide about 80 per cent. of local authorities' funds, with the authorities having to find the rest. If anything, that is a centralising measure. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has carried out a survey over the past few months of nearly 50 local authorities in England and Wales. It found that, on the figures available, in about 26 authorities poll tax levels would go up while the authorities' spending fell. In 22, they found the opposite. There is no accountability, and carrying forward the penalties will only penalise Scottish poll taxpayers even more.

It is said that the tariff will be reduced from 175 to 110 per cent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) has said, the burden will fall entirely on the domestic sector. I well remember in the past few years asking Strathclyde regional council to petition the Government to save social projects in our area—projects such as latchkey schemes and schemes to help alcoholics. Not only did the Government not save the projects but they penalised Strathclyde regional council 110 per cent. over budget because the council had a conscience and decided to save them.

If the Government have any conscience, they should let the poll tax payers in Scotland start with a clean sheet. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, over the past few years rate support grant has fallen from 68·5 per cent. in 1981 to 50 per cent. now. If the order is passed, there will be a total loss of £3 billion. Translated into its value in terms of rates, that means that poll tax payers in Scotland from next year would be entitled to a two-year rate-free period if the money were reinstated.

The problems of local government are nothing to do with local authorities, which have done their best to balance the books and provide services of all kinds over the past seven years. Their problems stem from the actions of the Government. If the Government have any conscience they will cancel the penalties that are being carried over to next year and let the poll tax payers of Scotland start with a clean sheet.

12.27 am

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): We have heard the Minister castigate Strathclyde regional council. It was not so long ago that the previous Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), went around the world praising that council as an excellent, prudent and responsible authority. The council is in an area of huge deprivation, made worse since the Government came to power in 1979. Since then, the Government have cut almost £2 billion from Strathclyde alone.

Since 1979, deprived areas have got worse; in 1979 there were 45—now 78 are so designated. I can see the Secretary of State having a wee laugh. I can assure him that people in Strathclyde are not laughing at the damage inflicted on them by the Government.

The Minister mentioned local government guidelines. When Dick Stewart was leader of Strathclyde regional council he said that no one could tell it what the guidelines were. The figures were mythical, picked out of a hat. The officers and councillors of Strathclyde would learn more from the "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" than from what the Scottish Office puts out.

It is appalling that the Minister is attacking Strathclyde, given that it looks after nearly half the population of Scotland—2,500,000 people who are waiting with trepidation for the poll tax to be implemented. If the Minister goes ahead with the clawback there will be a lot of weeping and wailing in Strathclyde because of the damage that that would inflict on the area. For the first time ever, the council would have to consider cutting home helps, concessionary fares, social work and services for the elderly—and the police. That would be a tragedy. The Government should reverse the policy of clawback and give the people of Strathclyde some hope and some future to look forward to.

Instead of castigating Strathclyde, the Government should start to give it a bit of support. They should give

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some encouragement to local councillors to carry out their mandate. Those councillors were democratically elected and the number of Labour councillors has increased. They have not lost seats but have gained seats at every election. The people of Strathclyde have shown that they wish to have Labour-controlled councils and no Tories.

12.30 am

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) has said is true. Perhaps the most eloquent comments were the horse laughs of ignorance from Conversative Members in response to the references to poverty in Strathclyde. At other times Conservative Members, and especially Scottish Office Ministers, seek to exploit the achievements of Glasgow and Strathclyde, but when it comes to the bit, the mass of people in those places need Government financial support to give them a decent standard of living and the decent housing and services that they desperately require.

Ministers are only too happy to participate in the PR. With one hand they seek to take the credit for the achievements of Glasgow and Strathclyde and with the other they take away the resources that Glasgow, Strathclyde and other districts in Strathclyde so badly need.

Scottish Office Ministers are making a deliberate and cynical attempt to raise the starting point of the poll tax in Scotland. That is what the measure is about. If the people of Scotland take note of nothing else that comes out of the debate, they must take note of the contrast between what the Secretary of State for Scotland and his sidekick the Minister of State are doing compared to what is happening in England. What they are doing is in direct contrast to the words of the Secretary of State for the Environment who specifically said that no grant penalty system would operate in England in the final year before the introduction of the community charge. He said:

"Under my proposals for closing down the system, grant payments to authorities will not be affected by their level of spending in 1989-90."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1988; Vol. 136, c. 1200.]

Those words and their contrast to what Scottish Office Ministers are about tonight could not be more specific. Ministers are forcing up the level of poll tax in Scotland in some confused hope of gaining political advantage.

We have had news tonight of the departure from office of Mr. Alex Pagett, hired less than a year ago as the propaganda minister for the Vichy regime in New St. Andrew's house. It was discreditable for Mr. Pagett to take the job in the first place, but credit is due to him for, within a few months, saying that he has no stomach for the task of acting as propagandist-in-chief for dishonest Ministers who consistently seek to impose on the people of Scotland policies for which they were not elected. Those policies have no popular mandate in Scotland and can be imposed only by what the Secretary of State for Scotland calls the Gatling gun. If the Government choose to rule by the Gatling gun they cannot expect any respect from the Opposition or from the electors in Scotland. They cannot even retain the loyalty of the hirelings that they have brought in to retrieve the discredited name of the Conservative party in Scotland.

12.33 am

Mr. Lang: It is conventional to say at this stage that the debate has been interesting and sometimes productive. The only substantive point of any novelty that has emerged in this debate is the Pagett point. I am happy to be able to assure the House of Mr. Pagett's departure does not incur penalty and will not affect the guidelines of the Scottish Conservative party. Our guideline remains the prudent handling of the economy, and that is evidenced by the order.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) raised a number of matters and claimed that Strathclyde and Lothian were being hammered. He carefully played down the point that Strathclyde was budgeting no less than £75 million over its guideline and that Lothian was about £40 million over budget.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out, if the authority were to reduce its guidelines by just 1 per cent., it would reduce its penalty by £44 million. If it reduced it by 2 per cent., its saving would be over £66 million. There is a strong and clear incentive to the Strathclyde local authority to reduce its spending for the sake of its ratepayers and for the sake of its community charge payers next year. As Opposition Members have said, the penalties will be carried forward to the community charge, but, by the same token, a deduction in spending will also carry forward a benefit to the community charge payers next year.

When the hon. Member for Garscadden suggests that the local authorities would have some difficulty in meeting those targets, I should again point out to him that the guidelines this year are 4·7 per cent. up on last year's budgets and no less than 8·3 per cent. up on guidelines.

The hon. Gentleman made a bizarre point about the gearing of the community charge.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: I am sorry, but I have no time to give way.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the effect that the penalty would have on community charge payers. Community charge payers will face a burden next year if spending is not reduced to guideline, but it works the other way round, and the benefit to community charge payers can be considerable.

Suddenly my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has become the hero of the Labour Benches, as a result of his announcement that there will be no penalty in England in the year before the introduction of the community charge. The impact of that is, of course, that grant penalty will end in Scotland and in England in the same year. I should have thought that the Opposition Benches would have welcomed that. If we do something in Scotland before they do it in England, we are being guinea pigs. If we do it after them, we are being lemmings. If we do it at the same time, we are accused of being copycats.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I shall not give way, as I have only two minutes left.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of cuts in the rate support grant and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)——

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On a major issue of this kind—it is almost a constitutional issue—influenced by the policy in Cabinet, which the Secretary of State for Scotland has accepted, would it not be in order, even at this last minute——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. I call Mr. Lang.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Garscadden raised the question of cuts in the rate support grant, a familiar old story. He forgot to refer the House to the fact that the last Labour Government, in two successive years, cut the rate support grant by a total of no less than 6·5 per cent. No cut by any Conservative Government has ever come close to that. The hon. Gentleman also forgot that the average aggregate Exchequer grant has been increased considerably. Over the past five years, it has risen by 23 per cent. inflation has risen by 25 per cent., yet rates have risen by 52 per cent.

The hon. Gentleman referred to grant penalties as artificial, vindictive and arbitrary, but let him reflect on the history of grant penalties and recall that it was a Labour Government who brought in grant penalties in the first place—admittedly, as a crude and high-handed mechanism for controlling local authorities. We have considerably improved and refined the system, first, by excluding authorities below guideline from penalty, which were penalised under the last Labour Government; secondly, by relating penalties directly to overspend, instead of the crude impost of the last Labour Government; and, thirdly, by providing for the penalties to be revised both at provisional and at outturn stages. We now have a tariff that impacts moderately on low-spending—

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14.*

The House divided: Ayes 242, Noes 184.

Division No. 406] **[12.38 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David

Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Adam Ingram and
Mr. Nigel Griffiths.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, dated 11th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

Court of Session Bill [Lords]

Considered in Committee.

[MISS BETTY BOOTHROYD *in the Chair.*]

Clauses 1 to 51 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 1

RESTORATION OF POSSESSION AND SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE

'The Court may, on application by summary petition—

(a) order the restoration of possession of any real or personal property of the possession of which the petitioner may have been violently or fraudulently deprived; and

(b) order the specific performance of any statutory duty, under such conditions and penalties (including fine and imprisonment, where consistent with the enactment concerned) in the event of the order not being implemented, as to the Court seem proper.'.

—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]

Brought up, and read the First time.

12.49 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss Government new clause 2 and Government amendments Nos. 1 to 3.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In speaking to new clause 1, I shall speak also to the second new clause and to three amendments. I intend to propose them en bloc because none involves amendments to the law.

The main amendment is made by new clause 2, which concerns section 89 of the Court of Session Act 1868. The Scottish Law Commission's original view, as recorded in its report on this consolidation measure, was that this provision should be repealed in its entirety since it related to the Bill Chamber which was abolished in 1933. However, the commission has now reconsidered that view and wishes to restrict the appeal to those parts of section 89 which specifically relate to Bill Chamber proceedings.

Accordingly, new clause 2 re-enacts those provisions of section 89 which cannot be regarded as wholly obsolete as relating to the Bill Chamber and which relate to the powers of the Court of Session. For example, an interdict normally prevents an action, but section 89 of the 1868 Act also allows the granting of specific relief. Therefore, it is desirable that that power should be retained so that there is no doubt about the extent of the court's powers.

In order to achieve parity of treatment in the Bill of section 89 and section 91 of the 1868 Act, new clause 1 re-enacts also those provisions in section 91 which are not obsolete. Section 91 is similar in nature to section 89 of the 1868 Act and it should be helpful to practitioners if both provisions are dealt with in the Bill in the same manner *—[Interruption.]* Well, the point is that unless a provision is entirely obsolete it should not be rubbed out of existence without the House expressing a view on it. The point is that we are consolidating the law.

Amendments Nos. 1 to 3 are purely technical amendments. They are aimed at making clear which of the repealed provisions are re-enacted in the Bill or are repealed without re-enactment.

The noble and learned Lord, Lord Oliver of Aylmerton, the chairman of the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills, has been consulted on the amendments. He has stated that he is of the view that they are appropriate to a consolidation Bill and further that the amendments do not change the legal effect of the Bill. That is what the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) was concerned about. Therefore, I commend the new clauses and amendments to the House.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Not having understood a single word that the Minister said, I should point out that even in a Committee of the whole House, it is unusual for the Government's Deputy Chief Whip to make any intervention, whether from a sedentary position or not. I should assure the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) that I do not think that I was the only hon. Member who had difficulty in understanding what the Minister was saying. Indeed, I have a grave suspicion that the Minister himself did not understand what on earth he was saying. However, he read well from his notes and I accept that he is quite a good reader, but it is putting it a bit strongly to say that he actually understood it.

This is a consolidation measure. It had its Second Reading debate and I gather was printed some weeks ago. What I want to know is what evidence has appeared in the courts in Scotland, in the Court of Session, in the weeks between the printing of the Bill and this Committee stage or even since Second Reading.

The Minister said that it was originally believed that these clauses had fallen out of use and were no longer needed on the statute book. The only reason for reintroducing them is that in the past two weeks they have come back into use in the courts. Surely the Minister can give us examples of how this has come about. There must be a reason behind it. If not, why were they not included in the original Bill?

The Minister's explanation is unsatisfactory. He might have given us a fuller explanation of exactly what the new clauses do and why they are now necessary when two weeks ago they were not. I hope that the Minister will spend a few minutes giving us that explanation. If that is the sort of nonsense that Alex Pagett was having to sell, I am not surprised that he chucked it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Less than a week ago we heard the Minister tell the House that this was an uncontroversial consolidation measure which should not occupy the time of the House. We now find him compelled to move two new clauses and three consequential amendments. One is bound to ask what the Minister knew and when he came to know it. How is it that an uncontroversial measure suddenly requires new clauses and consequential amendments?

The Minister's explanation of new clause 1 was less than convincing. I understand that it relates to section 91 of the Court of Session Act 1868. That section has been in use in the Court of Session since the passing into law of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 when, in the absence of a system of judicial review in Scotland, recourse was frequently made to section 91 in an endeavour to persuade local authorities to discharge their statutory responsibilities. It is unconvincing that the draftsmen should have failed to take proper account of that when the section was in use and a matter of some judicial

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controversy in the past 12 years. I hope that this is not a measure of the standard of draftsmanship that we may expect.

The Minister knows that I have been pressing him for some time in questions and I asked again on Second Reading for a proper review of Court of Session procedure. Many people believe that that is a necessary accompaniment to the proper use of the Court of Session and its relevance to modern practice. I hope that if such a review is embarked on, the standard of draftsmanship which accompanies it will not be the same as that which apparently allowed these mistakes to occur in what we were told was an uncontroversial and consolidating measure.

Both new clauses create remedies in the Court of Session. It is not clear in either case whether the new clauses provide that the remedies should be available on an interim basis. New clause 1, which deals with the restoration of possession and specific performance, does not make any reference to whether such remedies may be available on an interim basis. Likewise, new clause 2 does not make any express reference to whether specific relief may be granted in interdict proceedings on an interim basis.

I hope that the Minister will take a little time to answer those points, which, in my respectful judgment, have some substance and may have important legal consequences in the Court of Session and, indeed, the law of Scotland.

It is perhaps unfortunate that these matters come before us at the end of a long day, because at another time those of us who know a little more about the procedure of the Court of Session might have been persuaded to press the Minister a little more vigorously. Perhaps the lengthy day has operated to the Minister's advantage. But I hope that he will accept that my observations are prompted by nothing other than a desire, which I have no doubt he shares, to ensure that the law of Scotland in this unitary Parliament receives the proper consideration that it deserves and that we pass into law, even by way of consolidation, only measures that are apt and appropriate and are not the subject of faulty draftsmanship.

1 am

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission reconsidered its view because it noticed that a genuine error had been made by those responsible for drafting. I take full responsibility, although I did not draft every word personally. Acts going back to 1594 were being consolidated and obsolete provisions were being omitted, and one error was made in this case. As soon as it was picked up, we acted on it at once and came back to the House.

Mr. Maxton: Where did the Law Commission meet to take that decision?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not sure whether there was a formal meeting. The Law Commission's view was firmly imparted and we are acting on it. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am faithfully recording what that view was. It is clear that that was the Law Commission's view.

Mr. Maxton: It may well be the Law Commission's view, but many Opposition Members do not know who the members of the commission are, how many they are and how, if they did not have a formal meeting, they came to a decision that has been put so clearly to the Minister. How on earth did they come to the decision, or was it just the chairman or the clerk who decided that a mistake had been made?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission does not put forward recommendations unless it has given them the most thorough and complete consideration. I have no regrets whatever about supporting the commission in this connection.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) asked about whether the provisions would apply on an interim basis. The present provisions do not deal with interim orders. I should make that clear. I have no hesitation in coming back to the House to admit that there was an error.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Has the Minister noticed that while learned people such as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) are here, only one party is not represented at this dissection of Scots law?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the absence of the Scottish National party.

I end by saying that the lesser the man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday. I have great enthusiasm in proposing these corrections.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

SPECIFIC RELIEF MAY BE GRANTED IN INTERDICT PROCEEDINGS

'Where a respondent in any application or proceedings in the Court, whether before or after the institution of such proceedings or application, has done any act which the Court might have prohibited by interdict, the Court may ordain the respondent to perform any act which may be necessary for reinstating the petitioner in his possessory right, or for granting specific relief against the illegal act complained of.'.
—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Schedule 2

REPEALS

Amendments made: No 1, in page 18, column 3, leave out lines 41 to 45 and insert—

'Sections 50 to 101.'.

No. 2, in page 22, line 20, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 89,
In section 91 the words from the beginning to "seem proper".'.

No. 3, in page 28, column 3, leave out line 29 and insert—

'Sections 76 to 88.
Section 90.'.—
[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at tomorrow's sitting, the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Telegraphs may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at the end of that period, Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

LAND DRAINAGE

That the draft Land Drainage Improvement Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 16th June, be approved.

FORESTRY

That the draft Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 27th June 1988, be approved.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

FISH FARMING

That the draft Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 16th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

ROADWORTHINESS TESTING

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6878/86 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Department of Transport on 8th and 27the June 1988 and 7946/87 on roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers and agrees that Her Majesty's Government could accept an extension of roadworthiness testing providing that the items to be added to the Department of Transport test were beneficial and could be tested to Member State's own test methods.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Science and Mathematics Teachers

1.6 am

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. *[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to have an Adjournment debate on the current shortage of physics and mathematics teachers in schools. I am also grateful to the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science for attending at this late hour to reply. The shortage has serious implications for the education of our children and also for Britain's industrial, commercial and technological prospects in the future.

The shortage of physics and mathematics teachers has been a matter of concern for some time and the recent publication of a disturbing report commissioned by the Engineering Council, the Headmasters Conference and the Secondary Heads Association is relevant. Over the years, the Engineering Council has been considering ways in which to increase the number of engineering places in higher education, and that matter was raised during a recent debate on engineering in the House.

The council found that not enough young people were coming forward from the schools and inevitably it began to consider the quality and quantity of mathematics and physics teachers. There is no doubt about the potential and ability of our young people, because just over a week ago Britain won the gold medal in the international school physics olympiad held in Bad Ischl in Austria. The talent is present and our young people have the ability to do well in the subjects.

The report was prepared by Professor Alan Smithers and Dr. Pamela Robinson of Manchester university and it serves to heighten concern about the matter. Obviously it is essential to prevent the problem from growing worse.

The origins of our present difficulties can be traced back, in part at least, to the changes in the education system since the 1960s. The disappearance of grammar and technical schools and their replacement with comprehensive schools, many now without sixth forms, reduced the availability of some of the more challenging and rewarding teaching posts in both subjects. The recent downgrading of the requirements at A-level and GCSE makes school a less satisfactory preparation for advanced university physics and mathematics.

A significant proportion of those teaching mathematics and physics at secondary level lack adequate qualifications to do so. Therefore, there is a hidden shortage of teachers in those subjects. The 1984 secondary school staffing survey showed that 13 per cent. of mathematics teachers and 18 per cent. of physics teachers were without higher education qualifications in those subjects. If those who study maths and physics as subsidiary subjects in higher education are included in the definition of the fully qualified, the figures rise to 28 per cent. and 29 per cent. respectively. According to the 1986 document of the Department of Education and Science, "Action on Teacher Supply in Mathematics, Physics and Technology", only 45 per cent. of mathematics tuition and 57 per cent. of physics tuition was being provided by graduates in those subjects.

The same problem arises in other subjects, including chemistry. I am interested and pleased to note that the

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hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who I know is concerned with the Royal Society of Chemistry, is in his place.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): May I intervene?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With permission?

Mr. Thompson: With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Anderson: The hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) will be aware of the concern of the Royal Society of Chemistry that urgent action is required to increase the supply of chemists into teaching. The hon. Gentleman will know that there are special initiatives in play in physics, for example, which have resulted in an improvement in numbers. In 1985 there were 255 post-graduate certificate of education courses, which was improved to 527. Surely the hon. Gentleman will agree that no such action is proposed by the Department of Education and Science for chemistry. That must be wrong when we take account of the public interest. The number of candidates presenting themselves for a postgraduate certificate in chemistry is down by one third this year compared with the figure for last year. Is it not proper that there should be similar bonuses and initiatives for chemistry, where the problem is even more marked than in the other disciplines?

Mr. Thomspon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. The survey on which I based my remarks was directed especially to physics and mathematics. On receiving correspondence from the Royal Society of Chemistry, I was as surprised and concerned as the hon. Gentleman. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science will respond to this issue along with the other matters that I am raising.

An especially alarming feature of the results of the survey on qualifications that was conducted by Manchester university is the disparities that it has revealed. Only a quarter of the staff in maintained schools with pupils up to the age of 16 years were trained graduates. There were twice as many in schools in the maintained sectors, with students up to 18. There were almost three times as many independent schools. This means that at the earlier stage of education the hidden shortage is worst.

It is equally clear that some schools have responded to the lack of mathematics and physics teachers by adjusting their timetables. Typically, this has been done by reducing the number of subject periods per set and by limiting the number of sets. This had occurred in five of the 26 schools surveyed for mathematics and in four of the 26 for physics that were included in the Manchester university study. We therefore have a vicious cirle. A lack of qualified teachers leads to a reduction of subject time allowed. That leads to a lack of enthusiastic young people taking these subjects to a higher level. The vicious circle can continue unless action is taken.

We can see the impact of inadequate training in these vital areas in the number of those abandoning study. Only a quarter of those who took O-level physics went on to A-level work. Significantly, there was a disproportionately high female drop-out rate. Of those who passed A-level of all pupils, roughly one in seven went on to take a degree in either subject at a university. Just over 5 per cent. of graduates in maths and physics entered teacher training in 1986.

This winnowing process is at least partly due to the fact that unqualified and under-qualified teachers play so large a part in the process of instruction. Nonetheless, it remains disturbing that accurate figures on the number of teachers in both disciplines in service remain hard to come by. The Interim Advisory Committee on Teachers' Pay and Conditions found this to be a general problem in its recent report. There is some evidence that the wastage rates for maths and physics teachers has been rising, and this rate of loss must be of concern.

Even more serious is the apparent gap between the demand for teachers in maths and physics and the supply. Whatever assumptions are made, it is clear that there is a shortage now, possibly more than 2,000, and that there is the prospect of an even more serious shortfall developing by the mid-1990s.

Other countries have experienced similar problems. The teaching of maths and physics cannot be considered in a vacuum. The attraction of other professions, in status and pay, must be taken into account. If severe difficulties are to be avoided, I believe that a wider approach may be required.

The Manchester university report showed that in mathematics under 30 per cent. of graduates were women, yet women comprised more than 50 per cent. of those entering teaching. In physics the imbalance is even more striking. Given the interest in teaching among women graduates, action should be taken to increase the number of girls taking mathematics and physics in schools. I urge the Government to consider introducing a national career break scheme to encourage more women to enter teaching. I am informed that Kent local education authority has recently introduced such a scheme.

There appear to be discrepancies between the figures of the Department of Education and Science and those provided by other bodies which require urgent resolution. I hope that the Minister can help me on that. I urge him to consider the establishment of a comprehensive database for in-service teachers. That will show the extent of subject shortages, hidden and suppressed, throughout the country.

As a corollary, an analysis should be made of staff movements within the education system and out of it. We need to know how many teachers are moving into other posts, into administrative jobs, and how many are leaving to have children, to retire or for other reasons. Only then will it be possible to consider the shape and scale of the training programmes for new recruits and for former teachers hoping to re-enter the profession. It is, regrettably, clear that many graduates would prefer the larger salaries and better working conditions to be found in commerce and industry. It may be necessary to offer financial incentives to attract such people into the classroom.

I know that my hon. Friend understands those issues. I fully support the Government's intentions in establishing a national curriculum in which maths, science and technology will play a prominent role.

The measures that have been taken to provide bursaries for prospective maths and physics teachers studying for a

postgraduate certificate of education have my full support. Could those bursaries be transferred to those who take up posts? I hope that the Minister will consider that suggestion in his reply. The provision of in-service training and the recruitment of new teachers through the Teaching As a Career unit are useful initiatives.

I welcome the Education Reform Bill, and many of its measures are relevant to this debate. In a recent paper that I wrote with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright)—"A New Strategy for Education"—we would not only have secured the place of maths and physics in the curriculum, but would have created a professional teachers' council and a local pay bargaining mechanism at school level to help to restore the status of teachers. It is with individual teachers' sense of their professional standing, of their financial rewards and of their morale that an important part of the solution lies.

The CBI's response to the circular of the Department of Education and Science on this subject stated that the teaching profession needs to be made attractive, by giving status and appropriate conditions of service, which should include annual assessment, career development and chances of advancement. It acknowledges that teaching is a vocation and that, unless rewards are adequate in the market place, employers will up the ante by offering higher salaries elsewhere.

We should not rule out measures to obtain the short-term secondment of staff from industry or the recruitment of qualified teachers or technicians now working outside the profession on a long-term basis. I believe that technician support for science departments in schools is important and will help with the general problem. Time does not allow me to develop that theme, but I hope that my hon. Friend will bear it in mind.

Mathematics and physics are two of the key disciplines on which the modern industrial world rests. Britain cannot afford to be out-distanced by its competitors in passing on that body of knowledge to the next generation. The fact that the importance of the issue has been recognised inside and outside the House is encouraging. The Government have responded positively to the concerns of the teaching profession, the universities and the Engineering Council. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to carry that process further in his reply.

1.19 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on a most thoughtful and constructive speech. Those of us who have known him for some time recognise that he always makes a major contribution to our debates, and his speech tonight was in that vein. I was equally pleased to hear the short intervention of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who spoke about his connection with the Royal Society of Chemistry. We also recognise the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), who always takes an interest in such matters and who had a long connection with the world of local government education.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North has introduced an important matter, and I give an undertaking that I shall pass on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the points that he and the hon. Member for Swansea, East made.

Britain has never been in greater need of people skilled in mathematics and the physical sciences so necessary to ensure that our industry can compete in the fast-changing world of the 1990s. We shall not have those people unless we have teachers to teach them, but it is precisely because those skills are in such high demand that those who have them are eagerly sought out by employers, against whom those who recruit people into teaching must compete.

We have long recognised that special attention must be paid to ensuring that there are enough maths and physics teachers to teach in our schools. That is why we have had a teacher shortage action programme in place for about two years, much of it built up on the basis of recommendations reaching us in response to a consultation document that we published on the issue two years ago. The result has been dramatic: since 1985 we have reversed the trend of decline in intakes to initial teacher training in the shortage subjects.

In 1986, as the report from which my hon. Friend quoted made clear, only 741 students started postgraduate certificate of education courses in maths and 341 in physics. In 1987, those two figures had risen by 29 per cent. and 41 per cent. respectively. It can be no coincidence that that took place over the first year of our action programme to combat teacher shortages, of which the main weapons are a bursary, tax-free, to trainee teachers in these subjects paid on top of their grant of £1,200 for 1986-87, which has risen to £1,300 in the next academic year, the use of national and local advertising, and the setting up of our Teaching As a Career unit—known as TASC—to promote teaching and improve its image.

All this had an effect on numbers last year, and is continuing to have an effect, even though applications for teacher training courses in maths and physics are not as buoyant this year as they were at the same time last year. But it is too early to say what the final recruitment figures are like, and I am still confident that the reversal of trend secured during the past two years will continue.

We are also spending six times more money than we are spending on direct recruitment on in-service training for the large number of teachers, also mentioned by my hon. Friend, who are teaching maths and physics without being properly qualified to do so. We call this the hidden shortage, and it is in many ways much more serious than the overt shortage of unfilled teaching posts in maths and physics, which are at their lowest level for many years. We intend to continue to offer substantial retraining and upgrading opportunities for under-qualified teachers through our training grants scheme to ensure that we have the right number of teachers that we need with the right qualifications to teach these vital subjects in the 1990s.

We have funded distance learning television-based and text-based in-service training materials in maths and science for use in upgrading the skills of those teachers who cannot be spared from the classroom.

Attracting new undergraduate recruits to teaching and upgrading existing teachers' skills is not, however, enough. The number of young people declines for demographic reasons in the 1990s just when the pupil population increases, so we need to make sure that we are tapping other sources of teachers to the full. We cannot expect teaching to take more than its fair share of scarce young qualified manpower.

That is why part of our action programme focuses on attracting older, experienced people into teaching from other careers. Surprisingly large numbers of people in

[Mr. Robert Dunn]

industry and other walks of life often want to change to teaching. Their experience enriches the classroom. We are also encouraging local authorities to look at ways of maximising the use of another great undertapped pool of teaching talent—those who are qualified teachers but currently out of service. Many are, typically, married women who left the profession to have a family. Many are willing to return and local education authorities and schools may need to offer job-sharing opportunities and refresher courses to tempt them back.

All in all, we would maintain that we are already doing pretty well everything enjoined upon us by the recommendations of the report quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North. It is too early to say whether the coverage of our action programme, or its intensity, is inadequate. We are in any case doing rather more than the report suggests. The Teaching As a Career unit, for instance, has started to make a real impact with its catchy national advertising, well-produced literature and videos and continuous appearance on the undergraduate milk round, at careers fairs and at seminars and conferences all over the country, as well as counselling some of the very significant number of older people in other careers to whom I have referred who actually want to come into teaching.

Contrary to what the report alleges, over 80 per cent. of our first cohort of bursary holders were teaching in maintained schools last autumn, a higher proportion than most PGCE graduates. We are, as the House knows, making proposals to simplify routes to qualified teacher status, to make changing to teaching more attractive to suitable people with financial and other commitments that make it difficult for them to undertake full-time training with no commitment of a job at the end of it.

We shall go on doing all these things and we shall step up our activities if the reversal of the trend shows any signs of falling back into decline. In spite of the turmoil of the last few years and in spite of constant denigration of their own profession as a career by teachers themselves, people want to come into teaching. We believe that they will find teaching in the new world of the national curriculum and higher standards in our schools will be much more exciting, challenging and rewarding. We are convinced that this, together with the new pay structure, which also allows incentive allowances to be paid to teachers of shortage subjects, will encourage the teachers whom we need to stay in teaching. We are making more money available than ever to enable local education authorities to make improvements to the teaching environment.

I turn to the figures quoted by my hon. Friend. We all know that we can do anything with statistics. It is of course theoretically possible that we could be short of up to 12,000 maths teachers by 1995, as the report quoted by my hon. Friend maintains, but it is also theoretically possible for us to have more maths teachers than we need by the same date. It all depends on the assumptions that we put into the supply and demand bits of the equation. We think that those who wrote the report have missed out some key assumptions and have given an unnecessarily pessimistic weight to others.

We shall be in a better position to assess the demand for teachers in these subjects in the 1990s when we have digested the maths and science subject working group reports that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has just received. We shall have better estimates of the current supply of maths and physics teachers when we have the results later this year of the survey of secondary teachers that we have brought forward by a year. We shall then be in a position to assess what risk there is of a shortfall and its possible extent. We are well aware, as both hon. Members have said, that we must keep up the pressure. We believe that our programme of measures to combat teacher shortages has at least a good chance of reducing the shortfall to nothing. We certainly think that it should be given more of a chance to show whether it will.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North and to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) for their contributions to the debate. We are fully aware of the problems and I believe that I have suggested some solutions to them.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF WALES, COLLEGE OF CARDIFF BILL
[Lords]
Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

IMPERIAL COLLEGE BILL *[Lords]*

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

BREDERO (BON ACCORD CENTRE, ABERDEEN) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

HIGHLAND REGION (LOCHINVER HARBOUR) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security Reform

1. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the results of the implementation of the recent social security changes.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): The reforms have helped us to provide extra help for families with children, improve incentives to work, and make the system simpler and easier to understand. Reports from local offices in my Department indicate that the vast majority of cases were reassessed on time, and the new income support scheme is proving easier to administer. On the limited evidence available, the position in most local authorities appears to be similar. We have made it clear that we will continue to monitor the effects of the changes.

Mr. Michie: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that reply. He mentioned the limited information available. I remind him of my prediction on 2 November 1987, at column 687, when I said that there would be hardship and asked for a report in 1988 on the effect of the legislation, bearing in mind that many of our constituents have lost out on housing benefit when they receive a fairly modest private pension. They have also lost out on certain Government training schemes. Therefore, will the Minister not carry out a limited survey, but come back to the House with the real results of the legislation?

Mr. Moore: As I said, we shall continue to monitor the situation carefully, but the Government reacted very quickly with the substantive changes that were announced on 27 April in areas that were causing clear hardship. The changes affect 8·5 million people, and overall they are settling in very successfully.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Does my right hon. Friend agree, and will he give publicity to the fact, that delays in paying family credit are not due to the local DHSS offices, which have to carry most of the flak from people waiting for family credit?

Mr. Moore: I am glad that my hon. Friend raised that point. The initial stages of the introduction of family credit meant that processing the claims took between five and six weeks on average. That has improved: 243,000 family credit claims are now in payment, 72,000 claims are pending, and the aim in future is to clear claims within 18 working days. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that a help desk facility has now been made available for local offices to contact the family credit unit in North Fylde with regard to those who complain of financial hardship while awaiting an award of family credit. My hon. Friend has raised an important point, and I am delighted to be able to make that announcement.

Mr. Orme: Can the Secretary of State explain why people on industrial injury benefit and invalidity benefit have suffered so severely under these changes? Cuts of £10, £20 and £25 a week have been made in their benefits through loss in housing benefit. What is the reason for that, and what is the Secretary of State doing about it?

Mr. Moore: I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the changes that were announced on 27 April, which took into account people above the income support level who had not had transitional protection. In most cases, the schemes to which the right hon. Gentleman is referring are discretionary ones implemented by local authorities. The changes have taken account of the points that the right hon. Gentleman has raised. Such people should be helped by the changes that were announced on 27 April.

Mr. Madel: In view of the time that it takes for people to receive family credit, does my right hon. Friend agree that local housing authorities should be patient and sensitive about rent arrears caused by an absence of family credit?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has raised a constituency case with me, but he makes a good general point. Local authorities are required to take notional account of family credit. The five to six-week delay in processing at the start of the scheme has created some difficulties, but we have set up a central unit at North Fylde to assist local offices, and it should help considerably.

Mrs. Beckett: In his continued monitoring, will the Secretary of State take account of the fact that the rules, which allow only the offer of loans to the most desperate and destitute, simply add insult to injury? When his officers

meet representatives of homeless organisations later this week, will he undertake urgently to review the balance between loans and grants?

Mr. Moore: No. We will look carefully, as we said we would, at the overall workings of the social fund. I hope that the detailed June figures will be available by the end of this week or the beginning of next week and placed in the Library, but it might be helpful for the hon. Lady and other Opposition Members to be reminded that loans generally are running at above 71 per cent. of the forecast profile and grants are running at about 32 per cent. In other words, the overall expenditure is about 59 per cent. of profile, which is nothing like the appalling suggestions that the Opposition made about the scheme. The overall figures are well within the cash forecast profile.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend nevertheless accept that there are still many cases of genuine hardship? Will he assure the House that the monitoring will be careful? Will he examine most thoroughly the dossier of cases that I am sending him today involving some of my constituents?

Mr. Moore: Of course. I shall look with pleasure at the cases.

Mr. Bill Michie: With pleasure!

Mr. Moore: I look with pleasure on the opportunity that I might have to help an hon. Member who, like Opposition Members, tries to help his constituents. I shall, of course, monitor the situation carefully. I remind the House, however, that 8·5 million people were affected by the most radical changes in social security for 40 years, and, overall, the changes have settled in extremly well.

Housing Benefit

2. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of people likely to qualify for transitional protection payments in respect of housing benefits.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We still estimate that over 300,000 households should qualify for the transitional payments announced by my right hon. Friend on 27 April following the changes in the housing benefit system.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister accept that when the Secretary of State told the House on 27 April that people most severely and significantly affected by the housing benefit cuts would benefit from the transitional arrangements, he was guilty of a very cruel con on some of the most vulnerable people in society? Will he confirm that many of the people who are most savagely hit by housing benefit cuts will not and were never meant to be helped by these transitional arrangements? How many people have so far applied for the transitional arrangements, bearing in mind the confusing under-publicity of the scheme? Will he confirm that the calculation made by his Department is that only 10 per cent. of those who apply will be successful? Will he answer these points——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We shall get through very few questions if we have long supplementaries.

Mr. Scott: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's third question, because I have no idea who will apply, but I can say that we have received 60,000 applications for transitional payments and that about 4,000 a day are coming in. We aim to have another advertising campaign in the near future to encourage the highest possible take-up of this protection, which, as we said at the time, is designed to limit housing benefit loss to £2·50 a week. It was never designed to protect people from rises in rents or rates which took place on 1 April.

Mr. McCrindle: The transitional arrangements notwithstanding, are there not many people who are ostensibly gainers under the new social security regulations who are being turned into losers almost entirely as a result of the necessary contribution of 20 per cent. to the local rates and the imposition of the water rate? I recognise the desirability of all citizens having some interest in local government expenditure, but does my hon. Friend remain satisfied that this is the most equitable way of achieving that?

Mr. Scott: Water rates were taken into account in the transitional protection. As for rates, £1·30 compensation for the minimum contribution to rates is built into the income support system. I believe that we tackled that problem in a fair and equitable manner.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister confirm that it is now 11 weeks since the scheme was announced and that, as yet, not a single claimant has received a refund? Many of them are now running up considerable arrears and facing threats of eviction by local authorities and private landlords. Do the Government not accept some of the responsibility for having got those people into that difficulty?

Will the Minister recognise that more than 5 million claimants have lost some or all of thier housing benefit, and well over 4,500,000 will get no help from the scheme —including all under 25, who have suffered a particularly savage cut in their benefit?

Finally, how long is transitional, and what is supposed to happen to claimaints when it comes to an end?

Mr. Scott: Those who have had the higher losses will have their transitional protection phased out over a number of years, so there is no question of the scheme being limited to a year. It is a remarkable acheivement that we have been able to set up the new office, employ and train the staff, establish the procedures and advertise all that so that I can say that the first payments will go out before the end of this week. We shall be anxious to achieve the highest possible take-up.

It is true that no transitional protection payments have been made under housing benefit, but they have been made for those in receipt of income support, who are the poorest people. Those who have not received benefit are by definitition not the poorest. Their payments should begin this week.

Social Security Reform

3. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect the social security reforms have had on the unemployment and poverty traps.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): When family credit replaced family income supplement, about twice as many working families with children became eligible for

help and the payments became more generous. Nearly all working families can now be better off in work. We ended the absurd situation in which a person on family income supplement whose pay went could be left worse off than before.

Mr. Riddick: That is an encouraging reply. Is not one of the major but little publicised advantages of the changes of last April the fact that it no longer pays to stay on the dole rather than to take a job? The Government are giving individuals the incentive to take a job. Does that not contrast starkly with the attitude of the Opposition, who clearly believe in blanket benefit and would prefer people to become more, rather than less, dependent on state handouts?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. There are now few families who would be better off out of work than in work. We ended the circumstances in which people could lose more benefit as their pay rose. Under family income supplement a family with three children who earned £75 could be £5·50 a week worse off if their pay rose to £130 a week.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister say something about the impact of the loss of income support on self-employed Harris tweed weavers? He will know something about that, because I have written to the Department about it. He will know of the great fear among these people that the loss of income support will act as a disincentive to others to join the Harris tweed industry and become weavers. Will he concede that the industry is unique and requires special measures, and will he undertake to review the impact of the loss of income support upon it?

Mr. Portillo: I shall be happy to consider the hon. Gentleman's letters and reply to them in due course. There is now a clear division between income support, under which the claimant must work 24 hours a week or less, and family credit, under which the claimant will work 24 hours a week or more. That division has simplified the system and is generally advantageous.

Mr. Franks: Is my hon. Friend aware that the apprentices in the shipyards of Barrow, whose places were formerly funded under the youth training scheme, have been laid off as a result of the industrial dispute and are being denied income support or unemployment benefit of any kind? Will my hon. Friend look into that as a matter of urgency and issue local instructions that unemployment benefit is to be paid?

Mr. Portillo: I cannot do exactly what my hon. Friend wishes, because these are matters for an adjudication officer. If a person is involved in a trade dispute, he is not eligible for unemployment benefit or income support for himself, although payments can be made to his dependants. It is for the adjudication officer to decide whether a person is involved in a trade dispute. I hope that that decision will be reached as expeditiously as possible.

Hospitals (Land Sales)

4. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the proportion of revenue from the sale of land belonging to hospitals which goes to district health authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): The policy is as set out in the land transactions handbook and by circular. It states that a significant proportion of the proceeds of sale should remain with district health authorities as an incentive for those districts to rationalise and dispose of property. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that the total amount realised in England from land sales last year was nearly £190 million.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister aware that in the South East Thames region, the higher the sale price the more the region keeps? Therefore, there is an incentive, every time a hospital is sold, to go for the highest price, irrespective of what ends up on the site. Is she particularly aware that in my constituency, St. Olave's hospital in Rotherhithe is out for tender and there is a risk that a hospital set up to cater for the poor will have part of its land sold for housing for the rich, while many hundreds of thousands of poor, who need housing, health and community services, might be sold down the river by the policy of her Department?

Mrs. Currie: The health authority locally has a responsibility to make the best use of its property for health care. I understand that for the St. Olave's site there were proposals for a psychiatric day care centre, physiotherapy, a respite care centre, and so on. As for the way that the money might be used, the hon. Gentleman appears to have forgotten that £28 million is being allocated to the Guy's hospital phase 3 rebuilding. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be visiting that site on Friday.

Mr. Yeo: Is it not of the greatest importance in promoting health care that health bodies should use every available penny, whereas the concept that appears to be advanced by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and his party is that we should reduce the amount of money available for health care?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is right. He might have pointed out that the determined efforts that we have been making recently to dispose of sites has brought a lot more money to the Health Service. I have already said that £190 million was raised last year, and that compares with 10 years ago, when the total receipts on the sales of surplus property were £7 million.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister look at the question in relation to proposals for the sale of land and hospitals, such as one in my constituency, which was owned by a charitable trust before being handed over to the NHS? When revenue is raised by such sales, should not a donation be made to the charity?

Mrs. Currie: I believe that that case was the subject of an Adjournment debate that I had with the hon. Gentleman not long ago. If I remember rightly, the charity that he had in mind had something to do with the mining industry. Those issues were settled a long time ago, back in 1948, when the hospitals were handed over to the Health Service. There is nothing more to be said.

Mr. Redwood: Is my hon. Friend aware of a scheme in Bromley, by a private company, to build a new 550-bed hospital, at practically no cash cost to the NHS, in return for land swaps? While not commenting on the merits of

that particular case, will she welcome the principle of such a deal and confirm that the rules will not get in the way of it?

Mrs. Currie: The details of the rules are properly a matter for another of my right hon. Friends, but we welcome such deals and look forward to much closer co-operation between the NHS and the private sector, which will benefit everyone concerned.

Cleveland Child Abuse Inquiry

5. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the cost of the Cleveland child abuse inquiry.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): The total cost to central Government of the inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland in 1987 is likely to be around £1·5 million. This includes payments of £300,000 each to the Cleveland county council and to the Northern regional health authority as a contribution towards the costs of those authorities.

Ms. Armstrong: The Minister's reply demonstrates that good quality work is not cheap, and meeting the demands of the inquiry and its report will also not be cheap. Many of the authorities are worried that they will not be able to put the necessary resources into protecting children. Can we look forward to a statement from the Government that they will adequately fund local authorities to ensure that every child who is on a child abuse register is properly supervised, so that we may know that the proper resources to meet this frightening problem will be made available?

Mr. Newton: In my statement last Wednesday I said that we were putting additional targeted resources towards training, which is an essential prerequisite. The hon. Lady's question distracts attention—again, I apologise for repeating something that I said last Wednesday—from the fact that, although the Cleveland crisis caused pressure on resources in Cleveland, it does not follow that a lack of resources created the crisis.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend accept that when we talk of the Cleveland child sex abuse problem we make a mistake, and that it should be south Cleveland? There was no abnormality of numbers in north Cleveland. The abnormality was generated in the area where two stupid doctors used a discredited system to try to enhance their empires. There is absolutely no reason why the Government should put extra funding into that region for that purpose. The Cleveland child sex abuse problem occurred as a result of bad direction by the doctors and bad management by those charged with the responsibility of looking after the children.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's remarks. I have no doubt that they will be taken into account by the Cleveland authorities when considering their response to the report.

Miss Lestor: Like many hon. Members last week, I am disappointed that the three-year training proposal will not be implemented. I recognise that some resources should go into the area of child abuse, but what steps has the Minister taken to include teachers in that training? It is clear to many people who have studied the Cleveland report, and child abuse generally, that there is a great deal to be gained from training teachers to identify children who are suffering and are at risk.

Mr. Newton: The grants that I announced last week were principally directed at social workers, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has issued a circular to the education service. I am conscious of the fact that there are training needs elsewhere, which I will discuss with my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Lord: Recent tragic events in my constituency have highlighted the fact that some small private children's homes still do not have to be registered or inspected regularly. Bearing in mind everyone's grave concern about the welfare of all our children, and especially those vulnerable children in care, will my right hon. Friend undertake to examine this matter with the greatest possible urgency, with a view to introducing the necessary legislation as quickly as possible?

Mr. Newton: Yes; I will consider that matter with a view to ascertaining the most appropriate action.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If it is not a lack of resources that is causing the problem in training, what is it? Why has the Minister not explained why he has not accepted the recommendation of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work? Is there not a difference betwen £7 million and £40 million, and why should this be the only country in Europe to have a two-year training programme?

Mr. Newton: I have explained several times the importance of improving the training, among other things, of existing social workers in that area. I did not regard the CCETSW proposals as the best way to spend that money. We hope to make a number of important improvements in the training of existing as well as future social workers. The right course is a balanced package of that sort.

Nurses' Pay

6. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what increases nurses working in paediatric intensive care in inner London can expect to receive as a result of the 1988 nurses' pay award.

Mr. Moore: The maximum pay for a staff nurse with post-basic training in paediatric intensive care in inner London is now £12,538, an increase of over £3,000, or more than 31 per cent., above the previous maximum annual salary.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the fact that he recognises the problems of recruiting specialist skilled nurses in London is very welcome, as are the steps that he has taken? Is he further aware that the problem is one of recruitment, not only in inner London, but in outer London, and that the sooner we can achieve regional pay negotiations the better?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will remember that the Government sought in their advice to the review bodies to move a little further on the question of geographical pay, but the review bodies did not see fit to go beyond the

London area. Under the recommendations, the outer London area carries, in addition to London weighting, a 5 per cent. supplement.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that one of the problems for nurses in inner London is the high cost of housing? In determining their pay award, and in considering the sale of nurses' homes, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that in future nurses can live reasonably near the hospitals at which they work?

Mr. Moore: There is no doubt that in inner London housing is an important factor in the employment of nurses. Last year the Government encouraged the Nationwide building society and other organisations to get together in some areas to assist in shared ownership. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that over the past two years the total rental increase for nurses' accommodation has been 4 per cent. I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's point about nurses' accommodation. That is an important feature of the debate.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware of suggestions for differential payments for nurses in paediatric branches and for sisters in other branches of the NHS, although they are thought to be doing equal work? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that nurses and sisters at all levels should be given equal pay for equal work under the 1988 award?

Mr. Moore: Of course nurses must be paid equal pay for equal work. The idea behind the review system was to give additional rewards to those with additional skills and responsibilities, especially those relating to patient care. There were clear shortages in those skills, and that is what the review regrading system is geared to address.

Private Nursing Homes

7. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards health authorities financing out of their budgets private nursing homes within the precincts of National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: We welcome close collaboration between the NHS and the independent sector including, where appropriate, making premises available on NHS land. However, the hon. Gentleman should be aware that health authorities have no power to provide finance for private homes, though they can of course buy places on contract.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Minister not worried that ward 5 at Fazakerley hospital in Liverpool was closed recently, causing considerable distress to the elderly patients, and that a private nursing home for 85 people is being established, no doubt at a price? Is it not incongruous that National Health Service wards are closed but the private sector is allowed to get its profits out of nursing homes in the precincts of an NHS hospital?

Mrs. Currie: It sounds as though part of the proposal is a good idea. The hon. Gentleman may like to check with his constituents in Liverpool before he takes that line. The total number of council-provided homes for elderly people in Liverpool stands at 43, providing 1,600 places, and the total number of private homes in Liverpool stands at 66, providing 1,800 places. The private and voluntary sectors in Liverpool are already providing most of the care for old people.

Mr. Baldry: Will my hon. Friend confirm that once the Health and Medicines Bill is enacted it will be possible for district health authorities to enter into collaborative projects with private health providers and, if the authorities want, to provide private hospital accommodation in their own right?

Mrs. Currie: Depending on the exact terms of the contracts being negotiated, some of these projects are already legal. Work is proceeding on them. We welcome these projects.

Clinical Grading Review

8. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the clinical grading review is based on actual jobs performed at the beginning of April and that managers will not be rewriting job descriptions.

Mr. Newton: The comprehensive management guidance which has been issued to health authorities makes it clear that, where this is possible, posts should be graded on the basis of existing duties and responsibilities.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister gave a commitment to fund the award fully, but there are disturbing stories that, because of the cash limits placed on health authorities, managers are trying to squeeze the award down to the money available. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that would be a shortsighted policy, which could only cause problems in future years and lead to a sense of betrayal among nurses?

Mr. Newton: The Government have made the funds available to the health authorities to meet the costs of the award on the best available estimates. We have issued guidance to assist that process. I have every intention of ensuring that it is carried out in good faith.

Mr. Hayes: I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and efforts on nurses' pay, but what fills many of us in the Conservative party with dread and foreboding is allowing regions to dole out the money to the districts, particularly regions such as North East Thames, which do not seem to have the management expertise to do so efficiently or properly.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's views on the North East Thames regional health authority, which I share with him, but the sensible way to proceed is in the normal way that we seek to allocate funds in the Health Service.

Ms. Harman: Is it not now clear that the sum that the Government have set aside will not fund fully the nurses' pay award? The Government must give an unequivocal commitment to fund in full the results of the clinical grading review, otherwise managers will have to choose between downgrading nurses to meet the cash limits and cutting services to meet the pay award. Which is it to be?

Mr. Newton: I say simply that the hon. Lady is extremely unwise to venture such categorical assertions at such an early stage in this very large exercise.

Benefit Claimants (Resources)

9. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an investigation into the effects on the disposable resources of persons dependent on social security benefits of the April 1988 social security changes, and in particular the effect on those in receipt of industrial injuries pension, war pensions or disability pensions.

Mr. Portillo: We shall be monitoring the effects of the social security changes on all client groups—including the disabled.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that the most traumatic of the changes in April were the increases in payable rents because of the erosion of housing benefit, and that of all the changes the most hurtful are those affecting the groups mentioned in my question—industrial injuries pensioners, war pensioners and disability pensioners? Even allowing for the transitional payments, they will find their special pensions reduced by perhaps £2 per week because of the way in which the benefit is working. Will the Government look again at the working people in those positions are not hit by that change?

Mr. Portillo: Let me separate those categories a little for the hon. Gentleman. He will know that for war pensioners the local authority discretion on housing benefit has not been removed. Any local authority that wishes to make special arrangements for war pensioners is free to do so. The other two categories are covered by the transitional payments, and any of the hon. Gentleman's constituents should now be applying to the transitional unit in Glasgow.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the distribution of explanatory leaflets for the benefit changes? Does he accept that two citizens advice bureaux in my constituency have drawn to my attention their concern about that? Can my hon. Friend do something to expedite the matter? I think that it would help.

Mr. Portillo: I am sorry to hear of my hon. Friend's concern. Some 8·5 million copies of leaflet RR4 on housing benefit have been published and most have been sent out. All social security offices, local authorities and many advice centres have them. If my hon. Friend has a particular difficulty in mind, I should be pleased to consider it.

Mr. Ashley: Can the Minister explain why charitable payments are now taken into account as income under the new income support scheme? Can he tell the House whether it is true that if a blind couple with guide dogs receive help in feeding their dogs, that couple could lose up to £10 a week under that scheme?

Mr. Portillo: The first £5 a week is disregarded. Other payments are taken into account as capital, as I understand it. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that payments that are made to third parties are not taken into account. That provision could be helpful in the instance that he has mentioned.

Mr. Favell: It has not escaped my hon. Friend's notice that, for the Opposition, the alarmist flavour of the month is to suggest that more people are living in poverty. Will my hon. Friend tell the House whether the bottom 10 per cent. are better, or worse, off than they were six or seven years ago?

Mr. Portillo: Since 1981 that group has experienced an increase in living standards of about 8 per cent., which is better than for the population as a whole, but my hon. Friend draws attention to the fact that under the old statistics, which are based on supplementary benefit, if the rates of benefit became more generous, more people appeared to be living in poverty.

Social Security Reform

10. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet the Disability Alliance to discuss the effects on people with disabilities of the social security changes which took effect on 11 April 1988.

Mr. Scott: We already have.

Mr. Flannery: I wonder whether Conservative Members are treating these questions seriously. The hon. Gentleman, amidst noise from the Government Benches, has given me a virtually monosyllabic answer. I have asked the Minister whether he really understands the misery and poverty that these changes in housing benefit and income support are causing. I want to ask him again and get a better answer. Does he not realise that there are severely disabled people in the community who at this moment are deeply worried about these changes? Will he tell the House exactly what he will do to satisfy these poor disabled people that these changes are not going to push them mercilessly into the sort of position into which the old and the sick are being pushed?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman could not have heard my answer. Let me give it to him again. We have already met the Disability Alliance. That was the question that the hon. Gentleman put to me.

Mr. Skinner: What about the money?

Mr. Scott: I will tell the hon. Gentleman about the money. In the period of this Government, £3 billion has gone to disabled people. There has been an increase of 80 per cent. in real terms. Then, as part of the reforms that we introduced at the beginning of April, an extra £60 million is going into the disability premium, another £8 million into the severe disability premium and another £5 million into the Independent Living Fund. We have fulfilled our commitments to disabled people.

Mr. Alfred Morris: How is the Minister replying to the Alliance's letter of 28 June, which shows that over 1 million disabled people were made worse off and expresses deep concern that these benefit changes came before the report on disability that the House is awaiting from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys? Will he categorically confirm, or deny, *The Independent's* report of 23 June that the OPCS findings are already with the Government and that, by delaying its publication, the Government are deliberately trying to avoid parliamentary scrutiny and criticism and, by implication, acting in a way that is grossly contemptuous of this House?

Mr. Scott: Disabled people enjoy transitional protection at the point of change. The first report from the OPCS survey is likely to be published in September. There will be

at least another three, and possibly another four, reports, the last of which I would expect to be published about 12 months from now. Until we have all those reports it would be premature to make any judgment about the extent and the nature of disability or the best way of meeting that need.

Medical Laboratory Staff

11. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the pay and working conditions of medical laboratory scientific officers within the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: A claim for improved pay and conditions of service was submitted on 5 April. Since then we have received numerous letters from hon. Members and individual medical laboratory scientific officers. Negotiations are continuing in the appropriate Whitley council.

Mr. Cook: The Minister will know that the Secretary of State has reason to be grateful to these laboratory technicians, in that his blood samples, when he was in a private clinic, were tested and quantified by these technicians in St. Thomas's hospital. So the critical position of these technicians is well known to the DHSS team. Will the Minister concede that what is necessary are pay and conditions that will not only retain the technicians that we already have but attract to the profession people of the necessary calibre to service the industry?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that almost every hon. Member, quite apart from my right hon. Friend, has had cause to be grateful to MLSOs at one time or another over the years. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the management side has put to the Whitley council a pay offer of 5·5 per cent., together with proposals for a restructuring, which would lead to a further increase in pay on assimilation to the new structure. Those proposals are designed precisely to meet the sort of problem to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that these people, although far less glamorous than nurses, in many cases undertake work of greater responsibility than nurses, with life and death involved, and that, certainly so far as Adenbrookes in my constituency is concerned, they have had a raw deal and deserve better treatment?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I care to tread into the minefield of the precise comparison with nurses, but I certainly wish to pay tribute to the value of the work of MSLOs. The nature of some of that work has changed a good deal, hence the importance of the restructuring proposals.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the management and staff sides meet tomorrow, why does the Minister not take this convenient opportunity to say that he will fully fund the cost of regrading? If he will not do so, can he really expect the House to believe that regrading is the way to solve the problem of low pay when he knows that management is offering only 2·1 per cent. to cover its costs? How does he hope to meet the Government's targets on cervical screening when the laboratories that carry out the screening are losing trained staff at the rate of 15 to 20 per cent. a year?

Mr. Newton: The offers being made by the management have been made after proper assessment of the cost. I am confident that they can be met. I should like to take this opportunity to wish both sides well for successful negotiations tomorrow.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to mark the arrival of the President of Turkey. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be attending a state banquet in honour of President Evren.

Mr. Boateng: The Prime Minister is clearly in need of some rest and relaxation. Will she be letting her hair down this year at the Notting Hill carnival? Before she does that, will she address herself to the deep-rooted problems of deprivation and discrimination that exist not only in Notting Hill but throughout our country? Will she do something about a situation in which apartments are for sale on our river at a cost of £370,000, with a Porsche thrown in, while in my local social security office in Harlesden, as a result of DHSS guidelines, the officers are paying out less than 2 per cent. of the total budget? *[Interruption.]* Will she confirm that the real cause of the moral thuggery about which the Home Secretary complains is in 10 Downing street itself?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask for brief questions, please.

The Prime Minister: No, I am not in need of rest and relaxation. The moment that the House rises I shall be going to Australia for the bicentennial celebrations. *[Interruption.]* I shall be there while the House is not sitting. The hon. Gentleman asked about social security payments. He will be well aware, particularly as I have heard some of the replies today, that the amount spent on social security has gone up enormously. The standard of living of the lowest groups has increased more than the rest.

Mr. Higgins: In view of the stand that my right hon. Friend has taken against terrorism, will she take time today to condemn the appalling attack yesterday on a Greek passenger vessel? While expressing sympathy to the victims, will she also pay tribute to the schoolchildren from the Sion school, Worthing, and those in charge of them, who not only reacted bravely but administered first aid to other people who had suffered?

The Prime Minister: I gladly respond to both parts of my right hon. Friend's question. This was an appalling act of terrorism against people on holiday. All acts of terrorism are appalling, but this was a particularly appalling one. The schoolchildren from Worthing were an

enormous credit to themselves, their families, their school and to Britain in the way that they tackled the terrible events. I gladly pay tribute to them.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These interruptions take up a lot of time.

Mr. Hattersley: On 23 June the Secretary of State for the Environment gave the House figures purporting to compare the burden of poll tax with that of the rates. Were those figures correct?

The Prime Minister: I would stand by what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said. I do not recall that matter, and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would be surprised if I did.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Prime Minister genuinely stands by what the Secretary of State said, why has she endorsed a candidate in Kensington who denies her figures and says that the burden of poll tax in Kensington will be a third of the figure announced by the Secretary of State? Why are Ministers endorsing his fabrication every morning?

The Prime Minister: As I understand it, the candidate in Kensington—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: For Kensington it has been said that the community charge would be—could be—£122 after the ILEA overspend—Labour's ILEA overspend—of £218 has been eliminated and after the money paid under the safety net has been eliminated. Those are two major figures. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not wish the safety net to be abolished, as that would hit many Labour authorities very hard indeed. It means that some areas—in some Tory councils—have to pay higher rates while it obtains. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not wish to be proud of the £218 ILEA overspend.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not think that the Prime Minister is wholly in command of her subject.*[Interruption.]* Does she realise that, in order to give even spurious justification to that calculation, she must be announcing to the House that she proposes a massive cut in education spending throughout the ILEA area? If the purpose of abolishing ILEA was to cut the cost of London education to the bone and to cut services with it, why did she not have the guts to tell the House at the time?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman were in command of his subject, he would realise that I had given him two very precise answers and even that the figures added up. The forecast of £122 is what the charge would be with no ILEA overspend of £218, which is to be laid at the door of a Socialist authority—the highest expenditure for some of the worst education in the country—and after the safety net, which is a burden deliberately placed on many Conservative authorities over a period of four years to help those in many Labour authorities. Does the right hon. Gentleman want that to be eliminated?

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the support given by Bury, Wigan and Rochdale councils to the employment training programme? Will she urge Bolton council not to turn its back on this excellent scheme to help the unemployed, and does she deplore the violent tactics used by some of the opponents of the scheme?

The Prime Minister: I hope that all authorities, including Bolton, will support the employment training scheme, and I welcome the support given by many local authorities. Those who do not support the scheme are depriving young people of very good training which will be very important in the coming decade because fewer young people will be leaving school and we shall need a greater proportion with the requisite skills. I hope that every authority will urgently support the scheme.

Q2. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Prime Minister find time to meet representatives of the 500 advanced electronics workers at Marconi, Tyne and Wear, whose factory shut down yesterday, and the 5,000 shipyard workers whose jobs are at risk, to tell them face to face whether they, too, must get on their bikes to the bed-sits of south Kensington?

The Prime Minister: To the first part of the question, I am afraid that the answer is no. Redundancies are always a cause of great concern, especially in the areas where they occur, but, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, unemployment is falling in every region. He knows full well that there would be no effective industry if we did not keep up to date with the times and if we did not rationalise industry. That has to be done on many occasions. No electronics factory could exist without keeping up with the very latest developments, and that sometimes means redundancies. The hon. Gentleman referred to shipbuilding. I assume that he was talking about the problems of Swan Hunter, or the problems of Sunderland. I read what some Opposition Members said when the main frigate programme went to Yarrow, but let me state clearly that that programme went to Yarrow because Yarrow put in the best tender.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: When my right hon. Friend is discussing with her ministerial colleagues the question of Government hospitality, will she advise them to follow the example of the Leader of the Opposition in quaffing South African wine?

The Prime Minister: I think my hon. Friend makes the point more effectively than I could.

Q3. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fraser: Is the Prime Minister aware that in London there are many hundreds of children, including over 100 in my borough, who are officially recognised as being in danger of physical and sexual abuse but to whom, because of staff shortages, no social worker can be allocated? Is she aware that exploding house prices and the impending poll tax will only make matters worse? What will she do to assist these vulnerable children?

The Prime Minister: With all due respect to what the hon. Gentleman has said, I should have thought that that

came very high on the list of priorities of any social worker and that any children who were vulnerable would be one of the first duties of the social workers who are there. *[Interruption.]* Otherwise, if the hon. Gentleman has any particular cases, will he please give the information to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which has been doing excellent work for over a century or more?

Sir Jim Spicer: My right hon. Friend will know of the announcement last Saturday about the Saudi Arabian arms deal. She will also understand that my constituents who work at Westland greeted that announcement with delight and, if I may say so, some relief. Will she take an early opportunity to come to Westland so that they may thank her in person for the part that she played in achieving that order for this country?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps one day I will visit the firm. May I point out that I think we obtained the Saudi Arabian order because of the excellent way in which the Tornado order was fulfilled. That is due to all in the company, both management and work force, who carried out that order, as well as to the training given by the Ministry of Defence and the support services. It is a success story that won another powerful order, which we welcome.

Q4. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Strang: Is the Prime Minister aware of the anger in Scotland at the remark by the chairman of the British Steel Corporation last week to the effect that the Ravenscraig strip mill will probably close next year? Does she recognise that the strip mill is crucial to steel making at Ravenscraig and that Ravenscraig is fundamental to Scotland's future as an industrial nation? That is why any move to close it will be met by a campaign of popular resistance the like of which has not been seen before. Will she take the opportunity this afternoon to congratulate the Ravenscraig work force on achieving levels of productivity which are the highest of the five United Kingdom integrated plants and probably the highest in Europe? Will she affirm the Government's commitment to steelmaking at Ravenscraig?

The Prime Minister: I read very carefully the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Trade and Industry as long ago as 3 December 1987 on British Steel Corporation privatisation and the future of steel making at Ravenscraig. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with that statement, which made it clear that there will continue to be commercial requirement for steel making at Ravenscraig for at least the next seven years. My right hon. and learned Friend was tackled by Opposition Members straight away about the hot strip mill. He made the position clear:

> "There is a problem with hot strip mills, as I frankly disclosed in my statement. There is surplus capacity in the United Kingdom. However, the commercial judgment of the corporation is that it can continue to operate all four strip mills, at least until 1989."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 1112.]

It was known from the beginning when the statement was made that there was considerable hot strip mill capacity in the corporation. That statement was made about the one associated with Ravenscraig as far back as 3 December 1987.

Q5. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend accept the House's gratitude for taking on board six refurbishment areas of rundown inner cities held by Labour authorities? Does she agree that it is a national scandal that today more than 136 council dwellings, largely in the hands of Socialist bureaucracies, lie vacant? Will she tackle that matter at the earliest possible opportunity?

The Prime Minister: I saw the welcome that my right hon. Friend's statement on action housing trusts received in the House yesterday. The people living in those areas will greatly welcome the increased expenditure on their housing and the higher standard of living and greater security that they will enjoy. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that many council houses are left vacant for far too long. They number about 110,000 properties. The complaints about homelessness made by many of the authorities concerned would be far more credible if they were to fill some of the accommodation that they have left empty.

Mr. Maclennan: As the Sharpeville Six's stay of execution is running out, will the Prime Minister make the strongest representations to the South African President that it would hinder the dialogue between South Africa and our country, and with all democratic and justice-loving countries, if those executions were to proceed?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, representations have already been made to President Botha——

Mr. Winnick: By the right hon. Lady?

The Prime Minister: By me, through the usual channels and through the best channels, for clemency towards the Sharpeville Six. If their death sentences are confirmed, those representations will be made again. They will not be made only by me, but will be reinforced by the Toronto summit Seven and the Community Twelve.

House of Commons Library

3.31 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you are the guardian of Back-Bench rights, I am sure that you would want Back Benchers to be well informed, and our Library services are essential in that regard. You may not be aware that the latest volume of Winston Churchill's biography is missing from the Library. That is very unfortunate, because if it were there hon. Members could read on page 190 that when Churchill was in Cuba on 1 February 1946 and was asked to criticise the Attlee Government, he replied that he never criticised the Government of his country while he was abroad.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the loss of the book.

Ravenscraig Steelworks

3.32 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of the Prime Minister's answer about the Ravenscraig Steelworks.

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order must be for me and cannot arise from a question to the Prime Minister.

Dr. Reid: A few days ago the chairman of the British Steel Corporation made a statement that he had advised the Government about the probable closure of the Ravenscraig hot strip mill. Is it in order to raise at this point the fact that the answer given by the Prime Minister today suggests——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not in order to raise it, because that would be an extension of Prime Minister's Question Time. It is not a matter for me. It is an Opposition Day, and a great many Opposition Members wish to speak.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In order to clarify the matter, and to ensure that we know exactly what is the situation in respect of Ravenscraig, will you, in your capacity as Speaker, tell the House whether you have received a request from any Minister for permission to inform the House of the up-to-date situation? If no such request has been made, will you convey to the Government our request that a statement be made to clear up the matter?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. I have received no request for a statement. The hon. Gentleman has made his point.

BILL PRESENTED

Young Employees (Training Requirement) Bill

Mr. Barry Sheerman, supported by Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Michael Meacher, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Gavin Strang, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Ken Eastham, Mr. Ron Davies, Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Mr. Dennis Turner, Mr. David Hinchliffe and Mr. Gerry Steinberg, presented a Bill to require employers to provide training for all employees aged between 16 and 19 years of a standard at least equal to that provided under the Youth Training Scheme: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 196].

Ravenscraig Steelworks

3.35 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, that I have not had the opportunity to give you notice of my intention to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, but the action that provokes me into doing so has taken place only in the last few minutes, and I take the view that Standing Order No. 20 should be flexible enough to take account of anything that happens before the time at which the Adjournment is moved. Therefore, I beg leave to move the Adjournment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I do not believe that anything new has taken place since 12 o'clock today. I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's reply, and, as I understood it, she was reading out what had been stated previously. I cannot hear a Standing Order No. 20 application arising out of that question.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you give us some guidance? There is more to a statement than the mere words read from a bit of paper, and Opposition Members feel that what we heard from the Prime Minister about Ravenscraig is of extreme urgency and importance to many hon. Members and many people in Scotland. We must have an opportunity to debate the matter.

Mr. Speaker: There are opportunities to debate the matter. There are Opposition days, Adjournment debates and Questions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear the hon. Members as long as they realise that they are putting in jeopardy—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am on my feet. —the equal claims of their colleagues, many of whom wish to take part in two very important Opposition day debates.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I doubt if I can give an answer to the hon. Gentleman, but I will take his point of order.

Mr. Strang: I shall be very brief, Mr. Speaker. The point that must be grasped is that the statement read out by the Prime Minister gives the impression that the remark by the chairman of British Steel was not, as was widely reported, some sort of gaffe. Having given that statement credence, we consider it fundamentally important for us to hear a statement from an Industry Minister to clear the matter up. Can you help the House and ask the Leader of the House to call an Industry Minister to appear before us?

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it necessary for us to be so solicitous to these points of order, bearing in mind that Opposition Members are absorbing their own speaking time because, as usual, they have not enough speakers to support their business?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the whole House appreciates —I certainly do—that this is an important matter for hon. Members who represent constituents who work at Ravenscraig. I cannot help the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), but I am sure that what has been said has been heard and noted on the Front Bench.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I hear the hon. Gentleman, I shall have to take it into account very carefully later.

Dr. Reid: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I assure you that I do not wish to put in jeopardy the chances of other hon. Members to make a contribution, but it must be understood that 20,000 Scottish jobs appear to have been put in jeopardy today. I should like to submit an application under Standing Order No. 20. I shall explain to you, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear such an application, for the reasons that I have already given.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Value Added Tax (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1124) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Smoke Nuisance (Domestic Sources)

3.38 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable smoke emitted from a chimney of a private dwelling to be deemed for the purposes of Part III of the Public Health Act to be a statutory nuisance.

Let me make it clear at the outset that it is not my intention in bringing in the Bill to try to transform all areas of this land into clean air zones or to impose bureaucratic controls on the types of fuel or appliances used. The Bill's intention is merely to remove an anomaly in existing public health legislation and to enable local authorities to act in cases in which gross smoke nuisance occurs from domestic chimneys. It is indeed an anomaly that, under our present law, smoke may be a statutory nuisance except when it is emitted from the chimney of a private dwelling.

Since, in all urban and suburban areas in Britain, clean air legislation is in force limiting the types of fuel that may be used, smoke nuisance from domestic fires is largely a rural problem, where the clean air legislation is not in force. In such areas, therefore, people have no statutory protection from neighbours who cause a gross nuisance, either because of what they choose to burn on their fires —I am talking not about logs, but about motor tyres, animal carcases or old window frames—or because of faulty chimneys or flues. Such people have recourse to the law through a civil action, but they cannot always afford that.

The fact that the omission is an anomaly was recognised by the Government who, in a consultative document on air pollution control, issued in December 1986, said that it was their intention to repeal section 16(1)(a) of the Clean Air Act 1956 so as to bring non-dark smoke emissions from dwellings within the ambit of the statutory nuisance provisions of the Public Health Acts. Such a proposal is strongly supported by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, the members of which have to deal with the problem. It states:

"It was of concern to the Institution that the proposals in the consultation paper did not culminate in new consolidating and revising air pollution proposals which would have included the provisions for the control of nuisance."

No doubt hon. Members will be able to quote examples from their own constituencies. A couple of examples from south-west Norfolk serve to illustrate the effect on individuals of the anomaly that exists. Mrs. Hammond's cottage is semi-detached. Unfortunately for her, her neighbours are enthusiastic users of a solid fuel range, which is refuelled several times a day and then burnt with the damper shut down. She says:

"The smoke billows continuously and at times so thickly that we cannot see from one end of the garden to the other . . . We cannot go outside to work in the garden or on the cottage, nor can I hang out laundry . . .On winter evenings my neighbours light the open fire also and we get a double dose. My nine-year-old son's doctor believes that his constant cough is caused by the smoke and he has had to go to hospital for chest X-rays in the past several months. Our neighbours admit that their flue should be 18 inches higher than it is now to prevent turbulence and down draughts, but they will not pay a builder to install a new flue. The environmental health officer said that he has no powers to do anything about the pollution and we are very reluctant to go to court ourselves . . . Do we have to wear a face mask every time we go outside?"

Mrs. Thompson lives in a semi-detached house with a flat roof single-storey extension on the rear—an exact replica of her neighbour's house. Unfortunately for her, the neighbour installed an oil boiler attached to an old flue in what had been the old washhouse. It goes without saying that that was done without building regulation permission. Because the flue is not tall enough to provide draught for the boiler, the fumes roll along the roof and into a first floor window in Mrs. Thompson's house. No action can be taken by the local authority, and no action can be taken under the building regulations.

In each of those cases the nuisance was investigated by the environmental health officer and was found to be genuine, but all action had to be abandoned because the council had no powers to act. Theoretically, it would be possible for such local authorities in rural areas to declare clean air zones to deal with the problem of smoke from domestic chimneys. However, that would be too draconian a solution to deal with isolated instances of nuisance, and it would be unnecessarily repressive for the majority of people, who are law-abiding and considerate neighbours.

What are needed are powers for local authorities to investigate and deal with nuisance caused by domestic smoke in the same way as they can deal with other domestic nuisance. After all, it has been recognised since the end of the previous century that no emission of smoke can be tolerated if it constitutes a recognised health hazard, either short-term or long-term, but that does not apply to smoke from domestic sources. That omission was put right for people living in towns with the clean air legislation in 1956. My Bill seeks, in a less draconian fashion, to offer the same protection from isolated incidences of gross domestic smoke nuisance for people in rural areas. It is a limited measure, designed to deal with a problem which, although it may occur relatively rarely, nevertheless constitutes a gross nuisance and a health hazard. Therefore, I hope that the Bill will be supported.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. John Greenway, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Julian Brazier, Mr. David Davis and Mr. Tim Boswell.

SMOKE NUISANCE (DOMESTIC SOURCES)

Mrs. Gillian Shephard accordingly presented a Bill to enable smoke emitted from a chimney of a private dwelling to be deemed for the purposes of Part III of the Public Health Act to be a statutory nuisance: And the same was read a First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 July, and to be printed. [Bill 197.]

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Inequalities in London

3.45 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the growing division between rich and poor in London; deplores the damaging effects of poverty on the health and welfare of the worst-off Londoners, which is reducing their chances of decent homes, worthwhile jobs, sound education and satisfying leisure; recognises that this will be made much worse by the Government's poll tax, Housing, Education and Finance Bills; notes the contrasting luxury of the rich who have benefited so much from this Government's policies; and calls for new policies to secure for all Londoners the benefits enjoyed under this Government by the privileged few.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dobson: It would be difficult for anyone in possession of his senses to deny that our capital city at the moment presents a sharp contrast between those who are doing well and those who are not. On the one hand we see people who are affluent and arrogant revelling in a display of wealth both tasteless and joyless, while on the other we see people degraded and demoralised, with no jobs, no homes and no hope. All that would be bad enough if it were the accidental by-product of circumstances beyond human control, but it is not. It is the direct product of Government action and Government inaction.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You informed us that a number of hon. Members wished to take part in the debate. As only two hon. Members representing London constituencies are present, would it be in order to adjourn the debate for a short time so that more hon. Members can come into the Chamber to participate in the debate?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. Mr. Dobson.

Mr. Dobson: It seems to me that it is a gross abuse of the House for a Tory Whip to go to the Back Benches and ask his hon. Friend to raise a false point of order.

Nowhere is the contrast between rich and poor greater than that between those who have a pleasant home of their own and those who have no homes of their own and are forced to share with parents or in-laws or dwell in squalor. No fewer than 15,000 families in London are officially homeless. About half those families live in bed-and-breakfast hotels. For most of them, their lives are like hell on earth.

Conservative Members need not take my word for it. A recent report by the British Medical Association stated:

"Even if hotel accommodation is in good order, it is rarely appropriate to the needs of young children. It is difficult to maintain hygiene while washing, eating and sleeping in one overcrowded room. High levels of gastroenteritis, skin disorders and chest infections have been reported . . . The stress . . . undermines parents' relationships with each other and their children. Normal child development is impaired through lack of space for safe play and exploration. High rates of accidents to children have been reported."

That is not a report on the Third world. The people described are our fellow citizens living today within two or three miles of the House, and we should all be ashamed of ourselves.

Thousands more of our fellow citizens in London are living in overcrowded homes. Thousands of young people with children are sharing with their parents or in-laws. The Government have put the clock back. Once again many poorer families are living with three or four generations in one crowded house or flat. To put that right, the Government will have to spend more money on housing.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No. It is essential that we get on, and I do not think that my giving way will help.

Mr. Maples *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: Mr. Speaker asked us to keep our speeches to a minimum so that everybody could have an opportunity to speak, and I shall stick to that request.

With all the recent preaching that we have heard from the Prime Minister about the need for Christian virtues, we might have hoped that the precepts of the New Testament would illuminate the Government's housing policy, but I suppose that we can hardly expect the Prime Minister to practise what she preaches. Nevertheless, it was the Prime Minister who, in 1980, shocked the Sunday audience of "Weekend World" with the statement:

"Nobody would have remembered the Good Samaritan if he'd only had good intentions. He had money too".

The recent Budget showed that the Government have the money but lack the good intentions. At least the Levite and the priest confined themselves to passing by on the other side. The Government are actually making matters worse. The only characters in the parable of the good Samaritan whom the Government resemble are the thieves who mugged the poor traveller in the first place.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not give way—that would not help at all.

The housing crisis did not happen by accident. Much of it is a direct result of Government policies. In 1979 councils and housing associations in London started to build nearly 11,000 homes.

Mr. Gow *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: By 1986 that figure had dropped to 3,000. No wonder homes to rent are hard to come by.

Mr. Gow *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but it is the only time that I shall give way to a Conservative Member.

Mr. Gow: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he agree that, although the good Samaritan did indeed have a kind heart, what was of more practical significance was the fact that he had two pence in his pocket? Was not my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister therefore making a quite legitimate point?

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is of course entitled to intervene in this debate about London, had listened to what I had said, he would know that the Prime Minister said:

"Nobody would have remembered the Good Samaritan if he'd only had good intentions."

People remember the good Samaritan because Jesus Christ preached a parable about him. It is not a question whether he had money or good intentions—the story appears in the Bible because somebody preached the parable. To suggest, as the Prime Minister did, and as the hon. Member for Eastbourne does, that that parable would not have been remembered if there had not been money around is preposterous. We can assume that the Levite and the priest had money, and that they passed by on the other side, and that what were missing were good intentions. That is precisely what the Government are lacking.

Mr. Maples: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No.

Subsidies have been cut and rents have soared. As now, the highest council rents in London in 1979 were charged by Kensington and Chelsea borough council. In 1979, its average rent was £13 a week. It is now £33 a week, but that is nothing on the private sector, where rents of £300 a week have been sought for three-bedroom flats. One-bedroom flats can command more than £100 a week, and £115 a week was recently registered as a fair rent for a three-bedroom maisonette.

Rents have risen, but house prices have soared. In some parts of central London very ordinary flats go for as much as £250,000, and one-bedroom flats go for £100,000. Most people on average incomes in London have been priced out of the house buying market. How many nurses, bus drivers or teachers can afford the current prices? By contrast, some of those who have benefited most from the Budget are doing very well and their extra wealth contributes to the house price spiral which does so much damage to people who are less well off than they are.

Conservative Members need not take my word for that, either. Last week, from a profession to which the Conservative party appears to be entirely devoted—the estate agents—came a letter through the letter boxes of Kensington. It said that one single factor had contributed most to the buoyancy of the recent London property market, and that was the Budget. It went on to say:

"The lowering of the top rates of tax has resulted in a large increase in the disposable income of those who command salaries between £40,000 a year and £50,000 per annum . . . In consequence the considerable demand for quality flats and houses is in part fuelled by many people who are seeking to trade up. The demand for quality family houses with gardens in all price ranges is especially high."

What a record combination the Government have put together for housing Londoners: record low house building, record high rents and record high prices, combined with record levels of homelessness and of overcrowding, in modern times.

The Housing Bill will make matters worse. In the time available I shall not repeat the arguments put so forcefully over the months by my hon. Friends—especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who has done such sterling work. I shall merely remind the House of what happened the last time the Tories put their faith in private landlords. Kensington contributed a new word to the English language, for it was in Notting Hill, following previous Tory attempts to bring market forces back into housing, that the crooked landlord Rachman used harassment and physical violence against his tenants to such effect that the whole squalid process was named after him. Between them, the new Housing and Finance Bills will not only conjure Rachman's spirit from the grave, but will give it a tax incentive to come out and haunt us again.

In many parts of London today we see much building work on areas of derelict land. In a decently ordered society, the priority for that land would be the needs of the local communities that surround it. What are the priorities for the development of such land, whether in docklands or behind King's Cross station in my constituency? Are they to be homes for local people, parks and playgrounds for their children, hospitals and clinics or jobs that local people will be able to take up? Not likely. Under the new dispensation the local community comes last.

The main use for property now is property speculation, which has caused a fivefold increase in land prices in London. The property speculators now decide what gets built, and if anyone objects the Government back the speculators. Not for them any finely balanced judgments of local housing versus a local park or local industry. The first priority is profits for the speculators, which rise in direct proportion to the damage that they do to the rest of society.

If any Conservative Members challenge my views on this I recommend that they read what Winston Churchill said about property speculators in 1909——

Mr. Maples *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Dobson: Who are these speculators? Are they especially well equipped to take the decisions on what should be built where in our capital city? I have always believed that many of them are crooks, but apparently the Government have great faith in them. On 7 March this year the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Minister responsible for inner cities told a press conference:

"Business men in the past . . . provided the leadership that made their cities great . . . It can be done again . . . Our business men today have the resources, the expertise and . . . the commitment to help the Government to make lasting changes in our Inner Cities."

I wonder whether that golden vision of civic leadership was what inspired the Brink's-Mat bullion thieves to invest their loot in docklands. I know that Proudhon said that property is theft, but this is ridiculous. Surely Ministers do not expect us to believe that these rich thieves took courses in urban design before putting their money into Cyclops wharf. Instead of undeveloped land being used to help the whole community, it is being exploited to benefit a few rich property sharks and their friends in the Tory party.

If the housing and planning system is penalising the poor and benefiting the best off, what is happening to education, for education is one way in which a whole society, or a few individuals, can improve their prosperity and prospects? Here again the Government are hammering the schools used by most London children and at the same time increasing public subsidies to private schools. Worst of all, many caring education authorities are being forced to reduce their efforts to help the poorest children most. Units for children with special learning difficulties have had their staffs reduced. Grants to help

poorer children stay on at school are being cut or are under threat, and it is the same with clothing grants and grants for school trips.

School meals were described by *The Lancet* as the "sheet anchor" of child nutrition. When the Government came to power, about half of London's schoolchildren could afford to buy a school meal. Tory education authorities, encouraged by the Government, raised prices of meals from 25p to as much as 75p and as a result, by last autumn, only one third of London's children could afford to buy a school meal. To its everlasting credit, the Inner London education authority—whatever the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) may say about it—and the Labour outer London boroughs struggled to keep their prices down. They also used their discretion to give wide entitlement to free school meals, but the social security changes have put an end to that.

From April this year, at least 34,000 children in London have lost their entitlement to free school meals. Two thirds of those children got nothing in place of their free meal, while the parents of the rest got anything between 66p and 38p a week instead of a free school meal. In contrast, schools for the well-off are receiving more and more subsidies—for example, through the assisted places scheme. Recently we have even had to endure the graceless spectacle of some of these academies for the grasping qualifying to receive cheap food from the Euro-surpluses.

On top of that, the Education Reform Bill, by abolishing ILEA, will impose further years of turmoil on London's schools and children. Teachers, who should be concentrating on the job of teaching, will be distracted by wondering whether they will have a job at all. At the same time, the Government will insist that less and less is spent on the schooling of London's children. All those decisions are being taken by Ministers who spend more and more on the private education of their own children.

When it comes to health care, the contrast between rich and poor grows more stark in London every day. When the Government came to power, the number of NHS beds in London was 64,000 and the hospital waiting lists—far too high—totalled 104,000. The number of beds has been cut to 52,000, but the number of Londoners waiting for operations has soared to 133,000. Those figures are not arid statistics: they are lists of human beings suffering pain and misery.

While the Government cuts have reduced the number of beds in the NHS, Government encouragement and subsidies from the taxpayer have expanded the number of beds in private hospitals in London from 1,900 to 3,200. That is all very well for those who can pay, but it is no help to those who cannot. The cost of private health insurance is way beyond the reach of the less well-off. The extra private hospital beds in London have actually extended NHS waiting lists, because most of the work at the private hospitals is done by doctors moonlighting from the NHS.

By the Government's calculations, the 10 most deprived local authority areas in England are all in London. Needless to say, Government support to help local councils to maintain and improve services to local people has been reduced. More reductions are promised.

Whilst average incomes have continued to increase, the gap between the poorest and the more affluent has widened. The difference is most marked in London, where real incomes of the poorest households have gone down by 17 per cent. and real incomes of the highest households have increased by 18 per cent.

The social security changes did not just deprive 34,000 London children of a free school meal. They took money from tens of thousands on housing benefit and hammered the worst-off most of all. Families who used to get single payments to help them over a crisis no longer qualify. A family, after a year in bed and breakfast, still needs help to get a few sticks of furniture together, but now such families are not entitled to a grant. They have to go cap in hand to apply for a discretionary grant from the social fund. This was introduced to cut the money available to help such people.

The Ministers concerned must be proud of their handiwork. "Didn't they do well?" Grants under the social fund in London in May this year total just 6 per cent. of the average monthly grants made before the system was changed—a mean 94 per cent. cut in grants for those in desperate need. Meanwhile, the Budget poured millions into the pockets of the rich and the Finance Bill is strewn with more tax loopholes for them to exploit, including extending the business enterprise scheme to promote Rachmanite landlords.

In the end, Londoners do not want welfare. They want to be able to fend for themselves. Above all they want jobs, well paid and decent jobs. When the Government came to power, 136,000 Londoners were out of work. The London total in the prosperous south-east now stands at 311,000. Despite the massive increases in schemes of one sort or another, that includes 91,000 young Londoners who are starting their would-be working life without the money and self-respect that go with a job.

What of the people in work? Some salaries in the City are ludicrous and indefensible, with people getting paid more in a week than a qualified nurse gets for a whole year. It costs a lot of money to live in central London. Again, Tory Members need not take my word for it. They can take the word of a former Cabinet member, Lord Gowrie, who resigned from the Government because £33,000 a year was not enough for him to live on in central London. Is that is so, and he has not resigned from the Tory party, how do he and his friends expect one of the firefighters who did their gallant duty at King's Cross to get by in central London on £13,000 a year?

Many people in central London now rely on casual and part-time work—work that usually means insecurity, poor pay and bad working conditions. Contrast that with the situation in the City, where gilded youths flit from job to job with golden handshakes both when they start and when they finish.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Did the hon. Gentleman say gelded?

Mr. Dobson: Perhaps they should be gelded, and we would have fewer of them in future.

On top of all that, Londoners face the poll tax. The poll tax is a deliberate attempt by the better-off to transfer the burden of local taxation on to the shoulders of people worse off than themselves. It is an effort by the well-off to abandon their obligations to their fellow citizens. It is bound to add to the growing divisions between rich and poor in London and throughout the whole of Britain.

What sort of society have the Government helped to create in London? It is a society in which old people are afraid to go out at night, drug addiction is at record levels, racial attacks fill fellow citizens with fear, violence and vandalism are commonplace, and the streets are filthy.

[Mr. Dobson]

The Tory creed of greed worsens old wrongs. Their worship of selfishness mocks those who feel some responsibility for their fellow citizens. It stifles the generous instincts of ordinary Londoners, but it cannot stamp out concern for family, friends, neighbours and whole communities. All over London those concerns are growing. The Government will not be able to ignore them much longer. If they were to ignore them, it would be not so much at their peril, but at our peril, because as Abraham Lincoln said:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Our capital city is now socially the most divided in Europe. We wish to unite it and give everyone a common faith in our city, but we will never achieve it while we have this Government.

4.9 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on those economic and social policies which have created conditions in London in which real incomes are rising; notes, with particular satisfaction, that between 1981 and 1985 the real incomes of the poorest rose faster than average; endorses the Government's policies to alleviate inner city deprivation in London through the programmes set out in Action for Cities, including economic regeneration through the encouragement of enterprise, employment and training, improved housing, through such programmes as estate action, the establishment of Housing Action Trusts and the extension of the role of housing associations, education and revitalising the urban environment.'.

I take part in this debate, as does the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), as someone representing a London constituency. I am a Londoner, having been born, educated and earned my living in the centre of London. I did not recognise the hon. Gentleman's description of London. I did not recognise it, because it does not exist—it is a fantasy.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: I will give way in a moment, but not just yet—and probably not to that hon. Gentleman. That London does not exist except in the fantasies of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Come down to the Embankment tonight.

Mr. Scott: I know about the Embankment; I have been more concerned about the homeless and down-and-outs in London than the hon. Gentleman has during his political career. I have played my part in trying to alleviate their plight. I shall have a word or two to say about the homeless and where the blame for homelessness in London should lie. I advise the hon. Gentleman to hold his horses for a moment.

I have considerable admiration for the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. His contributions are refreshingly frank. On television recently—perhaps he will correct me if I have his words wrong—someone suggested to him that the Labour party had lost the general election because of a muddle over defence policy, and he said, "No, we lost it because no one believed that we could run a whelk stall." It is 12 months since the Labour party lost that election, and I wonder how much its position has improved in the intervening 12 months.

I was disappointed that we had an ideological tirade from the hon. Gentleman. He should go out and look at London today and see whether private landlordism or public landlordism has contributed more to the squalor of our capital city, and decide where the right lies.

I recognise that the probable reason for this debate today is the by-election in Kensington the day after tomorrow. I look forward with some relish to the result on Thursday night, and perhaps some of the contributions will help to ensure that the Tory candidate wins that by-election. It is interesting that in the first by-election in this Parliament—in a Tory "marginal" seat, with a majority of about 4,500—the Leader of the Opposition swans off abroad, leaving behind the smiling predator for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). I would not leave the country with the hon. Member for Brent, East hanging around Parliament.

The Leader of the Opposition deserves the Milton Obote prize for overweening self-confidence. But perhaps he was accurately predicting the result of the by-election on Thursday and, as he would not want to comment on it, he thought he should be several thousand miles away.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): As the Minister has mentioned the Kensington by-election, will he tell the House and the electors of Kensington whether he and the Conservative candidate—but specifically the Minister—support the closure of the four hospitals in west London that serve that area as well as others?

Mr. Scott: I am a Minister in the Department of Health and Social Security, and eventually the decision on the restructuring of the hospitals in that part of London will have to come to the DHSS for ministerial decision. It would not be proper for me to judge that in advance of the decision that my Secretary of State will have to make in due course.

The Labour party's approach to this election was well heralded in the title of its motion, "Inequalities in London"—the Labour party's old obsession with equality rather than the quality of life. It is interested not in maximising human life chances and increasing people's choices about their lives, but rather in the drive for equality at all costs, despite the lessons that it should have learnt from its past about the direction in which that policy——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): If the Minister is concerned about equality, can he justify, and say whether he agrees with, the fact that between 1976 and 1987 the gap between the average earnings of the top and the bottom 10 per cent. in London increased by 50 per cent.?

Mr. Scott: I shall deal in some detail with equality and the increasing standards of living at the higher and lower levels later in my speech.

Nationally, we have the option of one party or the other being in office. But in London local government, we have the benefit of seeing two separate ideologies at work, two different political philosophies——

Mr. Simon Hughes: And more.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman's party multiplies so often that it is difficult to tell how many there are at any one moment.

Let us contrast how the two main parties approach their task. The main local authorities dominated by the Labour party are characterised by extravagance, loony left nonsense and absolute contempt for the interests of the ratepayers in their boroughs. Last year, Brent overspent by £104 for every adult in the borough; Camden by £352; Ealing by £100; Greenwich by £178; Hackney by £263; Haringey by £151; and Lewisham by £246. None was underfunded.

Compare that with what happens in Kensington and Chelsea. Three years ago, the council reduced its rates by 30 per cent. It has held its rates steady ever since and provided a first-class service to its ratepayers. It has given a good, effective service and looks forward to the savings that it will make in the not-too-distant future when at last we remove the burden of the Inner London education authority from its back.

Mr. Tony Banks: If the Minister believes that the Labour local authorities are betraying their ratepayers, can he explain why at the previous local elections, the London borough of Newham returned 60 Labour councillors and none from other parties? How did we betray the electors there?

Mr. Scott: I contrast that with our recent victories in two by-elections in Hackney—*[Interruption.]* We do not have a universal pattern. In some parts of London, at last Labour voters can see the advantages that Conservative administrations can bring them—the freedom to move away from the dull dependence on public landlords and Labour authorities.

I was talking about the prospect of removing the Inner London education authority from the backs of London voters. About 20 per cent. of the school leavers in ILEA leave school with no graded exam results, compared with an English average of half that figure. In 1987-88, ILEA expenditure was 75 per cent. above its grant-related expenditure. If it is argued that ILEA must deal with special inner-city problems in its schools, I say that ILEA spends 50 per cent. more per secondary school pupil than outer London boroughs, and 60 per cent. more than Birmingham, which has similar problems.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): If the Minister complains that ILEA spends 50 per cent. more per pupil, will he explain why the Metropolitan police spend twice as much per head as police forces elsewhere?

Mr. Scott: The Metropolitan police provides specialist services to a number of other forces. In effect, it is a central police resource as well as being the police force for the metropolitan area. ILEA educates 4 per cent. of the children and uses up 8 per cent. of local authority expenditure on education. Children who enter ILEA schools have IQs of the national average, although twice the national average fail to get grade results at the end of their education.

There is no doubt that, at vast expense, ILEA has been failing the children of inner London. I am confident that, when that education is removed to the boroughs, a much better service will be delivered to those youngsters.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): What about the parents?

Mr. Scott: Parents, too, will benefit.

Ms. Harman: They do not want the change.

Mr. Scott: Of course not. The hon. Lady knows that few people face the prospect of change with enthusiasm. They do not like it. They are conservative. With the fears whipped up by the Labour party many people were panicked into thinking that education standards would fall once ILEA was abolished. However, once the new system gets going, no one will want to return to ILEA. Who now worries in London about the death of the Greater London council?

Mr. Tony Banks: I do.

Mr. Scott: There are one or two.

We have heard a great deal about the down-and-outs, those living rough and the youngsters in London whose numbers, we are told, are increasing. The evidence in the DHSS does not support allegations that the numbers sleeping rough have increased under the new rules. The two main offices in central London dealing with itinerant claimants have found an overall decrease in callers since 11 April. DHSS resettlement units in London still have available for homeless people beds which are not taken up.

Mr. Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Scott: I have done much better than the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras in giving way. I always believe in giving way, but it tends to inhibit the natural coherence of the speeches which I like to deliver. However, I shall give way.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware of a pamphlet, which was launched yesterday with all-party support, pointing out the trap into which the single homeless, especially in London, have fallen, because of the social security changes? Income support is paid two weeks in arrears, so people do not have the money to get bed-and-breakfast accommodation. No one will take their word that they will have the money. Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to consider having emergency payments for the single homeless in London and elsewhere?

Mr. Scott: Evidence of the problem is not apparent to DHSS offices—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members could contain themselves for one, brief, shining moment. As reported in *The Guardian* this morning, I have asked DHSS officials to meet the organisations concerned and to listen carefully to their evidence. Of course we will do that. As I have said about all our social security reforms, we shall monitor carefully and note the impact of changes. As the House will have noticed, we have already made changes to the system of housing benefit and income support to take account of the places where the shoe was pinching unduly harshly.

It comes ill from the Labour party to criticise the Government for failing to help pensioners. The Labour Government presided over levels of inflation which virtually wiped out the savings of pensioners. They failed to pay the Christmas bonus in 1975 and 1976. They failed to honour their commitment to link pensions to earnings——

Ms. Harman: I was not born then.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Lady cannot remember Labour Governments. Perhaps that is just as well, because some of

[Mr. Scott]

their actions would certainly not square with her compassion. Labour cut the Health Service, reduced pensions in real terms, and so on. I suspect that, so long as the Labour party retains its present leadership, the hon. Lady will not need to worry about assuming the burdens of office, however charmingly she might do it.

I have no hesitation in saying that in London, as in the rest of the country, we have presided over a situation in which the incomes of pensioners have been rising twice as fast as for the population as a whole. We hope that that process will continue during the period of this Government.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Scott: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has just marched in and has not heard any of the speeches. I see no reason to give way. I made it clear when I gave way to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that I wanted to proceed with my speech.

I suppose that quite a lot of statistics will be bandied across the Floor of the Chamber. We know the old definition of statistics. I remember being told by the young Iain Macleod when he worked in the Conservative research department that Churchill had sent for him and asked for statistics on infant mortality, when what he wanted was one side of a paper which showed that more babies died under Labour Governments than under Conservative Governments. Nevertheless, there are statistical arguments. The Select Committee on Social Services published a report today, and it would not be right for me to comment on it.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked about the outcome of the survey of the living standards of the poorest and the richest. It is right that we should have a clear idea of the authoritative statistics. The first and most authoritative statistics we have derive from the family expenditure survey, which describes the position of all those living in households in the lower half of the income distribution. Those statistics offer a wealth of information and repay careful study—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should listen, because they may just learn something.

There is one important message for the debate: in recent years, the living standards of people in all income groups have been rising substantially. Claims that the poor are getting poorer do not stand up to examination. If the Opposition want to find the facts, table A1 of the households below average income statistics shows that between 1981 and 1985, on average, real incomes for the population as a whole rose by no less than 6·4 per cent.

That in itself is a substantial achievement, but it is clear —although I understand that some Opposition Members may wish to ignore this evidence—that the lowest income groups shared fully in that growing prosperity. Between the same years, those in the lowest tenth of the income distribution saw an increase in average real incomes of more than 8 per cent. while those in the lowest 20 per cent. saw an average real terms increase of 6·6 per cent. Not only have the lowest income groups been sharing in the growing prosperity, but, between those years, they did better than the average.

I started by saying that I failed to recognise the description of London given by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. The Government's overall economic policies have seen not just our country as a whole but London boom and all sections of London society benefiting from that boom. Average weekly earnings are now the highest in the country and unemployment, which is falling steadily, is below the national average. However, many people in London are hit by high rates and the mismanagement of council housing because of the incompetence and indifference of Labour councils.

In London, GDP per capita rose by 92 per cent. between 1979 and 1986. Average weekly earnings in Greater London rose by 5·8 per cent. between April 1986 and April 1987, to become the highest in the country. That is the London in which we live. Unemployment has fallen by 105,000—more than 25 per cent.—since June 1986, and vacancies are steadily increasing. The story is good and London is performing strongly. Youth unemployment has fallen by 33 per cent. from its peak. Government Departments are spending millions of pounds in supporting the urban programme and a number of projects providing training and employment for many people, especially the young.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras particularly mentioned homelessness. Yes, we suffer from homelessness.

Mr. Dobson: The homeless suffer from homelessness.

Mr. Scott: No, as a society we suffer from homelessness. There are 16,000 homeless households in the Greater London area. There are 33,000 empty council homes in the same area—twice as many—and what are local authorities doing to make sure that those empty council properties are brought into use? The Government will make extra capital allocations available to local authorities to help them bring those empty properties into use. Let us hope that they are put to the purpose of solving the problem of homelessness in London.

There is no need for gloom and doom as we contemplate London today. What we need to do is to build on the strength of the economy of this country as a whole and to lift the yoke of Socialism and bureaucracy from the backs of our people, as well as the political ideology of the loony Left councils. We said goodbye to the GLC and nobody shed a tear. Shortly we shall say goodbye to ILEA and nobody will shed a tear except tears of joy as we see education standards improve in our inner city. We are committed to helping all Londoners.

Ms. Harman: What about the crime figures?

Mr. Scott: I shall certainly give the hon. Lady the figures. More serious offences involving violence against the person fell by one fifth in 1987, thus making a substantial improvement.

Living standards are now rising sharply in London, not least among the poor. I recognise that the debate is an attempt to influence the outcome of the Kensington by-election. I very much hope that it will and that it will not be too long before Mr. Dudley Fishburn appears at these doors to take his seat. I commend our amendment to the House.

4.31 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I speak as a London Member, as someone who was born and went to school in London and who has worked in London all her working life. I also speak as someone who is tired and weary of the implicit contempt for the people of the inner city that comes out in every statement from the Conservative Benches.

The Minister said that he did not recognise London from the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). Indeed, that would be so—things look different from Chelsea. The Minister talked about figures. He talked about London in the abstract. He talked about GDP. The one thing that he did not talk about was people. I challenge him to come to Hackney, talk to people and ask them, as people, as individuals and as families, whether their GDP has gone up, and whether they feel richer or better off under Thatcherism. I think that he would find that the answer is no.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my point.

As the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, I am particularly well placed for observing growing chasm between rich and poor in London. In Hackney, we have the poorest borough in the country but in the south, at the tip of the borough, we see people who have made billions under Thatcherism. We see the contrast there.

At the most recent general election, the Government expressed a wish to do something for the people of the inner city. The Prime Minister said that the Government must now turn their attention to the inner city. She has turned her attention to it much in the way of Hitler's Luftwaffe. Instead of any concern or measures aimed to help the inner city, my people in Hackney have seen legislation in this Parliament that represents a series of hammer blows to their welfare, the welfare of their children, their standard of living and their hopes for the future.

Mr. Scott: Will the hon. Lady explain to us how the Labour party came to lose those two by-elections in Hackney?

Ms. Abbott: If the Minister met the two Conservatives who won in New River ward, particularly Mr. Christopher Sills, he would not be sitting there gloating. They do his party no credit. If the Minister met Mr. Sills, the smile would be wiped off his face. In Hackney we are confident that we shall take those seats back at the next borough elections.

Sir George Young: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: I have already given way. I should appreciate the opportunity to develop my argument before I give way again.

As I said, in Hackney, we have seen a series of hammer blows aimed at our welfare and standard of living.

The Government talk about concern for the inner city year after year, but we are rate-capped in Hackney. The pattern of the allocation of the rate support grant over the eight or nine years of Thatcherist rule has resulted, in relative terms, in taking money away from the poorest and the most deprived in the city and giving it to the shires.

In London and the inner cities, we have also seen a Government bent on a spiteful, ideological holy war against areas whose only fault is that they vote Labour. Under the Government and under Tory boroughs in London we have seen the utter degradation of the notion of municipal virtue. Who would have thought that one would see a responsible London borough sell off its cemeteries for 15p? I am waiting for a single Conservative Member to get up and condemn the activities of Westminster council that have earned it the attention of the fraud squad.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: With the greatest respect, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my point.

Among the hammer blows aimed at Hackney has been the abolition of ILEA——

Mr. Hughes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: No.

After the abolition of ILEA, Hackney will lose £60 million on present figures. I am waiting for a Conservative Member to get up and make a commitment that we shall not lose money in real terms as a result of abolition. With the prospect of abolition, we face a net loss in money terms and the falling apart of the education system.

On housing, the Minister has sneered at inner-London authorities and the number of empty flats. Inner-London Labour authorities would say to the Minister, "When will you give us the money to do up the flats? When will you allow us to spend the full sum of our receipts on doing up those flats?" The Minister's talk about empty flats would be more impressive if the number of council house starts was not at its lowest for many years under this Government. Also under the Government we see moves to deregulate rents in the housing association sector and the private sector.

On the poll tax, in my constituency, which is the poorest area in the country——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my point.

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to challenge Conservative Members to stand up and answer a point and then refuse to give way? The hon. Lady has done that because she is frightened of what might be said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Giving way is a matter for the hon. Lady, who has the Floor.

Ms. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that that was the case.

In the poorest area in London, we shall pay a poll tax of between £500 and £600 a head. Is that fair?

There have been hospital closures all over Hackney with the resultant problems for services and a loss of jobs in the area.

We heard the Minister talk about the elderly. Will he say what I should tell Mr. Fisher, one of my pensioner constituents, who under the housing benefit changes and

[Ms. Abbott]

despite the transitional arrangements, finds himself with a rent that he cannot pay? He is piling up arrears and is facing the prospect of going to prison. What has the Minister to say to thousands of pensioners in London and elsewhere who cannot pay their rents, despite the transitional arrangements, because of the changes in housing benefit?

The Minister talked about maximising life chances—a wonderful phrase. Will the hon. Gentleman tell me how the Government have maximised the life chances of the girls who come to my surgery, who live in overcrowded flats in fungus-ridden tower blocks with no hope, because of the Government's policies, of ever having decent accommodation? Will the Minister tell me how he has maximised the life chances of the skilled men in my constituency who have been made redundant in their 40s and will never work again? Will the Minister tell me how he has maximised the life chances of the young black men in my constituency who face an unemployment level for young black people in Hackney of one in two? Above all, will the Minister tell us all how this Government have maximised the life chances of the hundreds of people who can be seen every night sleeping out in cardboard boxes on the South Bank and the Embankment?

I believe that, if there is one message that should go out to the electors of Notting Hill—and I speak as someone who was born not far from Notting Hill—on the eve of the by-election, it is that we are seeing a Government who have brought about the greatest and most grotesque contrast between rich and poor in London since Victorian times. Above all—and this has particular relevance to Notting Hill—we are seeing a Government as a consequence of whose policies—the systematic draining of money from council housing, the deregulating of rents in the private sector and housing associations, the extension of the business expansion scheme to private landlords—Rachman will walk again in inner London. That is the message that should go out to the electors of Notting Hill.

4.41 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled gave us a very sound analysis of the situation, which certainly brought the debate back to reality, and I want to try to continue that reality. Like him, I can claim to know London and be a Londoner. I have represented an inner London marginal constituency for 18 years. I won my council seat, a Socialist seat, from the late Tony Greenwood, and I want no lessons from the Opposition about knowing the problems of Londoners. I noted very carefully the comments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), speaking from his normal seated position, which do not help us very much.

The only comment made by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), when asked why Labour lost two council seats in New River, was to make a vicious personal attack on Christopher Sills, who is a very good councillor and understands the needs of the people. I noticed that she was not able to give the reason. The reason is that people are sick and tired of those who control Hackney from Mare street.

This is a short debate and I shall follow the example—the only time that I am likely to follow his example—of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I shall give way only once, and then only if I make specific reference to an hon. Member, because I know that a lot of my hon. Friends want to speak.

Of course there is poverty in London. There has always been poverty in London. One has only to look at Hogarth, one has only to read Dickens, to know that full well. There was poverty in London, in the east end, when my grandfather's generation of Jews came over from Russia; there was abject poverty. But those in that generation pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. They wanted no state aid; they wanted no subsidies. That is the contrast between what happened then and what was alleged in "Faith in the City" to be happening.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No, I will not. I have made my position very clear, and I thought that that would have reached even the hon. Gentleman.

A rundown London, recovering from the war, with a policy of building new towns, which in the main took out the young, active workers from London, was accompanied by a general attitude from what was substantially a Socialist London that could be described, as my hon. Friend said, as levelling down. At that time, profits and enterprise were dirty words. Those who thought that way could not see that people had to be set free in order to rise.

Ms. Abbott: Set free from what?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I did not interrupt the hon. Lady. Perhaps she might do me the courtesy of not interrupting me.

Winston Churchill had a slogan: set the people free. This was translated into the removal of a mass of controls and restrictions. But, as I want to illustrate a little later, that was not sufficient. He also believed that in the provision of social benefits the ladder to rise out of poverty was perhaps only as important as the safety net to look after the poor, the sick and those who could not help themselves. It took the vision and determination of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to see that the people had to be set free from crippling taxation and that the ladder of opportunity was more important because those climbing it were positively able to help those who still needed the safety net.

What is poverty? It is a combination of deprivation through poor housing, poor health and low incomes—a combination of any or all of these. I should like to analyse those for a moment.

First, let me take poor housing. For almost the entire post-war period London suffered because much of it, particularly inner London, was run by the Labour party, whether the old London county council or the old metropolitan boroughs. My knowledge of the east end of London goes back to fighting seats in Islington, Hackney and Stoke Newington. I know those areas and I know the problems. I saw how people suffered because of the policies adopted by the Labour party in those days. What people wanted in housing was not Ronan Points, but small houses with gardens. I can remember a debate in the House when we were talking about planning in London and blaming the planners for much of the evils of London,

and Bob Mellish made it clear that he, like me, endorsed the view that London had been ill served by its planners over those years.

Today, the Labour party has two stock excuses: lack of funds owing to Government policies, and massive homelessness. Both are untrue and largely self-inflicted. If the Labour authorities in London did not have £60 million of uncollected rents, they could do up the 33,000 vacant dwellings without the need to use capital receipts, and rehouse the 16,000 registered homeless. One does not, as all hon. Members—or all hon. Members bar one—know, count arrears of housing rent as capital. It is revenue, and one uses the revenue to do up dilapidated council properties. Thirty-three thousand empty properties, £60 million, 16,000 people—even the Labour party, in spite of the poor education record of ILEA, can do that bit of arithmetic.

On health, all the statistics show that there have been massive improvements. In 1986, the four Thames regions treated 1,792,000 in-patients, compared with 1,610,000 in 1979. They also treated 266,000 day-patients in 1986, compared with 144,000 in 1979 *[Interruption.]* It is interesting that empty kettles still make the most noise.

In 1979-80, expenditure by the Thames regions was £1·7 billion. In 1986-87, after allowing for inflation, the figure was £3·2 billion, an increase in real terms of over 10 per cent. Had it not been for RAWP, the creature of the Labour party, London would have been even better served. Those two figures put to bed the cant and hypocrisy that we have seen in the past few months from the unions and the Labour party which are trying falsely to claim that under this Government the National Health Service is dying.

The third of my three poverty factors is income. Let us look at the incomes of full-time employees in Greater London. In 1979, average gross earnings were £101·50. In 1987, they had risen to £255·70. If we look at the net amount, we find that in 1979 it was £71·90 and in 1987 it was £169·80. That means that average earnings are up by almost 30 per cent. in real terms. That gives the answer to those that say that Londoners are not doing well.

About 115,000 Londoners have bought their council homes. As those of us who have been in local government know, people are rehoused not according to the size of their bank balance but depending on their housing need. People are slowly—all too slowly—being able to buy their homes and are climbing the ladder, dragging themselves up as they would wish, despite restrictions put on them by authorities such as Camden.

Some of the worst areas of poverty, deprivation and dereliction were in London's docklands which were left to rot for a decade and more because of the interminable internecine battles between the GLC and the London boroughs. The vision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) enabled us to put into legislation ideas that some of us had put forward, which said that it was time to remove from the clutches of Labour authorities the people in docklands. We wanted to give them the chance to have their area properly revived.

One merely has to walk through docklands today to see the enormous benefits for the people there. Whether those benefits are new housing or new employment at the London City airport, they are there for those who want to see. The trouble is that many Opposition Members do not want to see them. My hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) is right. He and I have known each other for a long time. The House would not be discussing this subject if it were not for the impending by-election in Kensington.

The Labour party is not interested in London because its members are no longer in touch with real Londoners. The party does not have people like Bob Mellish or the original Ron Brown. It is a collection of people spewed up by the Left, and they are so out of touch that, in spite of all the evils we are alleged to have committed, there are now more Tory Members in London than at any time in our history. That is because the average Labour voter of the type that existed 20 years ago will not come out and vote for the modern Labour candidate. I do not blame them.

The facts speak clearly for themselves. I remind the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that just prior to the last general election he and I took part in a radio car interview. In the radio car in Soho square he finished by saying that the Labour party would do well at that election. I was asked if I would be satisfied if we had the same number of seats in London, and I said that I would not and that, as party vice-chairman, I had my eyes set on winning more seats. I was right, and, as so often happens, the hon. Gentleman was wrong.

Mr. Dobson: It was Fitzroy square, not Soho square.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: The hon. Gentleman will remember that the car had to go back twice for equipment. Either the car or I was misdirected. My point is that the hon. Gentleman was wrong in what he said.

If we are to finish the debate on a useful note, we shall have to pay more attention to the way in which we can help people to climb out of poverty. We should do that rather than just increase the size of the safety net. We must realise that it is kinder and wiser to assist people to become more independent and to take responsibility for themselves and their families than to trap them for ever into the dependence on the state that the Opposition want.

My first election was in Islington in 1949. I remember going into the courtyard of a block of flats and hearing the Labour party loudspeaker cars saying, "Come out and vote for the Labour party because it is the party that gave you these flats." If we now ask those tenants whether they want the flats or the right to own them, I know what the answer would be, and so does the House.

4.55 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We can all quote statistics. I remind the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) that at the last election, as at the one before, the majority of Londoners voted against his party. Opposition Members representing London constituencies speak for more than half the voters of London.

I want to start with people and not statistics. It will not be surprising if I speak about people that I have come across in the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Yesterday morning I took part in a press conference for my colleague William Goodhart, who is our candidate in Thursday's by-election. On the way back I walked through the underpass at Notting Hill Gate. That underpass leads to the tube station and also serves as a means of crossing the road. I was approached by a young man and a young woman who were begging for money. The young man was called David and was an 18-year-old Scot. The girl was 19

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

years old and Irish and her name was Renèe. They go to Notting Hill every day because there are rich people in Kensington. They think that in Kensington they may get money, in one case to visit a boy friend outside London or in the other case to buy the other contact lens that David needs.

People are begging in the streets of Kensington in 1988. The two people that I have mentioned squat in Peckham in a one-bedroom flat that houses at least six people every night. They wait for the person who occupies the flat to come home and let them in but last night he did not come home at all and one of them slept in the lift. They do not find London a place of equality of opportunity or choice.

Somebody in my office dug out a short quotation which is perhaps appropriate. It says:

"Whene'er I walk the public ways,
How many poor that lack ablution
Do probe my heart with pensive gaze,
And beg a trivial contribution!"

Perhaps the one quote we have not yet heard from the Prime Minister will say: "For ye have the poor always with you and they are to be blessed." In London there are now more poor people than when the Prime Minister went to No. 10 Downing street.

I should like to mention two other people, who feature on this poster. One is the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury, a resident of the London borough of Kensington. He lives in two houses, 44 and 46 Bedford gardens. He pays rates and he will have to pay poll tax, but he will save £1,757 under the poll tax. He and his wife will have to pay about £470. Of course, he voted for that inequitable tax in the other place. In the same area, Fred Leaney works as a porter in a block of flats and lives in Henry Dickens court, W11. He and his wife will have to pay the same amount of poll tax, because they do not qualify for benefit. They will have to pay £433 more than they pay in rates. That is how the Government legislate for equality in London. A porter in a block of flats will pay the same as one of the richest Members of the other place.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does not the Liberal "Focus" leaflet that the hon. Gentleman produced also say that the community charge will account for only a quarter of the cost of local government and that the Duke will be paying as much as 16 times more for local government than Fred?

Mr. Hughes: The leaflet does not say that, because the principle of taxation, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is that the more one has, the more one pays. The poll tax is different in that the more one has, the less one will pay relatively. That does not make a taxation system more equitable.

Library statistics show—the Minister may challenge me if he wishes—that, between April 1978 and April 1987, the difference between the highest and lowest 10 per cent. of earnings increased by 50 per cent. I concede that both lower and higher earners earned more, but the lower earners increased their earnings by 133 per cent., whereas the higher earners increased their earnings by 199 per cent.

In London in 1980, only 450,000 families—I say "only" —were in receipt of supplementary benefit. By 5 May 1987, 760,000 families were receiving supplementary benefit from offices in Greater London. I know what the Minister will say: if more benefit is paid out, more people will receive it. Supplementary benefit is meant to be the test of basic needs income, and the number of families receiving benefit has nearly doubled in that short time. As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, the real incomes of the richest 10 per cent. rose by 18 per cent. between 1979 and 1985, while the poorest 10 per cent. lost 17 per cent.

Mr. Scott: If the level of benefit is improved, the number of people in poverty will seem to increase. About 60 per cent. of increases in expenditure during this Government's period in office have been accounted for by real-terms increases in the level of benefits rather than by increases in the number of people coming into benefit. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that. Let us take an absurd example: if one doubled the level of supplementary benefit, one would bring a huge number of extra people into poverty. The figures need to be cited with caution.

Mr. Hughes: All Governments in recent times have assessed what is necessary as the basic level of income, to which the state then adds. This Government have fiddled the figures and reduced them several times. The figure below which one is entitled to support has nearly doubled in a few years. The Minister cannot therefore argue that there are not more people relatively poorer in a richer Britain. We are a richer country—of course we are—but the rich are getting richer still and the poor are poorer relative to their fellow citizens. That is the unfairness, and Londoners are sick to death of the inequality practised by the Minister and his colleagues.

I can tell the Minister all about it. I live in docklands —the area praised so graphically by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg). I know the difference between someone living in a grotty damp council-flat on an estate in Southwark and someone buying a £2·5 million penthouse flat with a view of Tower bridge. That is not equality: it is gross, obscene and absolute degradation.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, according to official statistics, the number of people claiming means-tested benefits increased from 4·4 million in 1979 to 8·2 million in 1987? Does he regard that as one of the problems of success that we have been told about by the Government?

Mr. Hughes: We are a richer country, but the wealth is being divided up in a grossly unfair manner. That is our complaint; it is very simple. A Government who wanted to be fair would not give away massive tax handouts to the rich in the Budget, while people on social security got less. Some pensioner couples in my constituency now have to pay £32 a week for housing instead of £16 a week in April, although they have no more income. That is not fairness, when people in high-paid jobs in the City take home substantial amounts every week—sometimes hundreds and sometimes thousands of pounds in real income.

Three quarters of the London elderly and two thirds of the London disabled are now below the Government's level necessary for supplementary benefit. The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) accurately said that she represents the borough which, according to the indices of the Department of the Environment, is the poorest local authority in England.

The 10 poorest authorities in England are all in London, and Southwark is also one of them. Even in Tory-controlled Kensington and Chelsea——

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I shall not give way.

In Kensington and Chelsea, 30 per cent. of households lack basic amenities in two wards, and in two wards 54 per cent. of people are pensioners living alone. Boroughs have pockets of poverty no matter who runs them. The reason why boroughs such as mine do not elect Tories and why Tories get about 10 per cent. or less of the vote is that poor people do not trust the Conservatives to help them to get richer. They know who will best look after them. It is not the Conservatives. It never has been and it never will be. The Tories look after themselves and their friends first.

Mr. Evennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, the hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

Did the great docklands boom reduce unemployment in Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets? It did not. Unemployment increased more in those boroughs than in Greater London as a whole. From October 1982 to September 1987, there was a 15·5 per cent. increase in unemployment in the docklands boroughs. I concede that unemployment is now falling, but the jobs are not going to the people who most need them. In July 1986, 51 per cent. of unemployed people in Southwark between the ages of 16 and 24 had been unemployed for more than 26 weeks. The numbers of Southwark's unemployed have doubled in 10 years—not relatively, but in real terms.

Let us consider health. Directly opposite the Labour party's headquarters in Walworth road, a Southwark building carries the slogan

"The health of the people is the highest law".

Having done some research, I gather that that is a quotation from Cicero. The trouble is that health care is not available to all on an equal basis. Let us consider the figures cited by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate, which show relative benefits to authorities in the Health Service. The four Thames health regions are the only regions to have suffered a 2·8 per cent. real cut between 1982 and 1986. I can give the Minister the evidence to prove it.

Since 1981-82, 14 per cent. of hospital beds have been lost in London and more than 1,400 beds were lost last year. The waiting list for those needing urgent treatment in 1986 made up 29 per cent. of the national list, although London has only 14 per cent. of the population. Last year, the numbers on the waiting list went up nearly 10 per cent. Meanwhile, between 1982 and 1986, there was a 45 per cent. increase in private hospital beds in the four Thames regions. At the same time, the Thames regions had to write off nearly £500,000 of unpaid private hospital bed debts to the health authorities, including £71,000 in Paddington and North Kensington, for people who had already got advantaged treatment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the number of patients cared for in London has been rising steadily? For example, the number of day cases in inner London went up from 48,000 to nearly 80,000 between 1982 and 1986 and the number of accident emergency attendances has increased. Does he agree that for many years, including 1986, inner London has had twice the number of acute beds per thousand of the population as the rest of the country and twice the number of consultants and junior doctors?

Mr. Hughes: Very good. The Minister's colleagues are easily deceived. Of course the figures are true, but many people who have received health care in London come from outside. Also, many of the people covered by the Department's throughput appear twice or more in the figures because they were discharged so quickly that they had to go back to hospital. The figures are not all different people. They are the same people, often the elderly, who were sent home and readmitted. They could not stay in hospital to convalesce, because the beds were needed for other people to leap into as soon as they were pushed out.

The private sector has benefited. Private sector recruitment has grown at the expense of the Health Service. Beveridge and Nye Bevan sought to provide not a Health Service that would be selectively available for those who could pay, but a Health Service for all, free at the point of delivery.

In social services there is exactly the same crisis in London, with 600 suspected victims of child abuse not getting professional help because there are no social workers to help them.

In education, before the Government's reforms the borough of Westminster pays 27 per cent. of the bill for ILEA but receives only 6·5 per cent. of the available money. After abolition, Westminster will have a massive windfall to spend on three county secondary schools whereas a borough like Greenwich which pays 2·5 per cent. spends 10·3 per cent. and, like Tower Hamlets and Hackney, will have to pay massively more.

I will end where I began, with the homeless. Last year, there were 30,000 registered homeless in greater London. The number had gone up by 75 per cent. in five years. That excluded the 10,000 in hostels, the 12,500 who were squatting, the 2,000 approximately who were sleeping rough, and many who were staying temporarily with friends. There were about 64,000 homeless people in the capital city last year.

Houses are being built in my borough, but at an average price of £80,000, where the average income in only £8,000. There is not much prospect of many of the homeless, let alone the homeless who are out of work, getting accommodation. There are more than 1·5 people per room in many homes in many boroughs—Kensington and Chelsea, Southwark, Camden and Haringey first among them.

The reality of Britain today is that the challenge that Beveridge, Nye Bevan, Lloyd George and others sought to put before the country has been grossly neglected by the Conservative Government. Beveridge, who was a resident of Kensington, where he had his first home—

Mr. Tony Banks: Had he a vote?

Mr. Hughes: He did have a vote to begin with, but not there when he became a Member of Parliament. He said:

"Liberals believe that our guiding force should not be self-interest or class conflict but the determination not to rest while any are condemned to want, disease, squalor, ignorance or unemployment."

That resident of Kensington would not have been voting Conservative in Kensington on Thursday, nor anywhere

[Mr. Hughes]

else in London, because the challenge which he gave us has been grossly neglected by this increasingly divisive and self-interested Tory Government.

5.14 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his excellent speech, which was not only thought-provoking and interesting, but put the case fairly and squarely for London as it is today. *[Interruption.]* I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) would at least listen for once, not only because it would be courteous, but because it would be educational for her.

I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) would not give way to me. I was appalled at how frightened he seemed to be, and also distressed at his view. He seemed to suggest that he would have preferred a derelict wilderness in docklands. We all know that docklands had died and needed to be rejuvenated. Many people who work in docklands are grateful for the development that has taken place, because they have jobs in an area where there were no jobs before.

I am delighted that today we are having a debate on London. As a London Member, I believe that we have too few debates on our great capital. I know that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is of a similar opinion. I am disappointed and surprised, because the Opposition motion does not give a true picture of London today. I am a Londoner, having always lived in Greater London. I worked in London and I represent an outer London constituency. My parents were Cockneys, born in Bow in the 1920s. I know what things were like in their early years in east London. My grandparents also came from Bow, and throughout my life I have heard of the real hardship, suffering and deprivation in London in the 1920s.

Ms. Abbott: Not now, of course.

Mr. Evennett: Again the hon. Lady is not willing to listen to my speech, although she has already made hers. That is symptomatic of what is wrong with the politics of London from the Left. They are unwilling to listen to the points of view of other people who were also born in London and who have been involved in Hackney. I shall give the hon. Lady a few lessons on that in a moment. She seems to be living in the past. She seems to glory in the past, and she refuses to look at the present and the future.

We are looking to the future for London. No one pretends that everything is perfect in London, because it is not. We accept that there is homelessness and deprivation in the capital city. We want to try to improve the position and change the lot of those who are homeless.

Ms. Abbott: How?

Mr. Evennett: I shall make my own speech in my own time without comment.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): And a very good speech it is.

Mr. Evennett: The Opposition do not like it. There are more ordinary Londoners on these Benches than on the Opposition side.

I was involved in Hackney in the 1970s. I was a parliamentary candidate in 1979, and I was a school manager and governor in the borough of Hackney from 1976 to 1980. I was distressed by the standard of education that was provided in Hackney at that time. *[Interruption.]* I was a teacher in outer London, but I was a governor of a number of Hackney schools and I was a school manager. I was appalled at how ILEA had allowed the children of Hackney to receive inferior education. I could not believe that children who in the past had had good schools had no passport to a good future because of the poor education being provided in Hackney.

The position in the 1980s is even worse than it was in the 1970s, and for that reason ILEA's abolition will be good for Hackney, for the children of Hackney and for inner London in general. Much money was spent on ILEA and on Hackney schools, but to little effect, and the children there were left without a decent education. That is one of the real deprivations in London, but it is a problem that the Opposition will not face. Under Labour control ILEA has failed the children of London, and Hackney is a classic example of where that has occurred.

My own home borough of Bexley is Conservative-controlled and provides excellent education, whereas neighbouring Greenwich is under ILEA control. A number of parents from Greenwich come to see me, wanting their children to be educated in Bexley schools because the standards there are better. That cannot be right. It must be unfair to Greenwich children that they are receiving an inferior education. The Government have put forward many policies to improve the lot of children and of education, which must be welcomed.

In the matter of housing, there is a chapter of woe to be read about many London areas. Many Londoners wanted to buy their own council homes, but only the Conservative Government allowed them to realise that ambition. Opposition Members were not interested in the aspirations of those ordinary people and voted against council house sales, yet those sales have been a tremendous success story. People now have an opportunity to do as they want with their own home and no longer have to conform to the painted front door that the council insisted they had. That is what the Government offered them.

Not everyone can own his home, and there is still an important place for the public housing sector, which we believe is right. However, we cannot support that sector —I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington did not mention this either—when, as was the case in Hackney for many years, councils will not sell off large areas of derelict land for development. It is no use the hon. Lady complaining 10 years later that there are not enough council houses, when part of the reason for that is that in the 1970s Hackney council refused to sell land for development, to provide more homes.

We hear also of the number of empty council houses in Greater London. The public would be appalled if they knew that there are about 30,000 empty council dwellings in Greater London. That is scandalous. The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington mentioned the

homeless. In Greater London there are about 30,000 empty homes. Something must be very wrong, and we ought not tolerate such a situation.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that one can interpret statistics in any way one likes, but the fact remains that most people living in the capital are enjoying a higher standard of living than ever before. There will always be a less fortunate minority, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) reminded the House that the poor are always with us and that they should receive the help that they need.

However, the vast majority of people, at whatever level and whatever their income, are better off now than they have ever been. I refer not only to their income but to their status. A higher percentage of households include in their possessions the so-called luxuries of life, such as tumble driers, washing machines and television sets. We welcome that and would like to see more and more people enjoying such possessions. We do not want to depress the number of people who already have them, but wish to elevate those who do not, so that everyone may enjoy a better standard of living.

Over the past decade most Londoners have enjoyed advances in their living standards and quality of life. More has to be done, and action is being proposed by the Government—but only by the Government. It would be disastrous just to throw more money at the problems that exist, because that will not solve anything. What is required is an investment in housing, education and employment. As ILEA has shown, throwing money at problems does not bring results. We must pursue instead a constructive programme, which is something that the Government are doing.

The Opposition motion proves that the Labour party is out of date and out of touch. It is out of touch with reality, out of touch with the wishes of the people of London, and out of touch with 1988. I look forward to the Government's reforms for dealing with those London areas that require urgent attention. When the Education Reform Bill, the community charge, housing reform and so on, are on the statute book and operational, more of London's problems will be attacked and solved. We shall not see that being done by following the lines of the Opposition motion. It is a trip into yesterday, and yesterday is history. We are looking instead to the future, for all of London's people.

5.27 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): When a proper audit is undertaken of the effect of the Government's policies on the people of London, the indictment will be devastating. The Government will be condemned for promoting the ethic of greed and self-interest as foundation stones for our society. It is an ethic based on the pauperisation of the many to enhance the wealth of the few. I hesitate to use even the word "ethic" to describe a set of values that are so uncaring, so damaging and so complacent that the Prime Minister could stand at the Dispatch Box one month ago and say:

"Everyone in the nation has benefited from the increased prosperity."—[*Official Report*, 17 May 1988; Vol. 133, c. 796.]

It is obvious that the Government are applying their usual technique for dealing with a problem, and have redefined the word "everyone". To be included in the Prime Minister's concept of "everyone", one must be more than a citizen of this country. It means also having a job, owning a car and a house, having shares, and paying for private health care. As Orwell would have appreciated, "everyone" really means being part of an elite.

"Everyone" does not include those without a job, those who do not own a valuable property, or the young forced to live a nomadic life moving from one bed-and-breakfast place to another. Neither does it include YTS trainees stuck on a scheme, the women who are struggling on income support, or the many of my constituents who have not seen any "prosperity". Instead, those people are by all means possible to vanish from the statistics, from the benefit system, and ultimately even from the electoral register—thus relieving the Government of any burden of responsibility.

In their deconstruction and redefinition of society, the Government are undertaking the task of taking apart the welfare state, that symbol of collective provision. In its place they have resurrected the concept of the individual within the family as an ideal social unit. If I understand the theory properly, it follows that those units are to operate within the free market, creating wealth that then results in the abolition of poverty as the incomes of the poor are pulled up by economic growth. That has not worked in the past, and it is not working now.

The Prime Minister recently enunciated the requisite moral values that underpin this organisation of society: self-reliance, personal responsibility, good neighbourliness and generosity. According to her, those are traditional values of British life which have been undermined by state intervention to a point of moral crisis. We have had nine years in which to assess the validity of those beliefs. All the figures show that, far from abolishing poverty, the Government's policies are widening the gulf between the rich and the poor. There is a liberalising state structure for the rich, but an increasingly authoritarian structure for the poor, in which the state polices their activities and punishes them for their poverty.

I rarely agree with the Prime Minister, but I agree that people want self-reliance, self-respect and responsibility. All my constituents want those things, but it is an act of cynicism and hypocrisy to praise such values on the one hand and on the other to push through a range of policies designed to constrict and stifle people's independence and freedom. It is clear that just as "everyone" means only some, true self-reliance and independence are to be available only to the rich.

This year's Budget was a clear example of that, favouring the rich at the expense of the poor. The Chancellor's £6 billion handout was apportioned thus: 31 per cent. for those with incomes already over £50,000 and 2 per cent. for those with incomes under £5,000. Do the Ministers sitting opposite me really not believe that that reflects the growing divide in this capital city? The Budget was a blatant example of the Government's basic strategy of increasing the earnings of the highly paid as an incentive, while at the same time holding down the wages of the low paid through deregulation of employment, job schemes linked to low pay and the constant fear of unemployment.

In Lewisham, we see at first hand how Government policies are accentuating the divide in our society. There, the divide has widened. A recent study conducted by Goldsmiths' college shows that, across a wide range of indices, poverty and deprivation are increasing. One in eight people are still unemployed, and in some of my wards 40 per cent. of young people are without work. Two in five

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

households receive housing benefit and 32,000 receive income support. Lewisham and Deptford in particular rank high among authorities with one-parent families, overcrowded conditions, a lack of amenities and single-pensioner households—which, combined with the loss of manufacturing jobs and a decaying environment, has led to multiple deprivation and an increase in poverty. I defy Conservative Members, two of whom also represent Lewisham, to say that that is not the case, and that constituents have not come to their surgeries complaining of such problems.

In such circumstances, the local authority plays a vital role in providing services and support. But Lewisham, of course, is rate-capped and has been for years, by a Government whose prime motive is not to help individuals and communities to improve their lives, but to silence and marginalise a dissenting voice. Nowhere has the Government's fight against Labour authorities hurt our community more than in the cuts imposed on social services in Lewisham: cuts that affect the quality of life for all except the ultra-rich.

None of us—home owners, dual-income families or even yuppies—can be sure that we will never need our social services departments. The private health scheme and the private school soon abdicate responsibility for the most acute problems. To meet the budget constraints imposed by the Government, Lewisham's social services department has had to close two homes for the elderly, two children's homes, two day centres for the active elderly and a holiday centre that catered for no fewer than 1,800 people a year.

Where is the freedom, dignity and personal responsibility allowed to those people and their families? They have paid all their lives for that provision, and the Government are denying it to them. Such people do not seek an act of charity; they seek the community rights of the society that we used to enjoy. In every aspect of Government policy, there has been a deliberate acceleration and legitimising of the two-tier society.

The Government have long promoted the idea of a property-owning democracy geared towards owner-occupation for those who can afford it and rented accommodation for those who cannot. But my constituents have an average income equal to only two thirds of that in the south-east as a whole. Most of them will never be able to purchase even a one-bedroomed flat with today's escalating London prices. Many must therefore rely on public sector housing, which the Government have starved of funds since 1979.

Why are the Government so determined to destroy publicly owned, affordable housing in London? Why are they determined to make second-class citizens of people who work in jobs that do not happen to finance a £50,000 mortgage? Against all those odds, Lewisham council cannot deal with the problems of homelessness and bad housing. Its housing investment allocation for this year is only £18 million. If that programme were being funded at the same level as in 1979, it would have received £70 million. Where does the fault lie but with the Government?

Nowhere is the problem more acute than in our tower blocks—cruel monuments indeed to middle-class architects who would never have chosen to live in them. Such is the present housing shortage that people who obtain their first flat in such a block are condemned to stay there when they start a family, because Lewisham council is allowed no new building. How many Conservative Members would care to struggle up 13, 14 or 15 floors with 18-month-old twins and the shopping when the lift is out of order? Why should people who pay their rents and are prepared to be independent be penalised because the Government will not allow the council money to repair their blocks?

Let me now turn to education. In Lewisham, parents, governors and teachers are resisting a proposal to turn the Haberdasher's Aske's schools into a city technology college. Such colleges were intended to be financed by industry to provide young people with a technological education. They are to exist entirely outside the state system, and their implicit role is to be that of the elitist school. They are to have funds to pay for better equipment and higher salaries for teachers. They will take our education back into the two-tier system.

It is rumoured that the Government are prepared to put £4 million into the creation of a CTC in Deptford—£4 million to destroy effective comprehensive education in that area, where real equality of opportunity has been constructed through a five-school consortium. Yet again, we see elitism triumph over the provision of education for all. When I see the willingness of the Government to pour money into projects such as the CTC, which will benefit only a minority, I know that Conservative Members have no wish to close the growing divide in London.

Last week, the Prince of Wales visited Deptford and praised the efforts of the people there, as he put it, to break "this terrible vicious circle" of deprivation. I echo his praise. I hope that the Government will stop blaming the poor for being poor and will take on board the many expressions of concern being voiced about the effects of polarisation of rich and poor. I bleieve that the Government, who ally themselves closely to a policy of self-interest and promotion of the rich at the expense of the poor, are coming dangerously close to authoritarianism.

In my constituency, the ideas and initiatives that are still to be found in our schools, community projects and workplaces are a tribute to the energy and enthusiasm that motivate people to improve their lives, despite the Government's indifference and active obstruction. Whatever the entreaties of Conservative Members and Ministers, we will continue to join those people in their struggle for self-improvement, better communities and better environments. We live among them and travel on public transport and see what is happening. We know that the squalor of our environment is not due to our neglect or the neglect of our councils, but to the policies of the Government. I commend to the House the motion in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

5.41 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I do not doubt the sincerity of the hon. Members for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). However, let the House not listen to what they say, but watch what the Socialists and Liberals do. I have lived and taught in Tower Hamlets, and I have taught in London schools for 23 years. Twelve of them were in the King's Cross area and seven were in deprived parts of

Lewisham. There were children of 95 nationalities. I take no lessons in deprivation or knowledge of ethnic minorities from Liberals or Socialists.

I remind the House that between them the Liberal party and the Labour party have controlled local government in Tower Hamlets for nearly 90 years. Billions of pounds of public money has been poured into that community, but one sees a concrete jungle of deprivation, unimaginatively and badly planned housing and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) said, communities destroyed by the corrupt administrations that we have seen over the years. We have seen appalling planning and people not being consulted.

I know from experience--I have fought three general elections in east London——

Mr. Tony Banks: How did the hon. Gentleman get on?

Mr. Greenway: Very well. When I went to speak in the docks against Jack Dash and others, often with the Bishop of Stepney, then Trevor Huddleston, I did not see the Socialist Member of Parliament.

In that society in the east end there is no grass, except for that around the high-rise blocks. There are concrete playgrounds for children, and if they want to play soccer they have to play on concrete. All recreational facilities are concrete. That area, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate reminded us, used to be full of fine open green spaces. That is Socialism and Liberalism at work. The hon. Member for Deptford believes what she said, but that is not the way that Socialism works in practice.

The homeless have been much discussed in the debate so far. I shall tell the hon. Member for Deptford about the homeless in the London borough of Ealing. When the present Labour council took control in May 1986 there were 30 families on the homeless register, costing the people of Ealing £300,000 a year. The council promptly abolished residence points, which took away the right to be housed, from people born and bred in the borough and who had lived there for two years or more. It sucked in all sorts of people from all over the country and all over the world who had no relationship with Ealing. Within a year there were 1,000 people on the waiting list, at a cost of £13 million or £14 million. If two homosexuals are living together and then quarrel and decide to part, the council believes that they must be housed separately, so that uses two housing units. That is but one example of why there is an increased need for housing.

Ms. Abbott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I shall not give way to the hon. Lady. Let her go back to Cambridge. She did not give way to anybody.

That is one of the ways in which homelessness and the demand for housing has increased. The Labour party needs to think about what it has done to the people.

Homeless people come to see me in my surgery.—*[Interruption.]* I have at least one surgery every week, sometimes two and sometimes I have a surgery every day. Those people will give me addresses of properties that have been empty for two years or more. They say, "Can I have that home? Will you write to the director of housing?" Somebody told me about a house that had been empty for three years. I wrote to the director of housing some seven months ago and asked for that home to be allocated to a lady. He wrote back and told me that it was already allocated. Three months later the lady came back to see me and said that there was still nobody living in it, so I tried again. Three months later the lady came back again and said that there still nobody in it. I have just written again to the director of housing, but I shall get the same answer. That needs to be sorted out. I commend my hon. Friend the Minister for tackling that problem.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I shall give way once to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is very decent of you, Harry.

No Opposition Member would defend a system whereby empty council properties are kept empty because a council does not know that the property is empty. One understands that that happens. However, will the hon. Gentleman accept that 72 per cent. of all empty properties in Greater London are in the private sector? The largest number, in percentage terms, are owned by Government Departments.

Mr. Greenway: I am not talking about council properties where the council does not know that they are empty. I have given an example in which the council was told by me that a property was empty, and I was being rung daily by people who wanted to move into the property. The councils know which properties are empty. The hon. Gentleman is attempting to mislead the House and it is mischievous of him to do so. I am sure that he does not mean it.

I have visited the Embankment homeless regularly in the worst of winters. A great deal of insincere cant is talked about those people. The truth is that many of them have refused to go into accommodation. That is not to say that I condone the fact that anyone is in that position. I have attempted on many occasions to persuade people to get out of that situation. Sometimes, even in the most bitter weather, one cannot persuade them to go into hostel accommodation, which I find for them. During the terrible winter before last I suggested, both in the House and outside, to anyone who was interested that we should do something. I said, "Open your halls, open this and that and take them in." I explained that those people would die outside on those terrible nights. Only the Salvation Army responded. What a fine job it does. It has a right to speak about the problem, but that does not apply to many Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

Learned articles in *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, and other reputable newspapers and journals have described people who own cars and have petrol allowances as being in poverty. One has to be honest when one talks about poverty. If one investigates the word "poverty" in the Oxford Dictionary, it is clear that someone who is in poverty has absolutely nothing—virtually no food to eat, virtually no clothes to wear and no home. We are not talking about poverty in London in those terms, and it is hypocrisy for the Labour party to table a motion in such terms. I hope that the House will reject it strongly and thoroughly.

A very serious form of poverty is poverty through education. It has been said in Ealing, it has been said by the Labour party today, and I have heard it said by many Socialists, that one must not push children of a single

[Mr. Greenway]

parent, or children from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially if they are poor, because they are deprived and cannot take the pressure. One cannot do children a bigger disservice than to push such a policy.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr Greenway: No, I shall not give way.

If ever children need extra help and pressure to succeed it is the children of single parents, and children from deprived backgrounds, whether they are white or from an ethnic minority background. We have heard such sentimentalism from the Labour party in London and elsewhere for many years.

I have marked the examination papers of such children at CSE and O-level—not at A-level, as they did not get that far—for many years. Their lack of a good grasp of English shows that they have not been pushed in the way that they could have been pushed and their grasp of the language improved. Such an improvement would have enabled them to write better examination papers and they would have been better equipped for work. That serious deprivation has emanated from parts of the ILEA and from other Labour authorities.

For 20 years, the education of children in secondary schools in London was secondary to the reorganisation plans of the ILEA and the old LCC, which wanted to create a unitary system of education which they hoped would produce a flank of Socialists right across London and lead to the end of Conservatism. The education of those children was secondary to that political aim. That was disgraceful and should not be forgotten. That generation will be deprived for life, and that is well known.

Finally, rates have rightly been mentioned in the debate. Let us examine what the Labour party does in power, and consider the rates damage in Ealing. In Ealing last year the Labour council increased rates by 65 per cent. Poor people, old people and deprived people went without food to pay their rates. For some of them, that huge increase cost hundreds of pounds in a year. In addition, the rates on factories went up and there was a £500,000 rates increase for Ealing hospital—that from a party that cares so much about the sick and about the NHS.

To take one example, the £750,000 rates increase for Lyons in Greenford meant that the price of tea, Ready Brek, ice cream, puddings and so on went up.

Mr. Tony Banks: Nonsense.

Mr. Greenway: Where could it find £750,000, other than from increased prices? Some employees also lost their jobs. My constituents have been struggling to pay a 65 per cent. rates increase and the higher cost of tea and food.

Ms. Ruddock *rose*——

Mr. John Fraser *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: No, I shall not give way. I have given way once and I shall not give way again.

Even the price of hair cuts went up by 50p. What a way to run a borough.

If I have not got my point across to Opposition Members, may I stress that within the past month Ealing council, which has £192 million to spend, compared with £151 million only two years ago—an increase of £41 million—has stopped all discretionary grants to pay for an extension or an extra downstairs lavatory for disabled people in Ealing. That is wicked.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is also not true.

Mr. Greenway: It is absolutely true. It has not been denied. The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right. I have council letters to prove it.

A family in Costons avenue, Greenford, with two severely disabled sons aged 23 and 20, need downstairs accommodation for them. They negotiated a grant and worked out with an architect what was needed and were all ready to go. But that grant has been stopped by a council which does not care a damn about the disabled. Those two young men still cannot live at home. It cares only about its own equality policy. It will put on a party costing £1,000 for lesbians with the Hot Doris band, but it will not give grants to disabled people who need them.

There are fewer home helps, and those who need them get them less regularly. The council has allowed people to be violated by unchecked invasions of gipsies—in one area, 12 times in three months. That is the extent of the mis-spending in Ealing. The council is seeking to put a second playground next to a perfectly good existing playground, in Perivale park, at a cost of £16,000. It spends millions of pounds on Labour party propaganda in "Voices", its own magazine, and in other ways.

People in Ealing were very pleased when the Secretary of State for the Environment rate-capped Ealing for the current year and rates were forced down by 25 per cent., but they are trembling in their shoes because Ealing is not rate-capped for next year. Just to stand still, rates will go up by a minimum of 50 per cent., and they will probably go up a great deal more. That is Socialism. That is what a so-called caring Socialist party, or SLD party, means in practice. Let the House know about it, and let it throw out the motion this evening.

5.57 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) made a speech which seemed to owe more to his imagination than to reality. I grew up in Tower Hamlets, and before the war most people there lived in the most dreadful hovels. The council housing that he decried was the biggest slum-clearance scheme in Europe. The people who received a council house received a new life. At that time the caring Tories were saying, "It is no use giving working people a bath; they will only put coal in it." That way of thinking still exists today.

Tower Hamlets is one of the poorest boroughs in London, and certainly in England, and, according to figures published in 1984, 70 per cent. of households survive on £6,000 per annum. Conservative Members should think about what that means, if their imaginations will take them that far. The link between poverty and ill health has now been proven. While richer London boroughs, such as Bromley and Sutton, have death rates comparable with those in Europe and the United States of America—the richer countries in the world—the death rate for men in the poorer parts of Tower Hamlets is comparable with those in Uruguay and Argentina. The standard mortality rate for Tower Hamlets is the highest in London.

Professor Peter Townsend, a social scientist of world renown, recently condemned the Government for pursuing policies that promoted poverty, and therefore ill health. His words have been illustrated dramatically by the report of the Social Services Select Committee which is published today, the majority on which, as hon. Members know, are Conservative Members. *The Observer* says that the report shows:

"The number claiming means-tested state benefits has climbed from 4·4 million, when Mrs. Thatcher first took office, to 8·2 million."

That is nearly double. The report says:

"another million live below the level of meagre benefits but do not claim."

The Government's policies have doubled the number of people who live in dire poverty. The result is early and untimely death for many of my constituents. I can justifiably say that, because of that, the Thatcher Government's policies are annihilation policies for many people.

Time after time, the Government utter pious words about the Health Service and how the health of our people is safe in their hands, but a healthy population cannot be achieved just by tinkering with the NHS. That view was expressed most eloquently by the British Medical Association Board of Science and Education report of 1987, entitled, "Deprivation and Ill Health," which says:

"No amount of redistribution of resources within the health and social security sector will resolve the health problems caused by deprivation. Increased resources for housing, work creation, income support, education and health and social services are needed although low cost initiatives are possible which will alleviate the health experience of some disadvantaged groups. The problem is so great and so entrenched within these structures of society as to be insoluble without significant diversion of public resources."

It is such a significant diversion of public resources that the Government constantly refuse to make, whether to health and social services or to anything else. As a result, the problems are perpetuated.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): My hon. Friend is right when she says that the Government refuse to give figures about deprivation. They gave what they called the Z scores index of multiple deprivation on the 1981 census, which showed that 11 out of 12 areas in London were deprived and that 16 out of the 24 most deprived areas were in London. Those are the Department of the Environment's calculations of deprivation.

Ms. Gordon: I am grateful for that information.

The divide is widening. I should like to give the Government's own figures. The Department of Employment family expenditure survey for 1980 to 1986 shows changes in gross household incomes at 1985 prices. Between 1979—a significant date for poor people—and 1985, the income of the bottom decile—10 per cent.—fell by 10 per cent., and the income of the bottom quartile —25 per cent.—fell by 7 per cent. During the same period, the income of the top decile rose by 10 per cent. and the income of the top quartile rose by 12 per cent. It is therefore clear from the Government's figures that the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer.

The figures for Greater London are even worse. The income of the bottom decile fell by 17 per cent. and that of the bottom quartile by 8 per cent. The income of the top decile rose by 12 per cent. and that of the top quartile by 18 per cent. So much for prosperity! The rich got their share, but the incomes of the poor deteriorated. That problem has been exacerbated by the Budget, but the Government hide what they do not like. They have now stopped compiling the figures in the form that I have just mentioned, so comparisons can no longer be made.

Yesterday, the Minister for Housing and Planning announced that a housing action trust will be set up in Tower Hamlets. People were shocked to hear that announcement, even before the Housing Bill has gone through Parliament. Council tenants are in ferment, and have been since they first heard of the Housing Bill.

It has been asserted today that nobody cared about the Greater London council being abolished. Poor people in Tower Hamlets cared very much. The GLC built excellent houses in the borough and the Inner London education authority has cared about children's education there. People's right to elect whom they please to run their schools and to build council dwellings has been eroded by the Government.

The people of Tower Hamlets feel that the Government have declared war on Londoners—they have abolished the GLC and they propose to abolish ILEA. My mailbag reflects the dreadful fear of old people in Tower Hamlets that they will lose their homes. I receive many letters asking whether the Government will prevent them from living out their old age in the council flats where they have lived for years. They see the safety net being ripped from under them. The outlook is grim. They see ward and hospital closures and the education authority being destroyed. Benefits are being cut. Their circumstances are getting worse rather than better.

Conservative Members are in cloud-cuckoo-land when it comes to what is happening in poor areas. Those who go to Bethnal Green tube station will see women and small children begging. I have not seen that in the east end since the 1920s. That is the pass that the very poorest people have come to, and it is a disgrace for one of the major cities in the world in one of the richest countries in the world.

The Government's game of dividing communities to deflect attention from their policies works for just so long. In my maiden speech a little over one year ago, I said that Londoners in the east end will fight back. They are beginning to rally to do just that. The London Docklands development corporation taught those people a sharp lesson. They saw that dictatorship being set up and public money being poured in, but there was a net loss of jobs and increased unemployment. They saw houses being built, but for £200,000, which they could never afford. They knew that it was not to benefit them.

They now know a quango when they see one, and the housing action trust will be just the sort of dictatorship in housing that the LDDC has been in docklands.

They are reacting violently against it, and they regard the HAT as a con trick. First, the rate support grant was taken away; our taxes were stolen; then Tower Hamlets was rate-capped and it was announced on Thursday that it would be rate-capped again. So there is no money for repairs. Then the Government say that the estates are in a state of disrepair so they will take away the democratic right of the elected authority to handle them and put them in the hands of an appointed quango.

A few weeks ago, the new rich who have moved into Tower Hamlets on the Isle of Dogs held a charity ball to raise money for the London hospital—at £200 a ticket. Local people were shocked. That is the divide between rich and poor, between people living on less than £6,000 a year

[Ms. Gordon]

and those who have moved in and can afford £200 a night. The local people do not want their hospitals funded in that way. They had enough of charity hospitals before the war, and that does not please them one bit.

I am reminded that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), writing in the *Sunday Telegraph* a few weeks ago, said that we must honour the philanthropists of the past century who provided money to build schools, hospitals and workhouses. The people of Tower Hamlets are not going back to the workhouse. The Government have a workhouse mentality and workhouse aspirations for the poor of this country.

There is a ferment in Tower Hamlets. Last week a local tenants' meeting was held on a small estate. We thought it would bring out about 40 people—but they had to shut the doors because 800 people turned up from all around. On Thursday the tenants' federation is calling a meeting to discuss what to do. I warn the Government that in Tower Hamlets anyone who lives near the river, or a canal, park or any other desirable natural space feels threatened. They believe that their houses will be grabbed, that they will be squeezed out and that the new HAT will eventually cause rents to go up so that they will not be able to afford to pay them and will have to leave. They will be pushed out by people who now find the area desirable for various reasons that we all know well.

I warn the Government that they have been pushing people too far. An explosive situation is building up in east London. People are saying that they will fight to defend their homes and that Government policies will not help them. Their lives have become much worse since 1979, and they are in no doubt about that.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was reading a newspaper—he is still doing it now, or perhaps he is eating his chips off it.

I see that only two Conservative Members representing London constituencies are present. Does that not show a contempt for the problems of London?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I was working on the assumption that if an hon. Member was reading a newspaper he was preparing his speech, but I remind the House that in other circumstances it is not in order to read newspapers.

6.15 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I want to make three brief points. First, I want to challenge the nature of what we are debating. We are discussing the gap between the rich and the poor, and we have been told by Opposition Members that it has widened. On the face of it, that seems a reasonable proposition. Opposition Members have produced statistics to back it up—even Members on the Opposition Front Bench, who seem to have spent all afternoon playing musical chairs, coming and going and not listening much to the debate.

People want a reasonable society with a sense of justice and fair play, so the remarks of Opposition Members might strike a chord. But they are not based on reality. To believe what Opposition Members have said, one would have to believe that the mere existence of some who are wealthy impoverishes people with less money—and I do not believe that. There are people in parts of my constituency who live in the stockbroker belt, earn substantial incomes, possess Rolls-Royces and live in houses that are worth anything up to £1 million. That compares with my income as an hon. Member and the rather more modest house that I live in. So one would have to believe, to follow Opposition Members' arguments, that the existence of such people impoverishes me, which is not true.

Neither has this ever been true of London. London has always been a patchwork quilt of poor and wealthy areas co-existing. But to say that because more people are wealthy in London others are impoverished is nonsense. Opposition Members know it is nonsense; more importantly, the people of London know it is and will not fall for it.

Mr. Corbyn: Exactly what useful work did those stockbrokers do to gain their enormous wealth, other than to exploit the people who work in industry, to take their money away and to make no useful contribution to society? Does the hon. Gentleman think that the working people of London are so stupid as not to realise that stockbrokers are parasites?

Mr. Hughes: That remark is part of the pattern. Perhaps to try to keep its spirits up, the Labour party tries to make us believe that areas of London that used to be Labour's strongholds, such as Walthamstow and Battersea—and Leyton soon—are giving increasing numbers of votes to the Conservatives because so-called yuppies are moving into them. But canvassing in working-class areas contradicts that notion. The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is an ex-Labour stronghold which now has a 15,000 Conservative majority, which was created not by yuppies or stockbrokers but by people on council estates who had been lifelong Labour voters but came over to the Conservatives.

What is the legacy of Labour in London? In places such as Tower Hamlets, the Labour party deliberately created a captive vote. It set out to control from the council the vast majority of housing in an area, and what a terrible job it made of that control. The party thought that the only way to build political control was to own property. It was warned about that in the last part of the last century. It was told that it should not control the votes of the people and collect their rents.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Who said that?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman should look at the works of Mrs. Hill, who created the National Trust. He should also learn something about London, instead of interrupting the debate in his broad Glaswegian accent. Those of us who were born and brought up in London and know a great deal about it know that the Labour party prospered for some time in Tower Hamlets only by making promises to people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has talked about the phenomenon in 1949 and I should like to talk about it 30 years after that. The phenomenon was that of Labour councillors standing outside polling stations telling people to give them their vote and they would make sure that they got another flat. But they never had any intention of doing

that or of keeping up the maintenance of the properties. That is why, in the end, those properties were taken away from them.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Like me, my hon. Friend has fought general elections in east London. Labour Members will not like it, but what he says is true. I have seen Labour councillors walking down streets and canvassing, and I have heard them say to people, "Who got you that flat? Be there next Thursday." That is corruption.

Mr. Hood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member has just walked in, straight from the bar. He knows nothing about London, and I shall not give way.

This debate is about political control. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning made an announcement about housing action trusts. Listening to what was said yesterday and what is being said today by Opposition Members would make one assume that the maintenance problems in the areas that have become subject to HATs are a result of what the Government have done, and the money that they have taken away. However, anyone who knew the Ocean estate or any of the areas that are being talked about during the 1970s knows that they were the pits then. They know that Tower Hamlets could not control them, and that the council did not even know what it owned. It left properties empty, it did not maintain the lifts, and the staircases were a disgrace and dangerous —and all that was in the Labour 1970s. It is the same now; that is why they need to be taken out of the control of Labour authorities which have deliberately kept people in poverty and badly maintained estates in order to maintain their political control.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I have already given way quite a lot.

A particular problem has arisen in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, and it concerns those Bengali families who were declared to be intentionally homeless by the SLDP-dominated council. I am in somewhat of a quandary because I do not know whom to blame. Last week, I was talking to a Bengali gentleman in Spitalfields after a large meeting that I had addressed. Perhaps I should blame the Labour council, which left him, his family and another family in the same one flat since 1973, refusing to rehouse them. I do not know whether it is the well-known racialism of the Tower Hamlets Labour party, which goes back such a long way, that is to blame. Is it the SLDP council, which has taken the disgraceful step of treating people who are in this country legally and who are entitled to be here and who want to be rehoused as if they could be put back on boats? That is the SLDP in action, and I challenge the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to distance himself from what the Tower Hamlets council has done.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Member knows my view. I disagree with, and disassociate myself from, that decision. However, on other housing matters, the council has made substantial progress and it believes that it could put much of the housing stock into good condition before the next borough elections.

Mr. Hughes: Those are the weasel and mealy-mouthed words that we hear from SLDP spokesmen all the time. The reality in Tower Hamlets is that 3,500 properties are empty. Organisations helping the homeless say that they could bring many of those properties back into use within weeks and use them to house local homeless families. The SLDP council is keeping people out of these houses. It is deliberately taking an attitude towards Bengali families that I can only describe as racist. That is the real gap between rich and poor, and it has not been caused by the Government. They are trying to do something about it with the HATs and allowing opting out under the provisions of the Housing Bill. The people who are responsible are those sitting on the Opposition Benches, and at least one word of apology would help.

6.23 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): The argument in the House today is not so much about whether there is inequality of opportunity in London as about who is responsible for it. I see this inequality every day in Greenwich. We have already heard many statistics, and I do not propose to add to them. I shall draw the attention of the House to some of the human consequences of this inequality.

Let us assume that all babies born in Greenwich today are born equal. However, by the time that they are only a few weeks old the inequality of opportunities that they face will be manifest. The first inequality that they will face comes when they go home. They go to estates such as Springfield Grove, Cherry Orchards, Mascalls Court and the Ferrier. Those are all pretty sounding names, but they are not pretty places in which to live. They are often damp, cold, miserable and concrete. They are overcrowded and subject to intolerable noise. Violence and crime are common, and dirt is just taken for granted.

I have heard a typical example of what happens, although the results of this example are rather more extreme than others. Earlier this year I received the following letter:

"Dear Rosie Barnes,

I am writing to you about the letter I got on the 3rd February. Does it mean that I am not going to get rehoused because I don't think I can take this place much more.

It is so cold and my children are so bad that they will not settle down now and not sleeping. I have been up day and night for a month. The flat is getting very bad now. Every time it rains or snows it comes in and my children are still not well."

I received a subsequent letter from that woman two or three months later, in which she said:

"Thank you for your letter you sent to me. I am writing to you to let you know that I have had my baby. I had him on the 4th March. He has got a cold allready and he is only 6 days old. So now I have three kids with colds."

I wrote to Greenwich council, and received a reply, which said:

"I refer to your enquiry . . . This family now have a total of 26 points which, as you know, is far below the level required for rehousing. As previously reported, no medical priority has been awarded to this family."

On 13 June, I received a letter from the same woman, who said:

"I am writing to let you know that I had my baby. He was born on the 4th March but he died on the 16th May."

That was not the first unexpected child death that I had been told about in my short time as Member of Parliament for Greenwich. It happens often to children who are taken home to these appalling estates. They have no chance, if they do not have a decent home, of growing up healthy

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

and free from asthma and bronchitis. They should at least have a warm start in life. Warmth would be a step in the right direction.

Poverty is the next big battle that these families face. Housing benefit has been cut and the poll tax in Greenwich is expected to be £500 or £600 a year per person.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Waldegrave): The hon Lady has rightly outlined a number of problems that poor families have to face. Another problem is racism, which we have discussed in the debate. Both sides of the House will, I think, agree that to some extent this is a by-election debate. I should be interested to know the hon. Lady's view of her party's candidate in the by-election, who has been putting material through my letter box saying that the Notting Hill carnival, which I happen to enjoy, should be banned. Does she stand by that policy?

Mrs. Barnes: I stand by the policy that the candidate has set out, which is that the carnival should not continue unless it is made safe. I strongly deny any allegation of racism against the SDP candidate in the by-election. The fact that he has a black adopted daughter should go some way to allay the Minister's fears. That was an outrageous intervention.

Housing benefits and the poll tax will take their toll of the already limited income of poor families in Greenwich. Money for food and fuel bills will be even harder to find and the families and their health will suffer accordingly.

We have not been helped by some of the actions of the local council, including a rent increase in sheltered housing of £18 a week. For many elderly people who are not on full housing benefit, or on housing benefit at all, but are of limited means, that is an unacceptable increase, which will mean that their limited savings for their old age will have to go much further than they imagined.

I draw attention to the plight of families in London when they need hospital services. We have spoken about housing and poverty, and health is another major requirement for equality of opportunity. If the Health Service is not functioning when needed in a way that will restore health, there is no equality. I endorse may of the statistics on the closure of hospitals in London and the cut in the number of acute beds.

Let me illustrate what is happening in one of the two major district hospitals in my area by reading an extract from a letter that I received from a paediatrician. He said:

"In view of your interest in our Department I thought I would bring you up-to-date with our present problems. The downstairs ward at the Brook Hospital has been closed since shortly after the hurricane. This was initially as a result of an invasion of sewage flies from the overloaded Brook Hospital sewer. These have proved extremely difficult to eradicate. However, I was informed today that the ward now remains closed because the hospital cannot find enough domestic staff to open it. We therefore have to cram all our medical and surgical patients into the upstairs ward which makes life very cramped and possibly contravenes health and safety regulations.

In view of the high, and rapidly rising, rate of child abuse in Greenwich District . . . we have a requirement for 2 full time Social Workers in Paediatric Social Work at the Brook Hospital. One Social Worker recently left and it has proved impossible to replace her. I think that Social Workers have been put off applying for this post because of the risk of being embroiled in child abuse scandals . . .

The Medical Secretarial service at the Memorial Hospital has been radically curtailed. As a result I am still signing letters dictated in early January"—

this letter is dated 15 March—

"and there are some letters which were dictated for Paediatric and Gynae Clinics in late December which have still not been typed."

The letter also stated:

"The whole of the Brook is a depressing and depressed area. For a while this year the children were given sandwiches for their evening meal. As you might imagine many of my patients would not accept strong cheddar cheese and Branston pickle sandwiches. Following a strong protest we have reinstituted cooked food for the children though I am not sure whether this applies to the rest of the hospital."

That is a bleak medical picture.

Much needs to be put right in Greenwich. Poor housing, poverty and the Health Service must be sorted out. There will be much argument about whose fault those problems are. I have no doubt that the people of Greenwich are suffering because of the combination of a harsh Tory regime towards alleviating poverty, of not allowing money to be spent on building new homes for those who desperately need them and on restoring dilapidated homes, and the ideological conviction of the hard Left council in Greenwich and its inflexible approach to the problems that ordinary people face daily.

People such as the lady who wrote to me about her baby and those going into the Brook hospital and receiving that sort of treatment do not care whose fault it is. They just want it put right. Such suffering can and should be alleviated. Some things could be done immediately. We could eliminate the 20 per cent. ceiling on reinvestment in housing. We should use the money from the sale of council houses to build new ones, which are desperately needed in south-east London. We should seriously consider allowing portable discounts for tenants who are trapped in those miserable council properties so that they can buy a decent home. That has been SDP policy for some time.

We should reconsider the poll tax and ask whether it is right to expect people to pay £500 or £600 a head when they have no means to pay that sort of money and never expected having to do so. A tax of that sort, which does not reflect people's ability to pay and comes out of the blue, is uncalled for.

We should invest more money in our National Health Service. It cannot exist on a shoestring budget. If we want our children to get better, we must do more than give them cheese and pickle sandwiches in sewage-fly-infested wards. That is a disgrace in modern London. The suffering and the excuses must stop. Action must be taken to resolve some of the problems with practical solutions.

6.35 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): This has been a useful debate in which 15 of the 23 Labour Members of Parliament for London have been present in the Chamber at one time or another and at least four other Labour Members of Parliament have been trying to speak. Compare that with the Conservative party, which has been rooting around in the back streets of Westminster trying to dragoon its Members in.

Mr. Waldegrave: To put the matter properly on the record, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the 15 came in seriatim—one after the other? There were never more than four in the Chamber at a time.

Mr. Soley: We carry out our operation in waves. I make no excuses about that.

The real issue is the ideological commitment of the Government to the market economy. They believe that if everyone is allowed to do his own thing, without any thought for the community or society, everyone will be better off. That has been spelt out by Conservative Member after Conservative Member, but they forget that the market is already distorted. In April, the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced a Budget that gave millionaires a rise of about £430 a week, and the Secretary of State and the Minister introduced housing benefit cuts that took £10 and £20 a week from the lowest paid.

That is the moral crisis of the Conservative party. However many times they try to use North sea oil to bribe the voters of the south-east to maintain their majority, they cannot hide the fact—as the Churches have rightly pointed out—that the Conservative party is devoid of morality on such issues.

Interestingly, the market will not be allowed to rip in the south-east. There, if people build houses where they are wanted, all of a sudden 100 Conservative Members sign motions saying that there must be planning controls and that local authorities must be allowed to step in. To his credit, the Secretary of State says no. I think that it is a mistaken policy, but at least he is consistent in saying, "No, you must not." But 100 Tory Members are constantly saying, "No market in my back yard," because the market is too embarrassing.

The same philosophy justifies the rise for the millionaires: to encourage people who are well off to work they must be given more money, but those who are badly off must be given less money to encourage them to work. There is no consistency in their philosophy.

The Government are abolishing the Inner London education authority not because it is expensive to run—the Metropolitan police are three times as expensive and local authority social services are twice as expensive—but because ILEA, like the GLC and the metropolitan counties, is run by the Labour party, and they want to smash anything resembling local democracy that they cannot win in the normal democratic way.

When the Inner London education authority goes, nursery education, school meals and the adult education service will be squeezed in some boroughs. We know that that is true because in the Kensington by-election, the poor old Secretary of State for Education and Science was wheeled out to try to explain the bizarre figure of £122 per head for the poll tax in Kensington. When asked about education, he said that it would be cheaper to collect. Price Waterhouse has said that it will be more expensive. The Secretary of State for the Environment has issued figures showing that the poll tax will be more like £380 per head in Kensington. Let us have no more nonsense about this wicked and regressive tax imposed on the people of London.

As for jobs, the Minister said that the homeless do not exist any more. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) pointed out, the homeless do not apply for bed-and-breakfast accommodation because they no longer get in advance the money needed to pay the rents for which the landlords ask. The homeless do not exist—just like the jobless! I was mistaken in thinking that there were 3 million unemployed people. It is just a wicked rumour put about by 3 million people with nothing better to do all day. The homeless do not exist. We cannot really see those people who live in cardboard boxes. The doubling of the number of people who present themselves to local authorities as homeless is just a statistic. That is what the Government say.

I was fascinated to see the hon. Members for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) quietly take the comment of a Home Secretary who says that they are to blame for the crime wave. This group is a new scapegoat for the Government—perhaps not all that new, because the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) also blamed them. Teachers and parents are to blame, we are told. The Home Secretary has discovered another group to blame—broadcasters. Everyone is to blame, except the Government—yet under the Government the figures have been rising faster than under any previous Government and faster than in any other western European country.

More important, they have been rising when they should have been falling. The age range of those who commit crimes is falling. Normally, when that demographic change takes place, there is a decline in the crime rate. There has been a decline in some sectors, but in others —especially the deadly crimes of casual violence—there has been an increase. I sadly predict that that increase will continue. If people are driven into homelessness and their benefits are slashed in a way that breaks up communities, the crime rate will be pushed up.

As I have told the Government before, some aspects of crime have become dramatically worse under the Conservative Government. Of the many causes of crime, three of the most important aspects are consistency in parenting, love in parenting, or other relationships within a family, and the strength of the community. In all three the Government are guilty, by making it more difficult for families struggling to maintain themselves on the margins of survival to carry on building up family bonds. The phrase introduced by the right hon. Member for Chingford, "On your bike", sums it up—it means "Get on your bike, leave your family and look for work." When kids came to London, what accommodation did they find? The Government said that they would improve housing and free the market. As a result of freeing the market in London, more than half the lets are already outside Rent Act provisions and the private sector is drying up faster than it has done since this idea was last tried in 1957. What a disaster this is.

The Government pretend that unemployment is not a factor and say, "These are youngsters. They are not at work." The Government forget that a family which is only just managing to cope and has to face additional pressures —perhaps unemployment for the father or rent arrears for the family—can be expected to run into more difficulties. It is no good the Home Secretary blaming teachers like the hon. Members for Ealing, North and for Erith and Crayford—if they had taught me, it would have been enough to drive me to crime—or blaming broadcasters.

Even the *Evening Standard* is getting worried. It has been ranting and raving about crime while at the same time encouraging it by some of its articles, especially those on race aspects. The *Evening Standard* has editorials which show that it is worried. In floundering around in a desperate attempt to find a reason for our problems, that newspaper recognises that the breakdown in the community is one factor. The Government, in their attack on local authorities and communities, are bringing that about. That is why the crime rate will continue to increase.

[Mr. Soley]

I challenge the Minister to say what he would do about the four hospitals that will close in north-west London. The Westminster, the Westminster Children's, the St. Mary Abbots and the West London are all to be closed because the Government want the money to close a fifth hospital—St. Stephen's—and reopen it in three year's time. Riverside district health authority wants £25 million, or it will close those four hospitals and rebuild the other. I challenge the Minister to say what he or the Conservative candidate in Kensington would do about that. The answer is nothing, as everyone knows.

Mr. Waldegrave: I should like to put this firmly on the record. As the hon. Gentleman knows, these decisions, which are not yet final, involve the choice of building a new £100 million hospital at St. Stephen's. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not want that hospital? It is important to know the answer.

Mr. Soley: I should love to see that new hospital but, more important, I do not believe that it is necessary to close four other hospitals to do so; nor does anyone else, including the medical staff and the district authority. That authority has clearly said that it cannot manage without the £25 million. That amount is a tiny percentage of the amount given in the Budget to millionaires. Where is the morality in that? Where is the morality in the Conservative party?

The Government say, "Let us do something about transport." They are to drive a dirty great west cross route through Kensington, which will blight homes on either side of it. The Government are doing that in the belief that somehow it will improve internal transport in London. Have they ever thought that perhaps we should give a little more support to the public transport system as one way of improving it?

We come to housing—the Government's big failure. Housing troubles people in Kensington perhaps more than anything else, other than the poll tax. There are 16,000 homes in multiple occupation in Kensington, all eligible for the van Hoogstratens of this world. Because the Minister cares about this matter, I hope that he will respond when he gets my letter asking him to meet two women who were driven out of their home by Mr. van Hoogstraten. One of them appeared in the television programme on him. Those women will tell the Minister, in ways that he does not seem to accept from me, why Mr. van Hoogstraten is able to succeed.

The Minister could help by saying that tenants of non-resident landlords in the private sector can pick a landlord. Was that not what the Government were talking about in the Housing Bill? Was there not supposed to be something about "pick a landlord"? The Government turned it into "pick a tenant". The Bill allows people in the private sector or in housing associations, which I support, to take over public property in the form of council properties. The Government have not allowed a person in the private sector to say, "I have a Mr. van Hoogstraten on my back. I want a different landlord." The Government could have given local authorities a power and, more important, a duty to ensure that they had a tenants relations officer to check up on such properties and take action. We must remember that people cannot necessarily get legal aid for such cases, but the Government do not provide for all that. To them, it does not matter.

Buying a house? Forget it in London. One cannot buy a house in London any more unless one is earning a very good salary—well in excess of £20,000 per annum. Where is a person supposed to get a mortgage for houses and flats that cost more than £100,000? Where is a person supposed to rent when the market is well over £100 a week in most areas—one of the lowest estimates I have been able to get. The Conservative candidate in Kensington is offering a flat in Kensington for £500 a week. One must apply to the economic adviser in *The Economist* who is none other than the Conservative candidate for Kensington. It is £500 a week, so presumably he knows——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): He is executive editor.

Mr. Soley: I thank the hon. Gentleman. So one has to apply to him for that flat at £500 a week. Do Conservative Members really believe that ordinary Londoners can afford that? Could a bus driver or a teacher afford it, or others who are desperately in need?

The Government tell us about empty properties. We have heard all about housing action trusts. One can have anything one likes except a vote. One is not allowed to vote just in case one does not vote in favour. The Government say that they want to deal with empty properties. The Minister ducked the question when I challenged him yesterday. He said that there are not many empty Government-owned Ministry of Defence properties in London. Actually, there are quite a few.

But it is not just that Department that we are concerned with—what about properties owned by the Home Office, London Regional Transport or the Department of the Environment? There is a whole range of empty properties in the Government sector, which are not being mentioned. Some 6·9 per cent. of Government-owned properties are empty, compared with an average of 2·5 per cent. of local authority properties, 4·1 per cent. in the private sector and 3 per cent. in the housing association sector. What matters is bad management, whoever manages the property—local authorities, the Government, private owners and so on.

The Government are not doing anything about that. All that they are doing is driving a wedge between the people of London, which is reflected in the rest of the country—a wedge between rich and poor, black and white, old and young, male and female. That is why Ann Holmes will be the new Member for Kensington on Thursday.

6.51 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): During the debate I was almost converted from my views on televising Parliament, because, if the debate had been televised, it would have been worth another 10,000 votes to us in the Kensington by-election. Never have I heard such sterile speeches as we had from the Opposition. As for the dying swan songs of the splintered centre, we had better pass them by in silence.

The tone was set by the speech by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), who spoke in the inimitable accents of my late and much-lamented aunt, Joyce Grenfell. She gave a catalogue of the past gamut of Labour analysis. It was only with

speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that we began to grapple with the problems.

The saddest intervention was by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock). The hon. Lady made an eloquent speech, in the course of which she said that nothing was the fault of Labour councils. Even the leader of her council, Dave Sullivan, knows that that is not true, as he says in the secret reports that leak out of that council all the time. He admits that, despite the great expenditure and politicisation of officers recently, criticised by the ombudsman, there has been no improvement in services.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) had five minutes longer to speak than I shall have, so I shall give way to the hon. Lady, but to no one else.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister accept that Lewisham borough council is willing and able to put its own house in order to deal with disrepair on its estates and that it is the Government who deny the council the money for that?

Mr. Waldegrave: Not on the objective evidence of looking at the competence of highly politicised housing departments, which went to the point of writing unsolicited letters to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), the Minister with responsibility for sport, criticising his political views. When the politicisation of officers has gone to that extent, can the hon. Lady be surprised that we begin to doubt the competence of such authorities?

Opposition Members will be astonished—the hon. Member for Hammersmith will not, because I suspect that he has had the same experience—to hear that when I meet Labour authorities in the midlands and the north of England, which I do regularly, their opening words are, "For goodness' sake, we are not like those Labour authorities in London. We understand your problems with them. We are different. We are good Labour authorities." They are anxious to put a gap between them—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] I shall give Opposition Members some names. Let us take the Labour council in Blackburn, which was the most recent one to put that point to me clearly—and why not, because such a council is a different kettle of fish? Why are those councils so anxious to put as much space as possible between the London Labour party and themselves? They know that we are right in our criticisms of Labour in London.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke about homelessness. The trouble is that the feebleness of the Opposition that we have had to face today makes it all to easy for us to pass over the fact that there are real problems in London. The right hon. Gentleman is right that there are problems, and many of my hon. Friends recognise that.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey should be careful in using the 30,000 registered homeless as if that were the permanent picture. That figure represents the annual acceptances, half of which go into permanent accommodation. We recognise the problem and that is why today we are giving the third set of additional allocations to several local authorities, to deal, above all, with the bed-and-breakfast problem. It is wrong that families should be in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

I am happy to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that there has been a steady reduction, which was repeated in the last quarter's figures, for those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I know that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is an expert and is anxious about the problem, will welcome that fall. It is not the beginning of a total solution of all the problems, but to get those families out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation must be a high priority for all of us.

The Opposition did not convey a vision of how we should manage housing in London as a whole. In London, about one third of all the housing stock is social housing —council or housing association property. Do Opposition Members think that that is enough, too much, or too little? With a stock that size, if we cannot manage to meet the needs of those in real housing need, with one in three of all the dwellings in London in the social rented sector, it is the incompetence of those who are responsible for it to which we must look first.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) put forward a radical new proposal, which is relevant—that we should have transferable discounts so that there is better use of the stock. I know that she voted against the Housing Bill, so she might have missed it, but we are doing exactly that. That is what we must now do. We must get the housing to those who need it most. Equally important, we must make sure that in this great city we are not polarised between the very rich and the very poor. That is why the right to buy and home ownership in London are so vital.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: No, because I have only four minutes left.

The 120,000 families who are now home owners, having bought council property, or the 300,000 new home owners in London since 1979, represent a far more practical step towards building a city that is balanced in tenure than any of the rhetoric and nonsense that we have had from the Opposition today.

Opposition Members often say that the right to buy has caused a huge loss of new lets, which results in homelessness. It has not. I can give the House some new figures. During the period 1983-84 to 1986-87, which is a reasonable period on which to calculate, 4,650 potential new lettings were lost as a result of right-to-buy disposals, but that loss was far more than offset by the addition to the London council housing stock, leaving aside housing associations for the moment, of just under 26,000 houses. So it is a myth to say that the right to buy has contributed to homelessness in that way. A more careful analysis is needed if we are to proceed in the right direction.

The Labour authorities in London, which the hon. Member for Deptford so touchingly said were responsible for none of the problems, are in fact in possession of billions of pounds worth of public property of one type or another. It is their duty to use that money efficiently to meet the needs of the people of London. Some of their confrères in other parts of the country and, indeed, some in London, can achieve that. But while the London Labour party dominates those councils and while we have

[Mr. Waldegrave]

rent arrears of £30 million and the slowness of the lets in Southwark, the muddles and confusion in Tower Hamlets——

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is getting better.

Mr. Waldegrave: All right, but even the hon. Gentleman would not want to say that he was proud of that organisation. He distanced himself from it today in one important matter of policy which he and I have discussed a number of times, so he is not too proud of the Liberal organisation of Tower Hamlets.

Today we have had nothing but sterility from the Opposition. From the Government Benches we have had a number of excellent speeches which analysed the situation, looked to the future and rubbed the noses of Labour Members in some of the truths that they like to forget and that their colleagues throughout the country know to be one of the reasons why they lost the last election. It was London Labour areas, where we did better than anywhere else in the country, that helped us to power in the last election and will doubtless do so again in the next one.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 279.

Division No. 407] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian

Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on those economic and social policies which have created conditions in London in which real incomes are rising; notes, with particular satisfaction, that between 1981 and 1985 the real incomes of the poorest rose faster than average; endorses the Government's policies to alleviate inner city deprivation in London through the programmes set out in Action for Cities, including economic regeneration through the encouragement of enterprise, employment and training, improved housing, through such programmes as estate action, the establishment of Housing Action Trusts and the extension of the role of housing associations, education and revitalising the urban environment.

Sport

7.13 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the failure of Government policies to provide for the requirements of British sport, including a genuine Sport For All policy which meets the needs of community-based sport and recreation; deplores Government intentions to privatise the management of local authority sports facilities, and the sale of school playing fields; regrets the reconstitution of the Sports Council, removing the democratic right of British sport to elect its own representatives; condemns the failure of the Government to deal with the problem of criminal hooliganism in society as a whole and the imposition of unacceptable club membership schemes which remove the civil rights of genuine football supporters and which force upon football clubs arrangements which are impracticable and expensive; and calls for the development of a strategy for sport which is coherent and meets the needs of the whole of British sport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I remind the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Howell: The debate is about the social purpose of sport, which is being undermined by the Government at every turn. Sport ought to provide millions of our people with opportunities for enjoyment in their personal lives and with a sense of challenge and achievement, and there should be pleasure for us all in the triumphs of those who delight the nation with superb performances.

Sport should enrich the society in which we live, but the Prime Minister tells us that there is no such thing as society. She is now firmly in control of sports policy, so we must assume that she regards the role of sport in society as irrelevant. Alone of all nations, Britain offers not a penny piece to those seeking to attract here the great festivals of international sport—the Olympic games, the Commonwealth games and the world student games. Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Sheffield are all cash-limited or rate-capped and left to their own devices. That is very sad, because international sport has an enormous contribution to make to the multiracial society in which we live.

The debate takes place at a time when many of our national sports—football, cricket, rugby and tennis—are producing abysmal performances. We hope that the members of our summer Olympic team, to whom we send our best wishes, will have better fortune than their comrades in the winter Olympics.

The future of all British sport is to be found in school sport. It is there that the basic skills are taught and lifetime enthusiasms generated. Never has morale in school sport been in such a state of collapse. The Government's running conflict with the teaching profession is having disastrous results. Forced contracts in Scotland are decimating school sports and directed time in England and Wales is totally destroying their voluntary nature.

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: Not yet, it is too early.

When the English Schools Football Association tells me that it fears for the future, the rot has certainly set in. Two weeks ago, I attended the annual schools' athletic championships in the west midlands. For the first time in the history of those championships, 40 per cent. of the entrants failed to turn up. Judges had to be recruited from the crowd and people were asked to judge the javelin or the shot because teachers were not there. I inquired about the reason for this terrible situation and was told by physical education teachers that they were being directed to do other things and chose to to do their own things at weekends.

Anybody who doubts the disastrous effect on school sports of the Government's policy should stop for a minute or two to consider the report of the Secondary Heads Association. It represents headmasters in 5,161 schools that are teaching 4,095,500 secondary school pupils. A survey by the Secondary Heads Association found that

"95 per cent. of all schools have witnessed a rapid decline in the number of team fixtures during the last two years.

70 per cent. of schools have inadequate playing fields and indoor facilities.

75 per cent. of pupils no longer have the opportunity to learn to swim."

That is an utter disgrace and a threat to public health as well as to the future of British swimming. The association found that

"40 per cent. of schools have inadequate facilities for dance and gymnastics.

So few schools employ groundsmen that nearly half of all playing fields (by Department of Education and Science criteria) are substandard."

There could hardly be a more damning indictment of a Government who are failing in their duty to produce future generations of British sports people as well as facilities for people who enjoy sport for their own pleasure.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My right hon. Friend spoke about swimming. Does he agree that, following the recent tragedy in the North sea, it was established that one of the troubles was that many workers on the oil rig could not swim?

Mr. Howell: That is not within my personal knowledge, but I am happy to accept it. It is possibly the case. As I have given way to my hon. Friend, perhaps the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) wishes to intervene.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman is very gracious, and I appreciate his giving way. I was about to pursue a theme that he was developing earlier in his speech, when he said that the fountainhead of all successful sport was in schools. Is that true of our successful golfers, such as Nick Faldo and Sandy Lyle or of our snooker player Steve Davis? Many of our most successful sportsmen have developed their skills with good coaching, outside the school system.

Mr. Howell: I cannot follow that irrelevant remark. It would be like following Nigel Mansell round the motor racing track—which has nothing to do with school sport, I concede.

I want to talk about the scandal of the sale of our educational sports grounds. The Central Council of Physical Recreation has done an excellent job in drawing our attention to the fact that the Department of the Environment's own land register shows that 5,000 acres of sports fields are up for sale at present. That area is equal to a city the size of Coventry, and it is a reflection on the Government that they have allowed that to happen.

School sport in London, after the abolition of the GLC and the proposed execution of ILEA, will be in a catastrophic position. In its last year, the GLC spent

almost £40 million on sport and recreation in London. Neither the boroughs nor the Government have provided anything like that amount. In their amendment, the Government make some play of increasing the Sports Council's grant by 37 per cent. but they do not tell us that £5 million of that was provided to compensate for the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties, so it is a false figure. In 1981, the Sports Council grant was £19 million, of which £5 million went to the governing bodies; today the grant is £38 million, of which only £8 million goes to the governing bodies. Not only local authorities but the governing bodies of British sport are being crushed by Government policies.

ILEA is rate-capped and the effect on London is that ILEA is having to close down 12 school playing fields. That is an absolute disgrace. ILEA is also cutting swimming time for pupils and the number of teachers and instructors who train pupils in London schools.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister is to be condemned. He is a product of school sport, yet he preaches to the nation about what the Government will do with school playing fields. He is an utter disgrace.

Mr. Howell: I hope to reinforce my hon. Friend's judgment in the course of my remarks.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The right hon Gentleman and other more senior hon. Members know of my interest in the subject and of my anxiety some years ago to promote a Bill—which the right hon. Gentleman supported—on the sale of playing fields.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke about ILEA. Is he certain that ILEA is determined to close those fields? Is it not rather that, after consultation with my hon. Friend the Minister, certain boroughs will take over those sports facilities, thanks to the Government's initiative?

Mr. Howell: I am coming to that point. By 1990, when ILEA goes, there will be a tremendous crisis because the playing fields will go to the London residuary body. It will have to dispose of the playing fields, at present used by children in inner-London areas, to the highest bidders. That is what has happened to the Lyceum theatre. I spent an hour this afternoon with ILEA, so I am sure of my facts.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: Yes, although I assume that the Minister will make a speech later.

Mr. Moynihan: All the playing fields to which the right hon. Gentleman referred would go to the London education authorities and not to the London residuary body. After April 1990, it will be for the London education authorities to decide whether the playing fields have educational value and therefore whether they will remain in the control of education authorities for use by local students.

Mr. Howell: That is a completely unsatisfactory reply. Will those arrangements apply to the playing fields that ILEA so thoughtfully purchased outside London for use by children from inside London? That was one of the central questions that I was about to ask the Minister. We need a reply. Perhaps he will tell us. I shall certainly give way again if he wishes.

Mr. Moynihan: In my speech.

Mr. Howell: Oh.

The London borough of Waltham Forest would like to buy Waltham Lodge but it cannot because of what is to happen in 1990. That is an example of the difficulties that authorities face.

Opposition Members wish to draw the Minister's attention to a number of priorities on sport in schools with which we expect him to deal tonight. First, as an absolute minimum, physical education time ought to occupy at least 10 per cent. of the school curriculum. Nothing like that is provided in many schools at the moment. Secondly, we want in-service training for PE teachers, especially in primary schools, which are badly served in terms of sport and recreation.

Thirdly, we need greater flexibility in planning and provision for sport in local authorities and local education authorities and we should like the massive capital receipts to be unlocked in the interests of the sporting needs of the British people. Fourthly, we need development officers for sport. Given all the problems associated with boredom in our society, the need for more development officers stares one in the face. Such officers could create new sporting opportunities and attract people into playing a positive role.

There should be no more sales of school playing fields and where such sell-offs are projected, we want an assessment of both their present use and the future needs of sport. Finally, we seek 100 per cent. discretionary, if not compulsory, rating relief for all sports clubs that serve the community.

Let us consider local authority sport. The Sports Council's recent strategy document is entitled "Sport in the Community: into the 90s". There is no hope of pursuing that strategy unless we allow local authorities to provide facilities for all their citizens. In my own city of Birmingham, there were 620,000 users of indoor leisure facilities last year and there were 3 million sessions of swimming. All that is now threatened by the proposed privatisation of management. It is the city council that has built the facilities and attracted people to them. [HON. MEMBERS: "He thinks this is funny."] This Minister thinks that everything is funny. Charm oozes from every pore, but action from nowhere; he is stultified.

The Minister's own constituency of Lewisham has 202,800 users of indoor facilities and 740,000 swimming sessions. We should take these issues to the people. We should ask the people of Lewisham, as well as the people of London in general, why, when a local authority—not always a Labour authority—has taken the initiative and had the courage to provide facilities, that authority should be undermined by its own Member of Parliament.

The consultation document has turned out to be a total disaster for the Minister. Last week, he told the House that he had had 348 replies and that he was putting them in the Library. We had a count today and discovered that only 211 of the replies are to be found in the Library. What has happened to all the others? Of the replies to his consultation document, our analysis shows that 95 per cent. representing local government Conservative, Labour, Liberal and every other hue regard the

[Mr. Howell]

consultation document as a disaster and reject it. The responses have been overwhelmingly hostile to the Government.

The Minister says that he wants private enterprise to manage the facilities. There has been nothing to stop private enterprise building sports halls and swimming baths, had it wished to do so, but it has not. Faced with the opposition to policy mark 1, which was to privatise everything, the Government brought out policy mark 2, which was to privatise the management resources. That policy was manifest nonsense. After management had been privatised, local authorities would have been left to pay all the loan charges and insurance, to pay for the equipment and maintenance, and to subsidise sport for the unemployed, the handicapped and pensioners. No wonder the local authorities to a man rose up in opposition to that ridiculous policy.

Policy mark 3 is to privatise but to allow local authorities to decide the pricing policy and the philosophy. We need to know what that means. The Secretary of State for the Environment never attends sports debates or sports meetings. He has never been through a sports turnstile in his life. He is never seen at any sports ground. That is why he is the Cabinet Minister responsible for these matters. On 22 July 1987 he told us, in respect of his own legislation:

"The enabling power will . . . allow the level of fees and charges under existing, new or amended charging powers to be prescribed or varied."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1987; Vol. 120, *c. 277.*]

How can the Minister say that local authorities can have their own pricing policy when his boss, the Secretary of State, says that he will prescribe what the pricing policy should be? It is a total contradiction.

The Minister must come clean and tell us: will local authorities have the power to prescribe charges for privatised management schemes, or is the Secretary of State's diktat to apply? The other day the Minister said:

"Where a council wishes . . . to subsidise its pricing policy, it is perfectly entitled to write that into the contractual arrangements."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1988; Vol. 136, *c. 650.*]

If a council is free to fix the prices, why should it want to subsidise those prices? It makes no sense. It can only make sense if it means that the council can fix prices but if the Secretary of State disagrees, he will give a direction, and at that point the council would be free to subsidise if it wished to do so.

The privatisation of the management of local authority sports facilities will price thousands of young people out of sports facilities. They will be turned on to the streets to find their excitement in other ways. It will also mean that many sports facilities will become bastions of middle-class activity, as has happened, for example, with lawn tennis to its detriment. No sport can prosper and produce champions unless the base of the pyramid is large enough.

The Sports Council recognises the dangers. In briefing notes it says:

"the willingness of local authorities to build new facilities in the future is a matter of concern".

Of course it should be. No local authority in its right mind will build new sports facilities just to hand them over to private management. That is a reality of life which the Minister must accept.

The Minister has talked about joint schemes. He takes refuge in his statement about exemption for joint shemes provided in schools with local authority recreational support. In Birmingham, where we are doing this, it was after a great fight with entrenched interests. The problem is that although under the Education Act 1986, the Minister wants joint schemes between education and recreational departments, under his new proposal, school governors have a complete say. School governors and heads can decide whether joint schemes in schools will be open to the public. Therefore, we cannot find any comfort in what the Minister has told us about joint schemes. We would like to see more, but his own legislation precludes that.

One of the saddest features of the Government is the contempt in which they hold the democratic process. We see it time and again. Good people are removed from the Sports Council, the Countryside Commission and regional authorities. The test for the Prime Minister and for the Minister is: is he one of us? They do not ask themselves whether the person will make a contribution to society.

The Minister is applying that dictum to the Sports Council, which is par for the course for him. He has removed all regional chairmen of sports councils without consulting the House. He announced that, as he usually announces such things, by a written answer to a planted question so that he did not have to explain to the House why he was removing the right of the Central Council of Physical Recreation to elect the representatives of British sport whom it wants on the Sports Council. That is the essence of democracy and was a right first accorded by me after the White Paper in 1979, and followed by every Conservative Minister until the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. We want to know why he has decided to depart from the wisdom of all others who have held that office. We are entitled to an answer.

The Sports Council will have no representatives of local government or of British sport. I have heard just today that the one representative of the Football Trust, which the Minister tells us will help pay for his membership scheme, has had a letter from the Minister telling him that his services are no longer required. That is a disaster. That member has served only two of his three years as a representative of the Football Trust which is putting millions of pounds into community sport. No doubt the Minister will explain why he thinks that there should be no democracy in the Sports Council.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Can the right hon. Gentleman tell me one initiative taken by the five members who have just retired from the Sports Council?

Mr. Howell: If the hon. Gentleman means the nine chairmen of regional sports councils, I would regard it as inconceivable that those nine, covering the whole country, have never put forward any initiatives for sport.

Mr. Evans: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House of one initiative taken by the CCPR members who retired on 30th June?

Mr. Howell: If the hon. Member will look at the history of those sports that the CCPR represents, he will find that it is responsible for the voluntary control of them all. Everything that has been achieved in voluntary sports has been the result of the initiatives that the CCPR members took as representatives of British sport.

We know why the Minister wants to move in the direction he does. For him, the game is up. In an unguarded moment, he wrote a letter to the Sports Council chairman in November 1987, in which he stated:

"The Sports Council is to become the executive arm of Government."

That is what he wrote. Like everything else, sport is now to be brought under the immediate control of No. 10 and the Minister. The consultation exercise showed that 95 per cent. of those involved did not wish to go along with the Government, but that comment by the Minister before the consultation process began proves beyond peradventure that it was an absolute sham and was never intended to influence the Government—and it has had no influence. It was a totalitarian concept. Ministers who treat Parliament, sport or local government with contempt do themselves no service, and any Minister who does all three simultaneously is beyond recall.

I turn to the subject of football club membership schemes, relating to one of the greatest problems facing our country. One of the other great problems this country faces is the presence of Conservatives on the Government Benches. Serious violence confronts our nation, and it is spreading throughout our cities and rural areas. It is also to be found on the beaches of Spain. Yet the Government have not yet begun to approach the problem rationally.

It is not just a problem for football, but one for society —although if one does not believe in society, it is unlikely that one will be able to cure the problem. Three times I have offered to join an all-party examination of this serious national problem. Three times that offer has been rejected. For the fourth time, I make that offer. This matter transcends party political considerations, but the Government are looking for scapegoats or alibies.

The giveaway occurs in the plan that the Minister put before the House. He said that football violence was such a serious problem that he had to impose a membership scheme on every football supporter because that was the only way of getting the problem under control. But he added that the scheme will not be introduced next year and will have to wait another 12 months; the nation is to be terrorised for a further 12 months.

Mr. John Carlisle: Nonsense. That is stupid.

Mr. Howell: The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) says, "That is stupid," but if football violence really is a serious problem affecting everyone in the country, it should be seriously dealt with now, not in 12 months' time. That 12-month delay is one of the greatest derelictions of duty that I have ever encountered during my time in the House.

We all know that really it is an alibi, and I can tell the House the reason for it. It may be remembered that three years ago, the Prime Minister first sent for the Football Association chairman, and that the No. 10 propaganda machine was busy carrying the message that the Prime Minister was now in charge and that everything would soon be under control. In the three years that followed, disaster followed disaster. The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have much to answer for, as do many others.

Football itself has co-operated in every way. The Minister looks abashed, and no doubt will tell the House why he stated before the European football championship that the Football Association could not have done more and that he was delighted and pleased that it had co-operated with the Government in every respect. Those were his comments, and that is what he told me. In March, I wrote to the Minister and, on behalf of the Opposition, expressed the gravest doubts that the measures taken by the Football Association and by the Minister would be successful in curtailing the situation in Germany. The Minister replied that he was totally satisfied with the association's arrangements for dealing with the potential problem. I can only tell the House and the country that that is what happened, and I will publish that correspondence if the Minister disputes what I have said.

It is not immediately clear to any of us why the problems in Frankfurt and Dusseldorf, disgraceful though they were, should justify a scheme covering all legitimate, law-abiding football supporters throughout the country. That was a panic reaction to a serious situation. The Minister's membership scheme is totally impracticable and it will not work.

One can imagine the scene one Wednesday night at one of our great football grounds for an FA Cup replay. Along comes a supporter in the darkness, tendering his gate money, and the old boy manning the turnstile is expected to study his identity card. The supporter arrives at the gate at 7.20 pm for the replay, pays his money and receives his change—and then he must produce a card. The gatekeeper, locked in his little compartment, will have to study the photograph on the identity card to make sure that it is correct.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): What is the point of it?

Mr. Howell: The Minister has said that the card must bear a photograph—I am not inventing all this.

The gatekeeper must then insert it into the machine. At that point, the gatekeeper might have to tell the supporter, "You can't come in." There may be another 300 people queuing behind him, yet the elderly gatekeeper will be looking through his grille saying, "Please go away." The whole thing is farcical. The gatekeeper will do what the police already do when there is likely to be trouble when supporters having no tickets arrive at all-ticket matches. Then the police say, "Open the gates and let them in."

Mr. Moynihan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howell: I may tell the Minister that if he has ever been to a football match, he can never have seen anything. One of the troubles about the identity scheme is that it has been imposed by people who have never gone through turnstiles in their lives. I was personally present at the match between West Bromwich Albion and Leeds last year when 200 supporters turned up without tickets. They threatened to cause mayhem in the area, and I do not blame the police for responding on that occasion by saying, "Open the gates and let them in." If the Minister blames the police, no doubt he will take up the matter with the Home Secretary. Perhaps he will tell us how he proposes to deal with the problem. I use it merely as an illustration of the practical difficulties posed to the man on the ground.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): What is the right hon. Gentleman's solution?

Mr. Howell: My solution is to deal with the problem of hooligans where it exists, not to create it./*Interruption.*/ I am grateful for my hon. Friends' support, but I do not

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want to overdo my generosity with time. Let me draw my hon. Friends' attention to the cost and the total impractability of providing such a scheme. A club in Holland facing the same problem installed an expensive and sophisticated electronic device. It lasted one week. The so-called hooligans poured in sand, chewing gum and bent cards, which destroyed the system. Such a system can work only if there is a policeman at every turnstile——

Mr. John Carlisle: Rubbish.

Mr. Howell: No doubt the hon. Gentleman is going to tell us about Luton, but we are discussing a national membership scheme, not a localised one. I challenge the Minister to tell us whether he has examined the scheme and whether what I am saying is accurate. But I can assure him that it is accurate: the scheme simply did not work.

If we are to have a centralised computer system that will require a policeman at every turnstile, who will pay for the policemen? Will they be regarded as being inside the ground?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes.

Mr. Howell: That will impose a charge of many more thousands on the football clubs. I am glad that the Minister has made it clear that another tax is to be imposed on football clubs going about their legitimate business.

Let us examine the cost of all this. How many thousands of turnstiles are there in this country? I calculate that there might be 2,500 on any one Saturday, and I am told that the electronic devices might cost £1,000 a time. The Minister can tell us what calculations he has made, but the cost of a centralised computer will be enormous. If half the turnstiles are in operation for half the clubs playing at home on a Saturday afternoon, the cost of feeding in thousands of cards at precisely the same time between 2·45 pm and 3 o'clock will require a very costly computer. Moreover, the cost of using British Telecom lines back to the centralised computer may be as much as £5 a minute. We begin to see how the cost is mounting up. If I have got it wrong, no doubt the Minister will tell us the cost of policing and of the terminal, the computer and the photograph machine.

There are other substantial reasons why everyone, including Leicester university, is opposed to the scheme. It is an affront to civil liberties to say that no man shall take his relative of friend to a football match unless he is registered well ahead of time and has a membership card. I wonder whether the House realises that the only other instance in which it is forbidden to visit a recreational club without a membership card is attendance at a pornographic film. Lawful football supporters are being linked with viewers of pornographic films, and I fundamentally object to that on their behalf. *[Laughter.]* I think that my hon. Friends are enjoying my speech. I assure them that I have only two more points to raise, and that they will wish me to raise both of them.

First, there is nothing in the package to deal with the racist chanting that we hear in football grounds. I am not surprised by that. Nothing in the Government's approach to the South African question in sport gives us any confidence that they understand the important role of sport in society, particularly in a multiracial society.

We cannot conclude the debate without something being said about the proposal by certain clubs to disrupt the Football League. If sport is about responsibility to society, that must embrace football at all levels. We appreciate the need for our top clubs to be on equal terms with continental clubs and to have the resources to keep good players in this country, and that must be provided for in financial terms. We may well have to have some sort of premier league, but it must be within the existing league structure. No club can provide for itself unless it concerns itself with the health of every other club in the country. That is a question of morality, which clubs would be well advised to consider.

Let me add that, if the proposed premier league or anything like it makes no provision for promotion or relegation, the Government should be aware that they will be creating a cartel, and the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission may well become involved. The Independent Broadcasting Association should also consider whether its policy is in the national interest. On behalf of the Opposition, I have written to Lord Thomson that he must examine the proposals of independent television companies.

Where the Government are taking the action that we have long urged on them—on passport control, sensible attendance orders and stiffer sentences—we shall give them our support, but the truth is that their sports policy lies in tatters. That policy contains no strategy for sport in the community, or for dealing with the evils of hooliganism that the Government visit on football. The Government deserve the censure that we seek to impose on them tonight.

7.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

"welcomes the Government's success in encouraging increased participation in sport and recreation and the opening of new facilities, stimulating private sector sponsorship and increasing grant-in-aid to the Sports Council by 37 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80, bringing forward proposals for competitive tendering to increase the efficient management of existing facilities, announcing proposals for restructuring the membership of the Sports Council to enable it to carry out its responsibilities more effectively, thus setting the scene for the structure and direction of sports policy for the 1990's, providing the police and the courts with comprehensive powers for tackling the problem of criminal hooliganism and in taking a firm lead in ensuring an integrated approach to vigorous law enforcement; and also welcomes the anti-hooligan measures announced following the Prime Minister's meeting on 6th July with the football authorities.".

I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) for raising the subject of sport, and in particular the theme of sport for all. I am delighted that in doing so he has given me the opportunity to draw the curtain on the Opposition's favourite era, the 1970s, and to reveal how the Government have achieved more sport for all in the 1980s —and how we intend to keep up the momentum through the 1990s and beyond.

Perhaps Opposition Members have not noticed, or do not wish to notice, that since they left office the participation in sport and active recreation by people of all

ages and incomes has increased significantly, and that local authorities' spending on sport and recreation has continued to grow.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Minister not recognise that the great impact has been made by responsible local authorities, which seek to make leisure provision in their own areas? Will he pay tribute to their initiative?

Mr. Moynihan: I certainly pay tribute to the fact that local authorities' spending on sport and recreation has increased. I also pay tribute to the substantial increase in sponsorship. Last year another £40 million—that is as much as the Sports Council grant—was put into sport and recreation. Moreover, the level of grant aid to the Sports Council has increased far above the rate of inflation, and additional public spending on sport and recreation through other budgets, including those of the urban programme and the Manpower Services Commission, runs into millions of pounds a year.

Moreover—this is a key point—there has been a continuing and growing increase in sponsorship, not just at the top level, but sensibly packaged to assist the development of sports at grass roots, as well as recognising the importance to the marketing mix of companies—*[Interruption.]* I can give dozens of examples. Let me start with the Trustcard initiative in the world of rowing. It is not just at the top of rowing—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members ask for examples and when I give one they ridicule it. They ridicule it because they know that it is right, not just for rowing, but throughout sport.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: Other right hon. and hon. Members want an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that this is a short debate and that many right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to take part. All the sedentary interventions and attempts to intervene are at the expensive of time and other hon. Members' speeches.

Mr. Moynihan: To be more specific, the Sports Council estimates that 23 million people now participate in sports, compared to 17 million 10 years ago—an increase of 6 million. We now have more than 1,000 swimming pools, more than 1,100 sports halls and 99 artificial pitches, compared to 30 five years ago. Local authority spending on sport and recreation was estimated by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy at £650 million in 1986-87, a substantial increase in real terms since 1979. The Sports Council's grant for the present financial year is £39 million, compared with £15 million in 1978-79, an increase in real terms of 37 per cent.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Is the Minister prepared to congratulate my local authority, Ogwr, which is currently building a new swimming pool, even though it is threatened with rate capping because of its action? Will he ensure that it is not rate-capped?

Mr. Moynihan: I happily congratulate the hon. Gentleman's local authority if it has wisely recognised the importance of public provision for sport and recreation in the building of a new swimming pool. I have just given due credit to local authorities up and down the country for recognising the importance of providing adequate resources and facilities for the development of leisure.

On top of public provision, private sponsorship of sport from £60 million in 1980-81 to more than £160 million last year. The provision of sports facilities is certainly thriving. Our goal must be to maximise their use for wider participation and the development of excellence.

The introduction of competition into the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities will mean more value for money in the running of those services and more incentives for people to use them. The right hon. Member for Small Heath has still not grasped that point, despite my repeated attempts to help him to do so. He persists in misunderstanding. He also continues to ring the alarm bells over recreational land and playing fields in particular. There is no evidence that there has been a net loss when land that has gone out of recreational use is balanced against gains in provision.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman and other Members who have taken part in sports debates that it is important that we know in detail the availability of recreational land and playing fields in Britain. Currently, that information is not known by the Government, the Sports Council or the Central Council of Physical Recreation. When my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) brought his Bill before the House he rightly pointed out the need to assess and identify in detail the availability of such land so that we can monitor and increase its use by specific targeting of resources to obtain greater participation. It is participation that we want first and foremost.

Mr. John Carlisle: The House will be grateful for the remarks that my hon. Friend has just made. Will he consider instituting some form of register so that all the Departments—including his own and the Department of Education and Science—and all interested parties know exactly what sporting playing fields are available, so that we can obtain an accurate figure of whether any are being lost?

Mr. Moynihan: I have aleady spoken to the Sports Council about the importance of collating all the information that is available. I believe that that is the best source of information, and it is important to ensure that we bring in as much knowledge as possible, not just about specific facilities, but about their use. I hope that the regional councils for sport and recreation can assist in identifying that information.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moynihan: It is critical to make progress in order to give other hon. Members a chance to speak.

I shall respond on issues concerning the Sports Council and its membership, to which the right hon. Member for Small Heath devoted much attention. Membership of the council was one of the issues on which I invited comments in my open letter to the chairman on 19 November. Many of those who responded argued that the council as it then was, with 32 members, was too large and unwieldy to be effective. I have considered their responses—and the others—carefully in the light of the royal charter. I wrote

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to the chairman of the Central Council of Physical Recreation on the subject again on 13 June and I have considered his replies to me carefully.

It seems clear that the Sports Council will be better able to do the job provided for it by the royal charter with a significantly smaller membership than it has had. The primary aim of the Sports Council is to promote participation. It follows naturally that the pursuit of that aim will also enable us to identify, nurture and develop excellence in sport.

That excellence should be supported from schools to governing bodies by an effective structure geared to serving our promising sportsmen and women. The formation and development of an appropriate and effective structure to take British sport into the 1990s is the challenge faced by the Government, governing bodies, sportsmen and women and underpins the comprehensive review of sport which I am currently undertaking.

Neither grass roots participation nor excellence is furthered by having the Sports Council run by a board that is too big to operate effectively. Thirty-two members are too many. I intend, therefore, to reduce the membership to less than half the level that the council has had. It is my intention not to renew the membership of the seven members whose appointments ran out at the end of June and I have asked a number of other members to resign. I shall be looking to appoint a small number of new members in the next few weeks.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath spoke about the governing bodies of sport. He did not explain how the governing bodies, or anyone else involved in sport, are helped by having a Sports Council too big to carry out effectively the job required of it by the royal charter. Even with 32 members, the council was a long way from representing more than a small proportion of all governing bodies.

Like everyone else connected with sport, the governing bodies will benefit from a more effective Sports Council. It will be for the new council to decide just what its consultative arrangements are to be. I know that the chairman is keen to ensure that close consultation is maintained with the governing bodies. It is inconceivable that the Sports Council could operate without effective consultative arrangements with the governing bodies of sport.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: The governing bodies will have a major role to play in the future operations of the Sports Council. They will be playing that role——

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it clear that he is not giving way. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) must not persist.

Mr. Moynihan: They will be playing that role on behalf of sportsmen and women. That is their job.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Did the hon. Gentleman not hear me? He must not persist in disregarding what I have said.

Mr. Moynihan: Their job and mine is to serve sportsmen and women. I make no secret of my belief that they would be better able to do that job if they encouraged active sportsmen and women to play a greater part in running the organisation.

I held a conference for sportsmen and women in May. It was the first conference of its kind in this country, possibly in Europe, and I was delighted by its success. More than 150 sports people came and many of them contributed a great deal. The conference more than confirmed my belief—I wish it would that of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers)—that active sportsmen and women have a great deal to offer in the way that sport is run.

Some governing bodies already involve active sportspeople in their decision-making process. I wish that they all did. I hope that they all will.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The way in which we usually conduct our debates is to seek to rebut arguments with which we disagree in the course of debate by making speeches, not by sedentary interventions or seeking to intervene.

Mr. Moynihan: One of the aims of the review of sports policy that I am conducting will be to bring active sportsmen and women much more into the administration of sport, both in running governing bodies and in the development of national sporting policies as a whole. That is why Sebastian Coe, Clive Lloyd, Steve Ovett, Tessa Sanderson, Duncan Goodhew and Jeoff Thomson together make up over 40 per cent. of the membership of the three reviews that I have initiated in my first year of office—reviews on drug abuse in sport, on sport for the disabled, and on sport and recreation provision in the inner cities.

Top-level sport in particular has changed radically in this decade. The pressures, including from the media, financial incentives, commercial interest and the level of competition itself are often intense. Who better can we choose to reflect, consider and implement new approaches to sports policy and sports administration than those coaches and participants, active or recently retired, who are willing and able to help? We need gold medal support in administration and management if we are to expect gold medal performances on the fields of play. We must solve today's problems with today's people. I shall be talking to the Sports Council and other sporting organisations about how we achieve that goal.

I shall now deal with competitive tendering. It is a sign of the weakness of the Opposition's Front-Bench thinking and continued outdated dark age vision of sport that they have to resort to scaremongering about our proposals for competitive tendering. If I interpret their views correctly, they would much prefer to maintain the status quo in local authority sport and leisure facility management. They would duck competition in the provision of services off the track, while purporting to promote competition on the track. They would enshrine for posterity the right of the direct labour organisations to manage facilities, without incentives for efficiency, better marketing and greater use. Worse still, they continue to misunderstand the policy.

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: They talk in their motion of privatisation, failing to understand that competitive tendering offers in-house DLO management a competitive chance to continue in that role. Their motion is defective. On that issue alone it should be withdrawn.

If the Opposition are to be believed, our proposals will undermine that ideal state of affairs and result in the closure of facilities, a massive lock-out of disadvantaged groups and a mushrooming of cowboy private sector operators looking to make a fast buck.

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: That is absolute nonsense. In case some Members had not noticed, we are moving into the 1990s. We are not stuck in the 1970s. We need to bring the sport and leisure service up to date and give it a sound base from which to grow and prosper. I very much doubt that even one local authority or one sports organisation could put its hand on its heart and argue otherwise. Indeed, I understand that a survey, commissioned by the London borough of Greenwich, into consumer satisfaction with its sport and leisure service found that a majority of the residents did not use the publicly provided facilities, not because they did not want to take part in the activities offered, but because they wanted, and preferred, to use privately run facilities.

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have clarified the Government's proposals.

The service found that public awareness of the services provided was low and that many within the borough's disadvantaged groups did not feel that the facilities had been provided for use by them.

In short, while the borough's provision may be good, there seems to be little effective marketing of its facilities, and the very groups within the community, about whom we have heard great concern, are not using the facilities. I am not sure where that leaves the right hon. Gentleman's case for no change to current management practices. Under competitive tendering the local authority would have to be more imaginative in its marketing if it was to compete successfully with private sector bids for contracts.

Our proposals for competitive tendering will bring forward the achievement of sport for all, in a way that has manifestly not been achieved under the current closed shop regime.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: We are creating a market for management contracts, supported by effective controls vested in the local authorities. Where marketing exists, the consumer gets a better deal. Our proposals would yield a greater use of existing facilities by all groups within the community, through more effective management and marketing. At the same time, we have listened to, and taken very full account of, the main concerns expressed by local authorities and sports facility users. We are not proposing to allow the free market to control completely the pricing levels of facilities.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: If they so choose, local authorities can determine what charges will be made to all, or to particular groups of users. In other words, the control of pricing is written into the order. By the order I mean the proposals that will come before the House, which will deal specifically with this and a number of related issues for the management of public sector local authority sport and recreation facilities.

Mr. Lofthouse: I thank the Minister for giving way. Perhaps he is not aware of a major consideration affecting the northern part of the country. Many of the mining communities have famous rugby league teams, such as those in Castleford, Featherstone and Wakefield. Because the mining industry has run down, local authorities have had to purchase two of the grounds. Under the new policy, what will happen to those rugby league teams? Will the local authority have to put them out to private management, which could mean the death of the rugby league clubs? How will the policy affect the teams whose grounds are now owned by the local authority?

Mr. Moynihan: Many sporting facilities are owned by local authorities and run by clubs, not least Rugby League, Rugby Union and football clubs throughout the country. While those facilities are run by the clubs on local authority grounds, they will not be put out to private sector management or to competitive tendering. They will go out to competitive tendering only when employees of the council are running the sports facilities. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that point and enabled me to clarify it.

Throughout the country many Rugby League and Rugby Union clubs manage themselves and the clubs run their own operations. I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman is nodding in assent. If no employee of the local authority is running the club—we know of no Rugby Union or Rugby League club being run by a local authority, but I should be happy to learn of any—the club will not be put out to competitive tendering, because the management is already in the hands of the club.

Mr. Lofthouse: What will happen if the council has to purchase the ground and is assisting in maintaining it?

Mr. Moynihan: If the council purchases the facility, there is no intention of privatising it. We are talking specifically about competitive tendering for the management of facilities in council management and under direct labour organisation management, not about private sports clubs which occupy council-owned sports grounds.

Mr. Rogers: I thank the Minister for giving way. What would happen if a bowling club ran and operated a bowling green on a long lease from a local authority, but all the maintenance of the club and its grounds was carried out by the local authority?

Mr. Moynihan: The bowling green would continue to be managed by the bowling club. Any council facilities, such as mowing, would go out to competitive tendering under the order. *[Interruption.]* When Opposition Members get a clear and direct answer, they continue to misinterpret it.

Such things as pricing policy, facilities for disadvantaged groups, the timing of access to facilities and subsidies will continue to be dealt with by local authorities if they so wish. The order relates specifically to management contracts, which will leave a private sector management team with the opportunity of marketing

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facilities far more effectively, because every additional person that uses the facilities provides additional income for the management. That is sport for all personified.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I have spoken enough on that issue on two occasions in the House. I am glad that Opposition Members agree with that, so I shall happily move on.

I have no doubt that in coming months, particularly during our consultations on the terms of the order to implement our proposals, we shall return to many of the issues that I have mentioned today. We shall bring forward a draft order that will go out to full consultation, and we shall debate the result of that consultation exercise on the draft order.

I now come to a subject that has little to do with sport, except for the harm that it does. I am referring to the hooliganism associated with football. The House will know that the Prime Minister and other Ministers met the football authorities last week to discuss the dreadful events in West Germany last week and the continuing problems of hooliganism in the last domestic season. We have made considerable progress since the agreement reached between the Government and the football authorities in February 1987; but the problem is still there, and we have to do more.

The Prime Minister told the football authorities of the action that the Government were taking. Considerable police resources have already been devoted to football, backed by restrictions on alcohol under the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol) Act 1985 and new powers for the police and courts under the Public Order Act 1986. The police will intensify their efforts to deal with criminal behaviour. The Government are considering how better to enforce restrictions on the sale of alcohol in the vicinity of football grounds and ways of prohibiting convicted football hooligans from attending matches here and abroad.

The Prime Minister welcomed the decision of the FA to withdraw from the friendly international match arranged in Italy in November and to reconsider other such matches arranged for next year. We pressed the football authorities to establish a national membership scheme to control access to all Football League matches. I regret that the football authorities do not believe that such a scheme could be introduced on a voluntary basis. The Government will therefore bring forward proposals for legislation to give statutory backing to a national membership scheme. A working party under my chairmanship, consisting of representatives of the football authorities, the Government and the police, will begin work very soon to look at all the details, and to take account of the points that the right hon. Member for Small Heath has raised.

Mr. Denis Howell: Will this working party include any football supporters, such as the National Federation of Football Supporters, which I have always found very responsible and extremely helpful? It is very important to have on the working party people who watch football from the terraces.

Mr. Moynihan: The working party will have representatives from the Football Association and the Football League, who I hope are ardent supporters of football. As for taking advice from various bodies which represent football fans, we shall talk to both major bodies and consult them on their reactions to the detailed schemes that we are working up, but we will not talk only to them. We shall talk to a range of computer companies about card schemes. We will consider bringing forward as comprehensive and foolproof a scheme as possible to deter the ugliness of hooliganism within the ground.

It is no use saying that there are no problems in the ground. Everybody knows that there are problems inside as well as outside. From the first day of the season at Scarborough last year, to the last day inside the Chelsea ground, there were problems, and we must tackle them. The package of measures put in place in February 1987 must deter hooliganism inside grounds. We must also face the problems outside grounds, which were prominent in the domestic season and during the European championships.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath mentioned my support for the FA in its preparation inside grounds for the championships. I congratulated it. There was not one incident inside any of the three grounds in which our first round matches were played. The problems in West Germany occurred outside grounds. We are tackling that through UEFA and the Council of Ministers for Sport, where we are taking appropriate measures to tackle the problem. It is no use allowing potential hooligans to travel to grounds knowing that they can get in.

I have noted with deep regret the support that the right hon. Member for Small Heath gave the authorities in their view that, in case of there being problems outside grounds, we should let people in. We must stop that. A national membership scheme would stop that problem arising in the domestic season.

Mr. Denis Howell: The Minister said, when asked, that of the 2,500 league matches that were played last year, only eight caused him great difficulty. When I said that he had supported and congratulated the FA, I said that I had here his document mentioning the problem inside grounds, but a memorandum that he sent me is clearly designed to deal with people's activities outside grounds. The Minister ought to face the facts. Of course football clubs have a slight difficulty inside grounds, but the problem is outside grounds, in society, and that is where we have to tackle it.

Mr. Moynihan: I deeply regret that the right hon. Gentleman believes that problems such as those that occurred inside Scarborough are minor and are not a serious issue that needs tackling. It requires total commitment from the football authorities, the Government and the police to stamp out the problem of hooliganism wherever it occurs. That is why we are proposing measures for inside and outside grounds.

Although there were eight major incidents inside grounds, we must not ignore the fact that there were 6,000 arrests associated with football hooliganism inside and outside grounds in the domestic season last year. That is a serious problem of law and order and it is associated with our national game. It requires the complete determination of everyone who has the game at heart, to say nothing of law and order.

I regret that it is necessary for us to legislate for a national membership scheme, but there comes a time when it is the Government's duty to act to protect society from

some elements in it. We must do that, however, as the measures taken so far have not worked as effetively as we would have liked.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Does my hon. Friend agree that a contributory factor to hooliganism on the terraces must be the behaviour of players on the field? Will he include among those whom he consults referees, managers and players' representatives to see whether we can re-establish rather more traditional standards of sportsmanship and behaviour on the field? People on the terraces often see dreadful behaviour on the field, and hear the foulest language and abuse of referees, which often sparks off bad behaviour on the terraces.

Mr. Moynihan: I agree that it is essential that our top sportsmen and women, whether in football or other games, should set an example. They are looked up to by many young people who enjoy sport, and if they see players ignoring or rejecting authority on the field of play, they naturally, although wrongly, follow that example. It is essential that a good example be set. I congratulate Liverpool football club on having the fewest bookings last season and on playing outstanding football. That should be more widely publicised. It is a credit to the game, and that example should be followed by other clubs. The FA should take tough disciplinary action over major incidents when professional fouls, which have become all too common recently, or other problems associated with bad behaviour on the pitch arise.

Mr. Lewis: Perhaps I might lower the temperature a little. Can the Minister explain how the card membership system will control the mayhem which sometimes occurs in the centre of Manchester when there is a full house game at Old Trafford or Maine road? That is the crux of the matter.

Mr. Moynihan: Uncharacteristically, the hon. Gentleman has not listened to what I said. There is a twin-track approach. We must tackle problems inside and outside grounds. With regard to the latter, we are reviewing exclusion orders, attendance orders and probation orders. We must have punishments that deter hooligans associated with football from behaving badly outside grounds.

Membership cards can exclude people convicted of football-related hooliganism from the ground. That should be a significant deterrent, as one of the recurring problems is that people gain access to a ground three months after receiving an exclusion order which may, for example, have been served just before the summer. They may have a shorter exclusion order, which is of no deterrent effect. That card can be used as a deterrent to stop people who have been convicted of hooligan-related offences going to a football ground of any of the 92 clubs, not only for a year or two, but I hope for much longer.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my hon. Friend consult the football authorities and Ministers about the success that we have had in Scotland with the alcohol problem inside and outside grounds? Will he comment on my firm belief that unless we have custodial sentences for hooligans we shall never stamp out the problem, especially on the continent? Will he have discussions with Governments on the continent to explain that releasing hooligans the morning after a match and sending them home with a pat on the back does no good to anyone? Custodial sentences are the only way forward.

Mr Moynihan: I am glad that my hon. Friend echoes my firm belief that we need effective deterrents. It was clear that a number of people who were detained overnight in German police stations regarded that as a free bed for the night—they had nowhere else to stay and got into fights as a result. That is appalling. We must make sure that punishments fit the crime.

Two interesting points can be learned from my hon. Friend's comments about alcohol in Scotland. One is that there is strong policing there, and I support that, as I am sure all hon. Members do. The second is that the Scots started earlier with alcohol restrictions. Lessons are to be learned from both initiatives.

As for the membership scheme, I hope that hon. Members on both sides recognise that we must act, as the measures taken so far have not reached the level of service to football or deterrents in law and order that we need. Decent football supporters—the vast majority of those who go to football matches—are as frustrated as anyone by the continuing blight of hooliganism and violence that is ruining their game. Of course hooliganism and violence are not confined to football, but football provides a focus for the thugs to operate on. I believe that decent supporters will welcome a package of measures that offer some prospect of curbing the problem.

I want the interests of the game and of law and order to be served. I do not want for ever to be talking about police containing the problem, and at what cost. Clubs should be thriving businesses providing entertaining football with trouble-free crowds watching in comfort. We must have a more businesslike approach and greater professionalism throughout football. Club boardrooms must play their full part and the FA and the Football League must show imagination and leadership. I want our football clubs to be more a part of their communities.

Clubs and communities should benefit one another. I see future chairmen and directors being proud of the part that their clubs play in local communities. The first attraction and concern will be the game on Saturday, but we must get away from the idea that the ground is unused between match days and is left as an empty mausoluem. I want directors to think of themselves as running important sport and leisure assets. The football in the community project fits in well here, and I hope that it goes from strength to strength.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): What calculation has the hon. Gentleman made of the reduction in crowds —particularly for poorer clubs—that would result from the introduction of his scheme? What financial support does he suppose he will introduce to assist the clubs that are hit by his methods?

Mr. Moynihan: We can look at examples in English football now, not least at Luton, the club of which my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North is chairman. Initially there was a considerable drop in membership, but then the families started coming back to Luton and attendances went up.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Has the hon. Gentleman been there?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, I have been there; yes, I have seen; yes, I have spoken to families at the turnstile, who will come only to home games and will not travel away. That is not surprising. There are no incidents in Luton. It is not a matter of "Fortress Luton", as it was before the full membership scheme banning away supporters was introduced.

The clubs should finance the scheme. I seriously believe that there are terrific commercial opportunities for the membership cards—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I can hear only one hon. Member at a time. Mr. Moynihan.

Mr. Moynihan: I firmly believe that there will be substantial commercial benefits for sponsors who are associated with a national membership scheme that has such a large number of different supporters and therefore access to a large customer base.

Much of what I have described represents the beginning of our blueprint for the 1990s. Sport does not, and should not, stand detached from the rest of society in this country or elsewhere. It must be able to change, adapt, grow and prosper, just as other activities, such as business and trade, do. Its administration and organisation, of which the Sports Council is an important part, must be constantly under review. I have begun that process and I intend to continue with it for the sake of a healthy and prosperous sports structure that delivers benefits to all members of our community.

8.36 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I have to tell the Minister that I have never heard anything as daft in my life. One can kid some of the people some of the time, but not all the people all the time. The Minister kids no one with his proposals. They are shabby and will act against the people that so desperately need the facilities that local authorities provide.

The Minister can help clubs in the Football League by enabling them to get shot of the police charges that they have to stand. The Government did that in Wapping. Surely they can help to provide proper police control by paying these charges.

I must correct the Minister on one point. Nothing that the Government have done has increased the number of people who participate in sport. All the credit goes to local authorities for ensuring the existence of the facilities for people to use. The Government have not spent more money on funding sports facilities. They have reduced the rate support grant by one third since they came to office, and unfortunately leisure amenities have been hard hit. Local people have made up the difference in local authorities' spending.

People ask how to become a member of the Sports Council. Obviously, standing beside the Minister on a political platform helps.

A point about competitive tendering: we should compare like with like. If local authorities are to allow the private sector to come in, the Government must remove their shackles so that they can compete with the private sector. For instance, Metro Catering cannot move into the private sector because of Government restraints.

Private profits mean high prices. Kids from these areas will not be able to use the facilities. When I was a kid I learnt to swim in what was known as the brown waters, where we were unsupervised by adults and in danger. We could not afford to use the swimming baths in the centre of Doncaster—we could not afford the transport—so we went over the fields unsupervised. Many children have drowned through lack of supervision. The Minister should be concerned about depriving kids of supervised training, without which they may disappear to some canal water.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend spoke about local authorities providing resources for sportsmen. A local authority is providing resources for Max Robertson, the Olympic hurdler and 400-metre British record holder. This Government, in the year of training for the Olympics, have taken away his benefit and his housing benefit because he is not available for work as he is training to represent Britain in the Olympics. That is the way the Government behave when a local authority provides free facilities so that someone can train for the Olympics.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I am sure that the Minister will have to ask my hon. Friend for the name, so that that young lad can be adequately financed to carry out his training. That is known as putting one's money where one's mouth is.

The old Ardwick urban district council built a leisure centre which increased the number of children who were able to swim. The Doncaster metropolitan district has now spent £23 million building a sports and leisure complex to ensure that Doncaster has one of the best leisure facilities in the northern region. The Queen laid the foundation stone, and we were extremely proud of it. Doncaster raised the funds to build that centre by selling off council-owned land to build debt-free. Because debt charges affect prices, building something debt-free lowers its price.

The Minister is kidding people about the residuary bodies looking after the school and local authority land transferred to them. That is not happening. Residual bodies are selling land. They are flooding the market and lowering prices, but that is to the benefit of their friends and colleagues, who are able to buy.

One of the most—if not the most—deprived areas in the country is Mexborough. I do not see the private sector rushing in to build facilities for the people there. It was Doncaster council's intention, following the completion of the Doncaster leisure centre, to ensure that there were adequate facilities for the people of Mexborough to enjoy. They created much of the wealth of this country through their blood, sweat and misery working down the mines. They kept industry going, and they have the right to the facilities that the private sector will not provide but the local authority will. The Minister's proposals will hinder the progress of providing such facilities for the people of Mexborough.

8.42 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), who made a reasoned argument, which will no doubt be well listened to by my hon. Friend the Minister, as he has voiced the opposition to the Government's proposals felt in his part of the world. His speech was in a rather better temper than that of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who, characteristically, kept the House in suspense for over 50 minutes, being egged on by some of the yobbish tendency sitting on

the Benches behind him. One got the impression that his speech was probably his swan song on this subject in the House.

There is no doubt, as my hon. Friend the Minister rightly pointed out, that the right hon. Gentleman is a man of the 1970s, with the policies and remedies of the 1970s. We are now into the 1980s and we have to face the reality of the situation. I am glad to see that the right hon. Member is now back in the Chamber. We need 1980s solutions to 1980s problems. That is why we were pleased to hear what may well be his last speech on the subject.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his spirited defence of the Government's admirable record. He was too modest to mention the many other measures that he and he alone has taken—on the drug scene, to improve the lot of the disabled in sport, and within the inner cities. The concept of a Minister responsible for sport who is interested in sport and sportsmen and sportswomen, and who dearly loves those sports that he played and which he wishes to encourage others to play is welcome. My hon. Friend is a man of great calibre, and we are lucky to have him lead us in this debate.

My opinion is different from that of the right hon. Member for Small Heath. He always wants it both ways. He accused my hon. Friend of using the Sports Council as the "executive arm"—my hon. Friend has used that phrase —and accused the Government of not taking enough interest in sport, not spending enough money on it and of interfering with local authorities and their policies on sport. The right hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Many hon. Members do not think that there should be a Minister responsible for sport—my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), is one of them. In my early and rather green days in this place, I signed an early-day motion supporting that view. However, having a Minister of such calibre and having money to spend on sport puts a different complexion on the matter. The right hon. Member must decide whether or not he wants Government interference.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Is it right that the Minister responsible for sport should treat sport as a social or economic problem? That was the impression that the Minister gave me tonight. Is it not time that Ministers decided to treat sport seriously, and set up a Select Committee on sport—as the hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out, sports involve millions of people—so that at last we can have a say, rather than having a Government who bring issues of sport to the Chamber only when problems occur with particular aspects of it?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) will know that I share and support many of his views. I do not want to ruin his political career by saying that. Some attention should be given to his interesting idea for a Select Committee, an idea that has much support in his party, and on which he tabled an early-day motion. I am sympathetic to that idea, but he has misjudged the Government by saying that we regard sport purely on a social basis. As the right hon. Member for Small Heath said, sport is big business, and for that reason and that reason only, the hon. Gentleman's idea will commend itself to the House.

I admire the courage of my hon. Friend the Minister in taking a decision about the management of the Sports Council that could not have been easy. It was that the Sports Council had become too large and unwieldy—so large that its meetings could not take place in its headquarters and it had to hire rooms from the British Medical Association in its adjacent building. It is remarkable that it had grown into such a dinosaur that it was representing no one. My hon. Friend is right to bring into the Sports Council more active sportsmen and sportswomen who are involved, day to day, in both participation in, and, in some cases, the administration of, sport. The new, slimmed-down Sports Council will be of benefit to sport in general and to those associated with the work that the council does.

I fully support, as I have said publicly in the presence of Labour Members, the Government's intentions about competitive tendering. If everything in the garden were lovely, and every leisure facility and swimming pool run by a local authority were making a profit, there would be no need for the exercise that my hon. Friend the Minister is proposing. If a Labour Member could point to a local authority that is making a profit, for the value and benefit of its ratepayers, on a particular facility, and that has been joined by many others, I would give way to that hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Bearing in mind what my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) said, will the hon. Member tell the House why he believes that it is a sine qua non, especially of swimming pools, that they must make a profit before they can exist and be run by local authorities? Surely they are there to provide a service, especially for our young people.

Mr. Carlisle: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but he must answer, as we all do, to the ratepayers in his borough as to whether that swimming pool is giving ratepayers full value for money.

Mr. Spearing: It takes them off the streets.

Mr. Carlisle: If the hon. Gentleman will listen, I shall answer his point. He is right to assume that in many cases swimming is a social and educational service. The Government do not dissent from that view, because they have written into the proposed legislation the fact that local authorities and education authorities can subsidise where necessary. Each borough council must ask itself whether that pool is being run to its maximum efficiency. There is nothing wrong in that question being asked and competitive tendering being invited to ensure that ratepayers obtain maximum value. Opposition Members do not like that, because they do not believe in value for money, but my constituents and ratepayers do.

Mr. David Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that a swimming pool in Streatham has lost £750,000 in one year?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend will know that the list is endless. The difference is that the few pools that have taken on private management—although not all of them—have turned in a profit and are still providing a good service to those areas. The pools are full, or they would not be making a profit.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The hon. Gentleman seems to be causing confusion where there is none. Any fool can make a profit. The district of my constituency has the biggest sports centre in Britain, with a throughput of 1·1 million people a year. It charges 90p for swimming. If it was handed over to Mecca, it could

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charge £1·90 and it would make a profit. Plenty of people would still use the pool and pay £1·90, but not those who live in the area. People will be drawn in from other areas, and excluded from using that pool will be those who cannot pay £1·90 for a swimming session. I know that it is not the way that things are done in Cape Town, but can the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a social concept, too? If all that we are talking about is profit, he wins the argument. If we are talking about any sort of social decency, he loses the argument.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman was either not listening to what I said or thought that I was speaking Afrikaans and did not understand. In response to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), I agreed that a form of social responsibility is contained in the proposals, in that the local authority can subsidise a facility. We hope that educational authorities will take the same initiative, but what is wrong with asking whether that pool is well managed? The proposals will provide great interest and a great opportunity to those who want to manage such facilities. They will introduce a new era of management into our pools and leisure facilities. At the same time, it will be of direct benefit to ratepayers and to those who wish to use the facilities.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The pools and leisure centres are already managed by professional managers, who were appointed before a brick was laid to advise local authorities on how to obtain maximum benefit from their facilities. The managers that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned are already in place and will run the centres exactly as they do now.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman makes my point—all is not well. Is he happy to ask his ratepayers to continue the bad management of facilities for the sake of political dogma? Is it right to allow that position to exist and not to say to the ratepayers, "We believe in value for money."? My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) has given an example of a facility that is losing thousands of pounds, yet Opposition Members seem to be happy for that to continue. We believe that we should examine those facilities.

I fully support the principles that have been stated. The benefits will be enormous, not only to the local community but to the ratepayers. Facilities will improve. Many facilities are completely out of date and local authorities either do not have the cash or, perhaps because of Government policies, cannot put the money in. Local authorities can go to the private sector and obtain an injection of funds into those facilities. Where that has happened——

Mr. Denis Howell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Carlisle: The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I will take him to Richmond to show him the excellent facilities there. The pool is full all the time and the facility is making a profit.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath and the Minister mentioned playing fields. The right hon. Gentleman was right to point to the conclusion of the Central Council of Physical Recreation, which I believe came originally from the Secondary Heads Association, that many of our playing fields are inadequate and not in the condition that we would like. Many hon. Members will concede that that problem should be arrested.

The main problem is that we do not know what playing facilities we have. When I introduced the Sports Fields and Recreational Facilities Bill, I thought it remarkable that officials of the Department of the Environment and of the Department of Education and Science had no means of telling exactly how many playing fields there were, and whether they were sports facilities in schools, in factories or in the private or public sectors. It is time that we resolved that problem by introducing a register.

Before the right hon. Member for Small Heath basks in the pleasure and the honour that I am giving him for helping me to introduce that measure, I say to him that, although the motion talks about

> "Government intentions to privatise the management of local authority sports facilities, and the sale of school playing fields",

laying the blame at the Government's door, he and his hon. Friends should ask themselves whether their local authorities are guiltless. After directive 909 from the Department of Education and Science gave education authorities the ability to sell parts of playing fields as school rolls drop, many Labour authorities took that initiative and sold the fields.

Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that, if a Labour Government came back to power, they would introduce legislation to stop the sale of playing fields? The right hon. Gentleman will understand, as do most rational people and organisations, including the National Playing Fields Association, that some fields will not be saved. I do not dispute that policy. The House, local authorities and sports council should know exactly how many playing fields exist and how many have been sold over the past few years.

One problem which has been in our minds over the past few weeks, months and—for those of us who have been Members somewhat longer—decades is the violence associated with football. The problem always seems to rear its head. Many Conservative Members share the concern of the right hon. Member for Small Heath about the membership scheme and its effect on democracy. He said that it was an affront to civil liberty. Undoubtedly, football is in crisis yet again. It has been in crisis almost since the right hon. Member for Small Heath entered Parliament. Just when we seem to be getting on top of the problem, it rears its head again—often because it is lit up by the media and sometimes because of a challenge in Europe, as occurred in the past month. The football authorities—league and association—must understand that patience is running out, not only in the House but among constituents. The majority of our constituents want peace and harmony in our towns on a Saturday afternoon. The Government have taken the decision to legislate on membership schemes extremely reluctantly. I think that they understand the great worry of Conservative Members about the liberty issue.

Dr. Godman: I am a supporter of Greenock Morton, which unfortunately was relegated from the premier league. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that when he and the Minister speak about national membership schemes and the football authorities, they are referring to matters exclusively English? Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that this scheme will not apply to Scotland?

Mr. Carlisle: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I sympathise with him in his dilemma and am sure that his team will bounce back if his enthusiasm is shared on the field next season. The proposals are restricted to the 92 English clubs and do not apply to Scotland.

I have represented Luton for nine years. Matters came to a head in the FA cup game with Millwall. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) will explain this matter more fully if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. The membership scheme in Luton has brought three things to our town. First, it has brought peace on a Saturday afternoon. For every football fan who goes to watch Luton play, four or five people go to Luton for other reasons—for example, to shop or see their family. We now have a peaceful town on a Saturday afternoon. We are grateful to the club for the membership scheme which it introduced.

Secondly, the scheme has brought responsibility. Those who go to the club are responsible citizens. If they were not responsible, they would not apply for a card in the first place. We are proud of that and of our membership of well over 20,000.

Thirdly, the scheme has brought pride in our town and our club. Luton has rightly been held up as the club that has tried to tackle the awful problem surrounding the game. The police—the few that appear—can now go home at half-time.

We should like a national membership scheme. We have always felt that the away scheme was inadequate. Every person who wants to go to a football match should be able to become a member, and I see nothing wrong with that. The right hon. Member for Small Heath talked rather mockingly about clubs. He knows full well that many football games are all-ticket matches. It is as though everyone is a member. A person cannot get into the club, even with the help of a little man behind the grill, without a ticket. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is not here. He knows that it is almost impossible to get a ticket to get into Cardiff Arms park, but a ticket is needed to get in. However, people do not riot. If they have forged tickets or cannot get in, they accept it.

Some provision must be made before people go to a sporting fixture. The Government propose that those who want to go to a game must make provision for it. There is nothing wrong with having a national membership scheme. It could be financed through a central system. An enormous amount of money could be generated by the company which won the order to use a mailing list or which carried advertisements. My hon. Friend the Minister is right to say that the clubs should bear part of the brunt of the cost. It was a confused public who last week saw Paul Gascoigne sold to Tottenham Hotspur for £2 million while football clubs plead poverty and say that they cannot afford this type of scheme.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I have given way once already to the hon. Gentleman.

We must all take the responsibility, and I take the point about law and order in general. But at the same time the football authorities must realise that our patience and that of the British people is at an end. That is why my hon. Friend the Minister is right to introduce the scheme, which will receive massive support in the House and outside.

9.5 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who opened the debate on behalf of the Opposition. My hon. Friends and I will have little difficulty in following him into the Lobby in due course.

This has been a sharply political debate and in some respects it may herald the end of what I had perhaps rather ingenuously assumed to be a bipartisan or even a tri-partisan approach to sport. The Minister—I do not say this lightly—must take some responsibility for that. Although he may have become a good Minister for the Government, I regret to say that I believe that he has become a poor Minister for sport. I do not know how he conceives his responsibility, but, as one who actively participated in sport for many years, I conceive his responsibility as being to fight for sport, to extract every last penny that he can from the Government and to influence every policy of the Government so that sporting opportunity is increased and participation widened.

I regret to say that the Minister has been party to policies for sport that are more noted for their political consistency with Government doctrine than for their contribution to recreational opportunity or sporting excellence. Nothing exhibits that more eloquently than his attitude towards the Sports Council. He wants—quite legitimately—to involve more of those who have been recently active participants in international sport. There is nothing new in that. The right hon. Member for Small Heath did precisely that in 1965 when he had the good sense to allow his eye to fall on me and to invite me to become a member of the United Kingdom Sports Council when I was still engaged in active participation in international sport.

If, by including more of those who are either currently or recently active, the effect is to cause an exclusion from the Sports Council of the wide range of interests that make up sports in the United Kingdom, inevitably a council will be created that is out of touch in material respects and that lacks a proper balance of interest. It must be said that the council was established by royal charter to give it independence. To describe it, in a phrase that I suspect the Minister may come to regret, as the Government's executive arm, at best is constitutionally doubtful and at worst confirms the suspicion that the Minister sees it as no more than an adjunct of his own Department.

The Minister's attitude towards the issue of violence associated with football has already been the subject of considerable discussion in the debate. I shall not add to that, save to say that the Government's proposals assume that all football clubs are the same, that they have the same resources and the same pattern of spectator attendance; and, are prepared to contemplate that the proposals may have the effect of preventing casual attendance, which for many football clubs is an extremely important part of their income.

No doubt we can have an unproductive debate about whether football is the cause of violence or whether violence arises from other causes, but one cannot ignore the fact that there has been violence in Spain caused by British holidaymakers and that there is violence in otherwise previously quite peaceful rural areas. I suspect

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that if we find the causes of those outbursts of violence, we may find information that will assist us in dealing with the cause of violence associated with football.

What is the purpose of privatisation? If it is truly to make more efficient use of resources, who could possibly oppose it? But it must be said that local authority management of sports facilities is concerned with the achievement not simply of profit, but of social and sporting objectives, which may transcend the narrow issue of the precise terms or form of the management of a particular facility.

How will the pursuit of profit enable local authorities to achieve such objectives? Can the Minister guarantee that there will be no reduction in opening hours if facilities are privatised? Can he guarantee that there will be no increase in admission charges? Can he guarantee that minority interests will be properly protected in the use of such facilities? Can he guarantee that revenue saved will be available to be spent on new and additional facilities?

What will the Minister do if lower standards of maintenance become established which have long-term consequences that lead ultimately to greater costs? At the moment much of the private management of facilities is concentrated on facilities which have a tourist and leisure component. I want to know—and the House is entitled to know—how competitive tendering will help in the provision of facilities for high-level training for outstanding competitors.

The Minister and I both had the good fortune to participate in the Olympic games—he with rather more success than I, it has to be said. Each of us had the benefit of an education and attendance at universities where the quality of facilities was such as to allow us the opportunity to realise our full sporting potential. I remember the days when there was hardly a proper running track in the city of Glasgow. I remember the days when people used to train in public parks. Because they were not students of the university, they were excluded from those facilities.

The great upsurge in facilities which took place in the 1960s and 1970s was financed by the public purse with a public purpose in mind. Where does the Minister think that those extraordinary athletes who now form part of the United Kingdom team came from? Where does he think that the exuberant black athletes who are likely to win medals for us at the summer Olympic games came from? They came not from the cloisters of universities, but from the publicly provided facilities in the inner cities.

The Minister wants a programme for sport. I will give him one. First, exempt sporting bodies, including the British Olympic Association, from paying corporation tax, and £3·5 million will go back into British sport. Let us have nationwide mandatory rates relief for local sports clubs. Let us have tax relief to encourage sponsorship. The Minister referred to sponsorship. Let us encourage more of it by giving tax relief for that purpose. Let us remove VAT from subscriptions to clubs, at least for those under 21.

It is a pity that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury finds it necessary to leave the Chamber at this point.

As part of that programme, let us encourage the multiple use of publicly owned facilities, such as schools, which for too much of the week lie empty and unused. What are the Government going to do about that? Finally, let us stop Government interference in sport. Sportsmen and sports bodies know best how to manage their own affairs.

If the Minister would fight for that programme, he would have the support of the whole House, and certainly of all the sporting interests in the United Kingdom.

9.12 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): It is my belief that the success of sport is determined by those who are running it. I believe that we have not only a poor soccer side but a pretty awful cricket side as well, and I am not all that happy with our tennis players either.

About 20 years ago, the cricket authority abdicated its responsibility to young cricket players by producing wickets at county level that produced results. People loved to go and watch the Denis Comptons of this world score hundreds between start of play and lunchtime, but the wickets that were produced approximately 20 years ago had a serious effect on the game. That complete dedication to getting results in county matches was transferred to minor county cricket, then to club cricket, and then to school cricket. It was not necessary to prepare the wicket properly and we have now lost the art of preparing the wickets on which the game is played. Unfortunately, for over 20 years players have not been taught to bat properly and bowlers have only to run in and wait for the wicket to do the work. Our test side is the poor relation of all other test sides and that is the responsibility of the Test and County Cricket Board and not the responsibility of the Government or the House.

We have weak management in the TCCB and weak part-time selectors. We have seen England's opening batsman knock over his wicket when given out and we have seen the captain arguing with the umpire. I do not know why he was not sent home that evening. That is the sort of image being presented to our youngsters. We must ask the people who run cricket to resign so that we may get back to playing the game properly. If we do that, in 10 years we may produce a side capable of beating other nations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) said that the Lawn Tennis Association was run by a load of upper-class twits. Anyone who looks at our tennis players will sympathise with that view, because we have not produced a men's champion at Wimbledon for 52 years, or a ladies' champion for 12 years. We should ask the LTA where all the money is going and why we cannot produce a tennis star—not 10, but one.

Why do we not have a man in the top 100 players or a woman in the top 50? The reason is simple. It is that over the last 20 to 30 years, the coaching and facilities provided by the LTA, the governing body of British tennis, have not been sufficient. Stefan Edberg lives in London and was coached by an English coach who offered his services to our tennis players but who was told by the upper-class twits that he was not needed. That is a mirror of what has gone on in lawn tennis for the last 20 to 40 years.

The football authorities abdicated not last Thursday at the Prime Minister's meeting but in the mid-1960s, when they agreed with players who negotiated contracts that the game could not afford. That was when the trouble started. The manager of Leeds United said that it was not a game but a war. From that moment on, the game started to deteriorate and the number of supporters who went to

enjoy the sport started to decrease. Because of the way that that team played, using every possible infringement within the law, the game started to decline. We saw the start of the professional foul, the taking of five yards along the touchline and the wasting of time with a minute to go. The offside tactic made the game boring, the crowd became frustrated and trouble broke out on the terraces.

Where is British football now? It is not in Europe and may not even be in the World Cup. We have lost half our supporters in 20 years, because gates have dropped from 40 million 18 million. In that time we have lost two thirds of the professionals and public perception is that football is the root of hooliganism and the breakdown of law and order in and around football grounds. Hon. Members have mentioned that.

Identity cards are about separating football fans, 99·99 per cent. of whom are very good supporters of th game. I want to see a national scheme for identity cards so that we can separate the criminal from the football fan. I am trying to get football off the hook.

Mr. Wilson: If 99·9 per cent. of football fans are decent people—we all agree with that—is it not approaching the matter from entirely the wrong end to introduce a draconian scheme to sort out the 0·1 per cent.? Would it not be better for the Government, who make a lot of noise about law and order, to pin down the 0·1 per cent. as they have so conspicuously failed to do over the past decade?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman has made a good point. I shall put my argument another way. Public perception is that football is the root of the problems in our cities. Football is made responsible for every breakdown in law and order in and around football grounds. Where there is no football ground, someone only has to put a scarf around his neck and say, "I am a football fan," for his crime to be hung round the neck of football.

It would protect the identity of football if it did not have every single crime committed in and around a football ground blamed on it. People say, "It wasn't Liverpool fans or football fans who were to blame at Heysel stadium." Nobody knows. We do not even know who is a football fan and who is not. A national identity card scheme would mean that if somebody misbehaved it would not be football's responsibility, but the responsibility of the Home Office and the police. It seems that it is being made football's responsibility at the moment, and that is wrong.

At Luton we had tremendous problems of violence. We introduced a membership scheme, and although it would not be suitable for football nationally, it has worked for Luton. It is proved beyond doubt that we have removed violence from the game at Luton. We have not had a single arrest inside or outside the ground for two seasons. We have brought families back into the ground and the Arndale centre does not have to close from 4.40 pm to 5.40 pm every other Saturday. There have been 34 arrests at away games and, lo and behold, not one of those arrested was a Luton member.

I said to the police, "Don't talk to Luton Town about those 34 arrests. They were not members of Luton Town Football club." The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire police would agree that there has been no increase in violence or trouble in those counties on Saturday afternoons. When those yobboes, bullies and cowards realised that they would have to fill in an application form, they disappeared and their gangs broke up because Luton is no longer a place in which to meet to cause mayhem on a Saturday afternoon.

I am sure that the national identity scheme will be sponsored, that a lottery will be held and that up to 6 million people will pay £1 a year to join in the lottery. There will be a prize of £50,000 every Saturday for 20 Saturdays and the other £3 million or £4 million will go into football.

I have every hope that a national identity card scheme will make football look the game it is. It will bring families back into the clubs. It is the big clubs that are nervous of the national identity scheme, not the small clubs. The scheme will be their saviour because mum will suddenly allow dad to take his son to the football game. Few wives will allow their son or daughter to be taken to a football ground at the moment. We have to make the ground a place that is perceived by the family to be safe to go to on a Saturday afternoon.

The first two years of the scheme will be difficult, but in about seven years the 18 million attendances will have gone up to 30 million, we shall return to the heyday of football and people will be able to carry on their normal Saturday business. Twenty years ago, people were proud to own a house near a football ground and those days will return because the Minister has had the courage to face up to football's problems; and he will solve those problems in the process.

9.25 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): It would be helpful if the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), as chairman of Luton football club, and the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) got their act together. We have the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield describing the All England Lawn Tennis Association as a bunch of upper-class twits for not making the performance of our tennis players more acceptable and competitive, although it makes a substantial profit and is not run by the local authority, and we have the hon. Member for Luton, North describing local authorities as incompetent because they do not make a profit.

As was said so ably by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), it is clear that sport and recreation are not intended to make a profit. I do not know whether the Minister felt that he was more a croupier than a cox when he was involved in that activity. If he had been organising the first major Athenian games or the games at Olympus, I wonder whether they would have been sponsored by Dimitri. Perhaps we would have Dimitri putting a drachma a metre on how far someone would run. No wonder we have a marathon of 26 miles 100-odd yards. It was probably decided on how much someone could make in profit.

That is what is being said tonight; it is not so much the playing fields as the paying fields of Eton that have been described to us. It is nonsense because a profit will not be made by managing our sports and recreation facilities and our swimming pools privately. The Government know that. I should like Conservative Members to name more than half a dozen football clubs that make a profit. Football clubs are run by patronage. We have the patronage of us, the community, who deliberately sponsor and pay for the facilities that we want. That is our choice and that is true of every major sports facility and

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swimming pool. Private management does not produce a profit. It allows local authorities to put money in the pockets of others. That is what is happening.

The average subsidy—because that is what it is—to a swimming pool is £150,000-plus; for those attached to sports facilities it is over £200,000. In the so-called privatisation, the Minister proposes that we, the community, pay a sum of money to people to make a profit out of us using our sports facilities. It is nothing to do with them making the facility profitable. What they will do is make money for themselves. We should distinguish that clearly. It is not about involving people. In the 1980s we should be moving to user participation and community management, with people in the community, the users and the interest groups being involved in the management and direction of sports facilities.

The proposal is quite the opposite. It is that we hive off the sports facilities. The last resort of any management that has given up is privatisation. Those were the words of John Banham, now director general of the CBI, formerly director of the Audit Commission. He is right. It is about whether we give up running things democratically and efficiently on behalf of the community and handing them over to others to make money out of the needs of the community.

I have a particular interest in the debate because Sheffield is attempting to host the world student games in 1991. The same applies to Manchester's bid for the Olympic games. The Government have failed completely to give anything except lip service to assisting my city to host the games—an opportunity to put on a major international event to provide sports facilities of world class to ensure that people from this country do not have to go elsewhere for decent training facilities.

Far from being willing to give even one cent—I use the word "cent" deliberately rather than "penny" because we are moving entirely into the American era of sponsorship and making money out of sport—the Government are doing the opposite. Every measure announced by the Secretary of State since the games were awarded to Britain —in terms of restriction of capital, intervention to stop the partnership between the public and the private sector, and between a pluralistic approach and the interests of the community—has undermined the possibility of successfully staging those games. That is an indictment of a Government who preach that they are in favour of joint partnership between the private and the public sector, and that they are in favour of sport for all and in developing facilities, but who then take every step to make it impossible for a major local authority to stage the games.

If we are for sports development and for community involvement, we must debunk once and for all the accusation that Labour Members are living in the dark ages of the 1970s. I presume that what is meant by the dark ages are the times of genuine enthusiasm of men and women for the sport in which they are engaged. I refer also to the £40,000 or more that the Amateur Swimming Association itself contributes directly to facilities, and for the time that is given night after night, weekend after weekend, by people who care about what they are doing and who are themselves in partnership with the managers of sports facilities and swimming pools in making them a living community asset.

If that is what is meant by the dark ages, then presumably it was also the era before we suffered a 50 per cent. increase in crime, before the Heysel stadium disaster, and before there were the disgraceful scenes in West Germany. In trying to deal with what is happening outside football grounds by restricting access, we must recognise that it is a social malaise. It is a blight upon our country. It is a matter of fostering greed, self-interest, and thuggery —and then blaming others for an environment and a climate that has been created by the grab-all, money-all society that the Minister and his colleagues foster. That is what it is all about. It is about market forces and economic greed. It is about taking away social responsibility and community involvement and replacing it by the money box. That is what we are debating tonight. We are talking about trying to create——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: I shall give way only to those who have sat through this debate.

It seems to me that there is tonight a real divide, such as that described by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. On one side are those who are committed to a healthy and fit society in which recreation and sport are available and accessible to all, and affordable to every member of the community, so that we may be proud as a community of the way in which we foster that involvement in creating a world that young people feel belongs to them, that they can own, and in which they can take part.

That is the difference between us. It is the difference between rattling the money box, going for profit, and believing that privatisation is the god of all, or believing that we move forward as a society in giving people responsibility and a sense of involvement, and in creating a healthy world in which young people feel that they can play a part. The difference between us is shown by our belief in accessible, affordable facilities that are actually ours.

9.33 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): This has been a fascinating debate, but is has been too short. I hope that the Minister with responsibility for sport will, when he winds up the debate, guarantee that he will fight for a full day's debate on the subject in Government time. Many of my hon. Friends wished to take part in the debate, but it became clear——

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend note that several of my Welsh hon. Friends have been present for this debate, but the lack of time has prevented me, for instance, from making the stirring plea for help for Welsh sport that I wished to make? Will he note also that not one Welsh Conservative Back Bencher or one Welsh Office Minister has been present? Will he ask the Minister to take that into account as well?

Mr. Pendry: That is the only intervention that I shall allow, as the debate has been circumscribed as a result of interventions, but I want the Minister to realise that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) speaks for many Opposition Members.

As the debate has progressed—I hope that the Minister is listening, because I notice that he did not listen very carefully to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell)—it has become

clear that Opposition Members are much more interested in sport, recreation and leisure for the mass of our people than are Conservative Members. The contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), and from the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North East (Mr. Campbell), demonstrate that Opposition Members follow the lead given by my right hon. Friend in his powerful introduction of the motion. We represent the sportspeople of this country.

Once more, a motion to debate sport has come from the Opposition. The last time that the Government instituted such a debate was in 1980. Although the Minister was not in the House at the time, he was on our side of the argument about the boycott of the Moscow Olympic games. I well remember how he supported me at the English-Speaking Union when we opposed the Prime Minister's stand on the issue.

As my right hon. Friend said, we are not discussing a peripheral issue. Whether or not the Minister recognises it, he presides over an important and fast-growing activity, which generates some £4·5 billion of consumer expenditure. He must accept that he has a great responsibility. Of course sport is big business, but for many of us it is much more important that it means a truly healthy society. That is what separates the parties on the issue.

As has become abundantly clear, the Government increasingly feel that commercialism is much more important than our belief that sport relates to the needs and aspirations of the community. It is true that the Minister is a genuine sportsman, and that causes us some difficulty. Many of us gave him the kind of baptism that every Minister would like on coming into office. My right hon. Friend warned me, and I must plead guilty to being one of those who welcomed him, saying that, after a crop of pretty awful Conservative Sports Ministers, here was a man who, possibly, would "stand tall" for sport. We now find that he is following the same line as the rest and not living up to our expectations.

We had serious hopes for the Minister. We wanted him to do well for sport in the Government, the House and the community. We wanted him to elevate sport, but he has let us all down. His press conferences in West Germany during the European championship were nothing short of a disgrace. He merely heightened the tension. When he should have been combating the problems, he mystified the German authorities and UEFA officials.

It is not enough for the Minister to say, as I am sure he does privately, that he has a philistine, unsporty boss, and that he does not mean half of what comes from his office. The fact is that we expect him to stand up and fight his corner.

One of the most disgraceful parliamentary actions of recent years was the Minister's handling of the Green Paper on compulsory competitive tendering for management in local authority sports facilities. After promising me, in a parliamentary answer on 24 January, that he would place all the consultees' replies in the Library, he did so 158 days later, at 10.55 am on 1 July, five minutes before making his statement to the House. That was prised from him only when the Leader of the House insisted that he come to the Dispatch Box. He would have answered a planted question on that day on this important issue, as he did on the restructuring of the Sports Council, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath rightly condemned.

The Minister's explanations are as woefully inadequate as his proposals. His statement on competitive tendering clearly echoes his master's voice. It is ideology, dogma and prejudice winning over common sense and reason. When we were eventually able to read the consultees' replies, it became obvious that the Minister had not wanted us to read them. There is widespread and hostile opposition to the proposals, even in the watered down form in which they appeared.

I shall quote from the replies of one or two local authorities. One said:

"The Council aims to encourage the use by young people, disadvantaged groups and those new to sport. The Council considers it to be important that these measures are not prejudiced by purely financial targets."

Another said:

"I should express my reservations about the applicability of contract control over privately-operated sports and leisure facilities."

Those quotations come from local authorities that consider themselves to be radical. They show that the local authorities are diametrically opposed to Thatcherite plans. They are respectively from the Royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London borough of Wandsworth.

The Audit Commission, not known for its Left-wing tendencies, also replied to the Minister. It said:

"the benefits of cheap sports facilities may not simply accrue to the individuals using them directly. They may encourage a fitter, healthier and safer community, by teaching children to swim for example. Or they may, by encouraging 'at risk' groups off the streets, reduce vandalism and petty crime."

There were many other replies. The Bromley Gymnastic Association urged

"the Secretary of State to leave the supply and control of sports facilities in the hands of the local authorities".

One gentleman wrote:

"As a Conservative voter, I feel there is a danger of shifting too far towards private control . . . Whilst there are strong arguments in favour of 'privatising' . . . I have serious doubts that the private sector will do this to the satisfaction of anyone but themselves and urge you to reconsider your position".

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Pendry: I shall not give way.

The borough of Lewisham, in the Minister's constituency, said:

"The recent report on the inner city produced by Lord Scarman following the Brixton riots stressed the value to the community of good quality, accessible sports and leisure opportunities. The Green Paper is at odds with this view."

As my mother said when she came to see my national service passing-out parade, "Our Tom was the only one in step."

The Minister was new to the House when we debated capital punishment in 1983. He went out to the people in his constituency and asked how he should vote. They told him to vote for hanging and he did. If he believes in vox populi, vox dei, why does he not believe in listening to his constituents on an issue of this sort?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath raised the important issue of sport and recreation in schools. I agree with what he said. The Minister must recognise the importance of our youngsters who wish to participate in sport in schools. The closure of physical education training colleges at Madeley, Dartington, Anstey, Bingley and Nonington, and the closure of physical education courses at colleges such as St. John's in

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York and a course at Dartford show that it is a problem when we consider the predicted bulge in numbers pssing through primary and middle schools.

As my right hon. Friend said, the Minister has to stand up and insist that 10 per cent. of the curriculum is devoted to sport. He should insist in a loud voice that the value of sport in schools should be recognised. It has been mentioned that the people whom we are applauding as heroes now did not come through the elitist system, but came through our school system. The Minister must answer that when he replies to the debate.

Mr. Rogers: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Pendry: No. I wish to get on. I have already given way to an hon. Member representing a Welsh constituency to put it on record that there is need for a better and longer debate on this matter.

I shall direct the rest of my speech to an issue that is fundamental to the nation—the way in which our national game will go from here. It is clear that the Government, and especially the Minister, do not understand football. It is not just because the Minister supports Charlton Athletic, which is not a bad team. One of his biggest blunders is the proposed legislation to introduce a national membership scheme for our football clubs based on the Luton Town scheme. The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) has a lot of power. If that scheme is to be emulated, we should examine it more closely.

When the scheme was introduced, we must remember that John Smith, the executive director of Luton Town, said that it was more to protect the away supporters from the Luton hooligan element. I do not believe that the chairman of Luton Town will disagree with that. As a result, Luton's thugs caused problems only when away from home. Since that time, Luton's average home league gate has fallen dramatically by about 27 per cent. to just 8,039.

Mr. David Evans: The number of home fans has gone up. The figure that the hon. Gentleman is quoting represents home fans. The away fans have not been in the ground.

Mr. Pendry: I checked the figures this morning with the Football League.

Mr. Moynihan: He is the chairman.

Mr. Pendry: The chairman is the author of the scheme, so of course he defends it. If the Minister keeps interrupting he will not have much time in which to wind up the debate, so he had better shut up. *[Interruption.]* I remind the House that we both boxed for Oxford, but I am a heavier guy.

The attendance figure that I have given is despite a successful season for Luton, with a cup win, three Wembley appearances, an FA cup semi-final and ninth place in the league. With that scheme in place, Luton should have the lowest police charges in the league, but instead they are halfway down the table.

Clearly, if the Luton scheme was imposed on football, many clubs would die.

Mr. David Evans *rose*——

Mr. Pendry: Many clubs do not have the lucrative sponsorship contracts or long cup runs, so the sad truth is that the Government do not understand the problem.

Almost 18 million spectators watched football last season—more than almost all other popular sports put together. During the past three seasons 7,000 league and cup games have been played and there was trouble in 0·8 per cent. of them. In total, 0·03 per cent. of those attending games were in trouble. There were 2,500 games last season, and there was trouble in eight grounds. Those figures show the scale of the problem. They also place it in a European context.

The disgraceful scenes in West Germany could not be ignored by Governments. The thugs who caused havoc in Stuttgart, Dusseldorf and Frankfurt were by no means only English. Hardly any English supporters attended the final, yet there were 80 arrests. The all-party football committee asked the Minister to convene a meeting of Sports Ministers from UEFA countries to discuss common problems and find common solutions. Instead, there was the summit, which relates not to European football but to our home clubs.

I want to give the Minister an opportunity to reply to some of those points. Clearly, he has been sucked into the Luton scheme, but if he will not listen to the football authorities, why will he not listen to the centre for football research at Leicester university, which his Department commissioned to look into membership schemes? It found that there would be no merit in introducing such a scheme. The Minister has to answer that finding.

I cannot go into many of the issues that I wished to explore, because of the lack of time, but the Minister must build on what has been done since Heysel. There is a success story in football and he must build on it. The 50 per cent. membership scheme introduced only one year ago has two more years to go. It has been pretty successful. We must build on such proposals.

The Minister, himself a sportsman, should recognise, even if his Secretary of State does not, that through sport people can experience life at its best—its peaks and troughs, elation and despondency. Sport is a massive influence, so let us harness it to the benefit of society, to give the young opportunities in life rather than to turn them towards boredom and lawlessness. We must ensure that moral and social moves, not the cheque book, define the parameters of sport. The challenges facing sport are constantly evolving. It is not just about sponsorship and television, but about youth unemployment, early retirement, inner-city decay and many other factors.

The Labour party recognises sport in that social context. We therefore hope that those who agree with us on this issue will join us in the Lobby, because the Government and the Minister have no answers to the problems that we pose.

9.51 pm

Mr. Moynihan: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

If a man hears only what he wants to hear and disregards the rest, then Opposition Members have pushed that truth to the limit. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) gave a list of areas in which the Government should interfere and then, at the end of his speech, said that we should stop Government involvement in sport. It is a bit rich for him to complain

about an open letter in which the Government rightly say that they wish to assess the relationship between the Government and the Sports Council. That relationship should be questioned.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) repeated the phrase "executive arm". That is a bit rich from a right hon. Member who, in 1965, when the Sports Council was established as an advisory body, was its chairman as the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science with responsibility for sport. He is critical of our assessing the relationship between the Sports Council and the Government and whether there should be executive power, and he is critical of our reviewing sports policy, but that is essential if we are to move away from the dark ages of the 1970s and develop a policy that is geared to serve the sportsmen and women of the 1990s.

I do not hesitate to face up to that challenge. We shall come back to the House and go to the country with a programme that is right for developing excellence and participation among the next generation of sportsmen and women.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) wanted a Government committed to a healthy and fit society and participation for all. We can do no better than examine the facts and what has happened in the past 10 years. There has been an increase of 6 million, from 17 million to 23 million, in the number of people who participate in sport. The average frequency of participation in sport in 1977 was once every three weeks. The hon. Gentleman should praise the fact that it is now once a fortnight and that more people from all groups are involved. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Gentleman laughs, but that is fact and he does not like it. Let him look at the financing of sport in this country. Opposition Members should listen——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Many Welsh and Scottish Members are here this evening. The Minister who is now responding on behalf of the Government and who opened on their behalf—I applaud his hard work—has no responsibility for Wales or Scotland.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has to say; I remind him that it is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Moynihan: Let all hon. Members look at the financial position of sport and recreation in this country. Every part has enjoyed a major increase in real terms—local authority spending, spending through the voluntary sectors of the Sports Aid Foundation and the Sports Aid Trust—and money going into the Sports Council. There has also been a substantial increase in sports sponsorship, which has risen from £60 million in 1980-81, to £128 million in 1985-86, to £146 million in 1986-87, to £164 million—with a £40 million increase in sponsorship of sport in the past year. That is a record to be proud of. We are encouraging companies in Scotland, Wales and England to ensure that we obtain more sponsorship of sport to develop tomorrow's talent, to back today's, and to ensure that we increase participation——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for raising the subject of disabled sport and the initiatives that have been taken in the past 12 months. The other initiatives, as he rightly pointed out, were on drug abuse in sport and on the inner cities. I hope that we shall have all-party agreement that it is essential to shift public opinion—especially the press—away from considering the outstanding perform-ances of our top sports men and women who have disabilities in the news pages to considering them in the sports pages, in which they should be granted recognition as outstanding sportsmen and women.

This is why I have embarked in the past 12 months on the 10-events initiative and the full review of sport and recreation for those with disabilities. It is essential to raise the profile of disabled sport. The initiative includes £100,000 for the Paralympics in Seoul. I hope that all hon. Members will wish our able-bodied and disabled sportsmen and women at the consecutive Olympiads at Seoul this autumn every success——

Mr. Wilson: Say something useful.

Mr. Moynihan: It is shameful that the hon. Gentleman should say that. It shows the importance that the Opposition attach to sport, and it is disgraceful and despicable.

I want to answer a number of important points about competitive tendering. The whole purpose of the competitive tendering regime is to yield better value for money from local authority expenditure, to seek more effective management of our facilities, to ensure that facilities are better marketed and to generate sensitivity to the needs of the community. Of course, the proposals recognise the concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides about the continued use of facilities by disadvantaged groups and promising young sportsmen and women. That is why local authorities will retain their discretionary powers over pricing, opening hours and admission policies. They would, if they chose, use those powers in drawing up tender specifications and, if appropriate, continuing a level of subsidy.

With these powers remaining, the notion of facilities being taken over by profiteering private sector managers is a fallacy. Once the tender specification is drawn up, local authority employees will compete on equal terms with the private and voluntary sectors for the management contracts. That is why we are building on the success of the private sector management of Cromwell squash and snooker club in Alton town council, of the Romford ice rink in Havering, of the Kingfisher leisure pool, and the Hadleigh swimming pool in Babergh district council. There are many more examples, and when these measures are in place there will be more throughout the country.

I turn to the important issues of football in its positive context, and the problems of football hooliganism. It is essential that there is a twin-track policy and that we should address the problem outside and inside the grounds. Often, the two will require different measures and that is why we are considering how best to enforce restrictions on the sale of alcohol within the vicinity of football grounds. That is why we are reviewing exclusion orders, probation orders and attendance orders. That is why we are looking at stopping convicted football hooligans from attending matches here and abroad. We are not going to stop in committing ourselves absolutely to ensuring that we achieve a comprehensive package to fight football hooliganism here and abroad.

Question put, That the original words stands part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 277.

Division No. 408] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus

Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the Government's success in encouraging increased participation in sport and recreation and the opening of new facilities, stimulating private sector sponsorship and increasing grant-in-aid to the Sports Council by 37 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80, bringing forward proposals for competitive tendering to increase the efficient management of existing facilities, announcing proposals for restructuring the membership of the Sports Council to enable it to carry out its responsibilities more effectively, thus setting the scene for the structure and direction of sports policy for the 1990s, providing the police and the courts with comprehensive powers for tackling the problem of criminal hooliganism and in taking a firm lead in ensuring an integrated approach to vigorous law enforcement; and also welcomes the anti-hooligan measures announced following the Prime Minister's meeting on 6th July with the football authorities.

Television Licences

10.14 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move,

That the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 899), dated 18th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th May, be revoked.

I hope very much that at the end of the debate hon. Members on both sides of the House will join us in the Lobby.

We know from the former Minister of State, Home Office, the right hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), that the Government wish that they could get rid of the concessionary television licence. In an intervention on 16 January 1987, the then Minister stated:

"what I said"—

he made it clear that that was in a letter to a pensioner in Preston—

"could not be reasonably defended was the 5p concession". That is what the then Minister with responsibility for those matters said at the time, although he was gracious enough to add, for the sake of clarity:

"and that as a matter of practical politics we could not get rid of it".—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1987; Vol. 108, c. 508.]

That thought was echoed by the Home Secretary himself when he was answering questions earlier this year. So there we have it. The Government's real intention with the concession is that they wish that they could get rid of it, but they do not believe that they could get away with it.

When the Government were defeated in the court over the qualification for a concessionary licence, they had a choice. They could have done what the Prime Minister is constantly urging all of us to do, and said, "Right, we shall accept the rule of law and abide by the court's decision." The Government chose not to do that. Instead, they seek to change the law to match their view. They have added, as a sop, private nursing homes and in the process upped the cost of the concession from 5p to £5 for each person in the places where the concessionary television licence operates.

Presumably, the £5 will now be the base from which the cost of the concessionary licence will be raised from time to time. That must follow. Having made the first increase since 1969 when it was introduced, the Government have now decided that an increase is long overdue and that, having made one increase they might just as well from time to time go on to make others. That must follow, too, or perhaps the Minister will give us an undertaking now, or when he makes his speech on how long the cost will remain at £5.

Through the regulations, the Government are making matters worse, not only by such a hefty jump in the cost but by extending the anomaly. I say that because we are now left with a group of elderly people living in a warden-controlled complex who have the concession, while their friends and neighbours of exactly the same age and in a similar financial position, but living independently across the road or even next door, do not have it. I defy the Minister or any other hon. Member to explain that to elderly people so that they will see the justice of it. It makes no sense at all to discriminate in that arbitrary manner. That is why Labour is pledged to phase out the television licence fee for all pensioner households. That is the pledge that I am pleased to repeat now.

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): As the hon. Gentleman is hostile to the anomaly, will he say whether he is in favour of a television licence fee or of abolishing it in favour of those of us who may not want to watch the BBC? Why should we pay for it?

Mr. Corbett: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has not been following with his customary care what I am trying to say, but let us hope that what I shall now say will make it clear. The point that I am making is that millions of pensioners do not understand how, by the mere accident of an address at which they happen to live, either they get the concession or they do not, when on all the other factors they stand absolutely four square with those who get the concession.

Mr. Taylor: Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of a licence fee?

Mr. Corbett: If the hon. Gentleman will stay with me, I will give him and the House the answer to that in a minute.

When the Government, on the back of the Kirkleess judgment, looked at this matter, that was the other choice that they had. They could have said that this was unfair across the whole range of pensioners and that they would take the opportunity to exempt all pensioners from payment of the television licence fee.

The right hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley, on 16 January 1987, at column 508 of *Hansard*, described the whole of the concession as "absurd" and argued against its extension. Indeed, he said that he regretted that it could not be abolished.

Instead of tinkering around, why have the Government not done the sensible thing and extended the concession to all pensioner households, or, better still, abolished the licence fee for all pensioners?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that the decision was taken in the High Court on 23 January, exactly one week after my private Member's Bill —which would have done precisely what my hon. Friend has suggested—was defeated by 21 votes? Is it not interesting that that decision in the High Court was not appealed against by the Government, and that instead they are bringing in this new scheme?

Mr. Corbett: The whole House owes my hon. Friend a debt for the persistence with which he has pursued his efforts for the extension of free television licences to pensioners. The hallmark of this Government, and classically, of course, of the Secretary of State for the Environment, is that, when they are taken to court and lose, they do not abide by that decision; they come here, use their majority to move the goal posts, and change the law.

Just in case the Minister and the House think that this revolutionary notion of exempting pensioner households from paying the television licence fee is the sole child of the Labour party, I want to remind them that the Peacock report, two years ago, at paragraph 634, recommended a step towards this, when it said that pensioners drawing supplementary benefit—as it was then—in households wholly dependent upon a pension should be exempt from

the licence fee. To be fair, it went on to say that it did not accept the case for extending this to all pensioners. That did not meet Labour's aspirations, but it did recognise that 1·6 million pensioners living on means-tested benefits had special needs. I want to remind the House in particular what Peacock said would be the cost. It said that it would add about £5 at most to the cost of a licence for the rest of us.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): A few months ago the hon. Gentleman was urging that the licence fee should be abolished for all pensioners. Would that not cost something like £360 million a year, which is equivalent to a 50 per cent. increase for all those who still have to pay the licence fee, including those on low incomes?

Mr. Corbett: No, it would not. I am happy to say that the latest calculation is that it would cost £287 million—but do not let us fall out over the difference, whatever it is. There are other ways of doing that, If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for a moment, I shall come to them. I anticipated all the questions that I was going to be asked.

The Government argue that abolishing the television licence fee for pensioners would give help to many who do not need it. Of course, in that sense so does the concessionary bus pass. The Prime Minister and her husband are entitled to bus passes, and I have heard no one say that they should not get them, like other pensioners, even though there are about 13 television sets in No. 10 Downing street for which no licence fee is paid.

The Government say that there is no way of knowing where the pensioner households are. That is tommy-rot, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) will quickly confirm. Perhaps the poll tax will at last unwittingly serve some sort of useful, though expensive, purpose by making it possible for the state to know exactly who lives where and how old they are.

This compassionate Government say that if they exempt pensioners, even pensioners who are on some form of means-tested benefit, what about other people on low incomes—the jobless, single parents, the sick and disabled and those on low pay? We know about the Government's concern for such people. The social security changes in April have made millions of them worse off. Again, the poll tax register would identify such people.

The Government argue that exempting pensioners would mean that taxes would have to go up. No such thing follows. I remind the House that Peacock said that exemptions for the 1·6 million pensioners then on means-tested benefits would add no more than £5 to the cost of the licence for the rest of us. Of course, we could claw back just a few of the thousands of millions of pounds handed to the already rich in this year's Budget and those that preceded it in the last nine years. The Government's arguments will not wash. They are indifferent to the real hardships faced by millions of pensioners, and, given the political will, the abolition of the licence fee is an extra and avoidable expense.

I beg the House to understand that for millions of pensioners television is a necessity and not the luxury or optional extra that it may be for some of us with more money. In most Opposition Members' constituencies there are hundreds of thousands of lonely, isolated pensioners living behind locked and chained front doors. To those people television is not simply a friend but often their only friend.

Of course I accept, as do we all, that regular contact within their communities is one answer to the loneliness of such people, but such contact is immensely difficult to achieve. Elderly people often resent well-intentioned neighbours popping in. They value their independence, although they often pay a high price for it. For millions of elderly people living alone and for elderly couples, television is a necessity. We know that most people rely mainly on television as a source of information about what is going on, and that is especially true of the elderly. It can help elderly people to play an active part in our democracy, and freedom from the licence fee can help in that process.

The television licence fee hits elderly people especially hard because, although it is good value, it represents a higher proportion of the income of pensioners than of the income of those of us who are at work, the principle seemingly being that the less one has the more one pays in percentage terms.

The Government's reluctance to help pensioners in this way is all the more difficult to understand amid all their boasts about eight years of sustained economic growth and the Prime Minister telling us that living standards are at their highest ever levels. They are for some, but not for millions of pensioners who have been left out of these riches. Why cannot the Government spare a few crumbs from the table for the elderly? What they have given away to the already rich in tax cuts would pay for exempting all pensioners from the TV licence fee seven times over. The value of those tax cuts is 78 times the cost of even the present restricted concessions.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I regard this as a matter of justice. Justice demands that pensioners have both the right and the means to live in decency and dignity. If the Government deny them that right again tonight, the Labour party will give it to them after the next election.

10.30 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I have a good deal of sympathy for my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who is faced with a concessionary television licence scheme that he would not necessarily have wished to inherit. I do not believe that he wants to abolish it, but I suspect that he would have preferred it to be in a different form when it reached his hands.

As we know, the scheme applies to people in sheltered housing who are of retirement age or who are physically disabled or mentally disordered. At present it does not cover nursing homes and is confined to premises provided by local authorities or housing associations. It does not cover privately run sheltered accommodation, of which I suspect there was very little when the scheme was first devised.

Inevitably, the scheme has its anomalies. In particular, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, it does not cover pensioners who live in their own homes, although it seems to me quite impracticable and unreasonable to suggest that it should. After all, many pensioners living in their own homes are well-to-do and can easily afford the full charge for the televison licence. Many homes have several wage packets coming in and only one pensioner; how simple it would be to take the concessionary television licence out in the name of that one

[Mr. Roger Sims]

pensioner. It would also be enormously expensive for ordinary licence holders if the concessionary scheme were extended to all pensioners.

The Government are right to extend the scheme to nursing homes and to suggest that the sum of 5p, which has remained unchanged for years while the licence fee has increased in line with inflation, should be fixed at the more realistic figure of £5. Nevertheless, the scheme is still confined to sheltered housing run by local authorities and housing associations. Many sheltered housing schemes are privately run, and there are a number in my constituency. It is now proposed to extend the scheme to private nursing homes but not to private sheltered accommodation.

The circumstances of people in privately run accommodation are often similar to those of people in local authority accommodation. Some of them are on social security, but they still do not get the concession. In some cases housing associations have taken over the management of private sheltered schemes and as I understand it, the residents of such homes will get the concessions, whereas those in homes remaining in private hands will not. Often it is pure chance that determines whether elderly people needing sheltered accommodation finish up in accommodation provided by local authorities, by housing associations or by private oganisations.

I have urged my hon. Friend the Minister of State in parliamentary questions and in correspondence to remedy the anomaly by extending the concessionary scheme to private accommodation. He has failed to do so and he has not justified his failure. In a letter dated 22 June he wrote: "the original intention of the scheme . . . was to benefit pensioners and disabled people living in residential homes, or in equivalent sheltered housing provided by a local authority or a housing association. We did consider whether it would be right to extend the scheme to private sheltered housing, but we concluded that this would not be justified.."

I have to ask my hon. Friend: why not? The only grounds that I can think of would be those of cost, but this is already met in part at least by increasing the fee to £5, which will increase substantially the revenue from concessionary licences. If it did not cover the cost of extension to private schemes, I would take no exception to the fee being £6, which would still be a modest figure compared with the full charge for a licence. Although the regulations remedy one injustice, they perpetuate another. As it is not possible to amend a statutory instrument, I find myself unable to support the regulations as they stand.

10.35 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) will be joining us in the Division Lobby.

Mr. Sims *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Winnick: He shakes his head. At least he will be abstaining, I hope.

The new regulations ensure that it will be much more difficult for pensioners to receive a concessionary licence, which is to cost £5 instead of 5p. Although I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, if all pensioners paid £5 we would have no quarrel.

The background to this deplorable decision by the Government was the High Court case which, as I said in my intervention, was one week after my private Member's Bill was defeated by 21 votes. The High Court ruled that Kirklees council was right and the Home Office was wrong. Kirklees said that pensioners who were visited by a warden should be entitled to the concessionary licence fee. The High Court agreed, as long as the pensioners lived in accommodation designated for retired people. The Home Office did not appeal against the High Court decision. It is interesting to note that, in his judgment, Mr. Justice Taylor said:

"The standpoint taken by the respondent"—

that was the Home Office—

"is perverse and one which no reasonable Home Secretary could adopt."

Following that decision on 23 January last year, a number of local authorities, Labour-controlled in the main, which wished to assist pensioners in their areas, made applications on the same basis as the High Court had ruled. That is, the local authorities made application where there was a common facility. In the case of Kirklees, it was the visiting warden.

In my own borough it was the "piper" warning system, which is a first-class facility for pensioners. They press a button if they are in difficulty and the warning goes through to a department in the town hall. It is a common facility. So long as the pensioners are in accommodation designated for pensioners, it was accepted by the television licence office in Bristol that the applications should succeed. Therefore, the regulations have to be seen against the background of the Kirklees application being successful. The Government have responded disgracefully. The whole purpose of the new rules is to make it as difficult as possible for pensioners to qualify for the concession.

The week before the High Court decision, I introduced a private Member's Bill that would have exempted all pensioners from the payment of the licence fee. Why was that Bill defeated by 21 votes? The explanation is simple. The payroll vote came out in force. The *Daily Star* called the No Division list a list of dishonour. Among those voting against was the Secretary of State for Education, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister for Local Government, who is responsible for the poll tax, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Minister of State, Foreign Office, the Secretary of State for Social Services, his deputy for health matters, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who could himself virtually subsidise the pensioners' licence fee, voted against, as did the Government Chief Whip, the Leader of the House, the former chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), and the Secretary of State for Employment —all people earning substantial salaries and all——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to read names from a Division List relating to a vote which took place some time ago?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): This is a short debate and I have heard nothing out of order so far.

Mr. Winnick: I will not read further names from what was indeed a roll of dishonour. Those who voted against on that occasion were, as I said, earning substantial

salaries, over £40,000, from their Government jobs. They voted to deprive pensioners living on very limited incomes of concessionary television licences.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winnick: No.

Mr. King *rose——*

Hon. Members: Sit down. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Winnick: The more interruptions I have from Conservative Members, the less time they will have to speak.

I am in favour of the BBC having a licence fee, and I regard it as good value for money. Indeed, any alternative to the licence system—for example, subscription television—would be wrong and would make life more difficult for those on low incomes.

Television plays an important role in the lives of the elderly, particularly the very old, especially those with few relatives or close friends, and especially during the winter months. The Peacock report pointed out that many pensioners were dependent on television for information and entertainment. One third of pensioner households are on what is now income support, and many more are just above that level.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Would my hon. Friend agree that the least the Government should do would be to introduce concessionary licences for all pensioners, particularly in view of the fact that since 1979, when they ended the link between pensions and earnings, they have taken £1,249 from the single pensioner?

Mr. Winnick: That is right, and that was the purpose of my Bill, which was defeated by Government pressure and the payroll vote. In the main, pensioners deeply resent having to pay the full licence fee. While Conservative Members criticise us over this issue, many of their pensioner constituents, like ours, want the fee reduced because of their limited incomes, and they and we will continue to campaign until that happens.

The Peacock report recommended that pensioners on what is now income support, then supplementary benefit, should pay a concessionary fee. I said on Second Reading of my Bill that if the Government were not prepared to accept my argument, I would meet them halfway as a first step on the road to achieving justice for pensioners. But the Minister who replied—he is now at the Foreign Office—said that in no circumstances would the Government bend their view. Now they are making it far more difficult for pensioners to receive the concession.

The Government have argued—no doubt the point will be made again tonight—that the cost would be substantial, but this is a year that has seen massive tax cuts for the wealthiest in the community. Not only the hon. Member for Hove but many others will receive hundreds, in some cases thousands, of pounds more each week as a result. A third of pensioners rely on income support, and I am informed by the Library that around 64 per cent. are on small incomes and certainly substantially below average incomes. Why should they be denied what they have argued and campaigned for year after year? No Conservative Member will argue that the pensioner's bus pass is wrong and unjust and should be withdrawn.

Mr. Greg Knight *rose——*

Mr. Winnick: If the hon. Gentleman is one Conservative Member who believes that the bus pass is wrong, he can tell his constituents so.

Mr. Knight *rose——*

Mr. Winnick: No, I will not give way.

If it is right for pensioners to receive the bus pass, why should they not receive the television licence fee concession? Why should they have to pay what we pay out of our incomes? That is both illogical and unjust.

I know that, because of the Government's majority, we shall lose the vote and these squalid, miserable regulations will be passed. Of that none of us has the shadow of a doubt. But anyone who believes that the issue will die a natural death is living in a fool's paradise. There are millions of pensioners in this country, and they are determined people: they fought for the bus pass. This shows my age, I suppose, but I well remember the campaigns which were directed at local authorities—I was a member of one—and against the Tory Government of the time, and which finally resulted in the introduction of the pass.

I have no doubt that pensioners will eventually get the concessionary television licence, but I know that it will not come from the present Government. A Government who have given massive increases to the rich in the Budget, and who are always willing to act for the most prosperous in the community, have introduced a measure that removes the opportunity for more pensioners to receive a concession. Everyone who votes against our prayer should be thoroughly ashamed. We have every justification for voting against the Government.

10.48 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): After listening to the speech made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I feel—as, no doubt, will most of my colleagues—that Harold Wilson was more than generous when he once described him as the silliest man in the House. If the hon. Gentleman had taken the time and trouble to study his own rhetoric and his private Member's Bill, he would know that only 162 Labour Members bothered to turn up to support him that afternoon. Where were the rest?

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First, nothing in the Library suggests that Harold Wilson was ever foolish enough to describe me in such an absurd fashion. That is a lie. No such remark was ever made about me. I want to put that right, because it has been mentioned before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a matter for debate, not a point of order for the Chair. Mr. King.

Mr. King *rose——*

Mr. Winnick: Further to my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) said that I introduced a ten-minute Bill. I——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his speech. Having resumed his place, he must allow other hon. Members to contribute to the debate. Mr. King.

Mr. King: The silliness of the——

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your advice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Everything that the hon. Gentleman has said so far amounts to a point of debate, not a point of order. If the hon. Gentleman has a point of order for the Chair, he must come to it immediately.

Mr. Winnick: Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that I introduced a ten-minute Bill on the date to which I referred. I ask that it be placed on the record that it was a private Member's Bill—I won a place in the Ballot—and not a ten-minute Bill. That is my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. King.

Mr. King: I concede that it was a private Member's Bill. It was silly, however, to read out a list of Conservative Members who voted against the Bill, when only 162 Labour Members bothered to support it. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was not a supporter, nor was the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). Where was the hon. Gentleman's support? The fact is that it was not present in this place. It was defeated by a small number on a Division.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons why the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) could not support the Bill brought in by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was that he, the right hon. Gentleman, was a member of the Labour Government who took away the Christmas bonus for pensioners? He may have felt guilty about supporting the Bill when he had supported the removal of the bonus from pensioners.

Mr. King *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) will not be tempted to go down that road.

Mr. King: I do not intend to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) for reminding us of the lack of generosity on occasion of Labour Members when they are in government.

I understand that the regulations will increase the 5p television licence fee for those who are in warden-controlled accommodation. For some years many people have claimed that 5p was far too small a sum. They argued that the difference between the full licence fee and 5p was an enormous anomaly. I could not object to the 5p fee being increased to £5, but perhaps we should consider a two-tier system, which would mean that all old age pensioners in receipt of the basic state benefit would pay a reduced fee of £30, for example. That would be far more acceptable.

We are paying money to the BBC to bring us television and radio services, which are available in considerable quantity. The cost to the consumer is about 16p a day for two television channels, four national radio stations and many local radio stations. When we bear in mind that the cost of the average newspaper is about 25p, the television licence fee is a bargain. But is the idea of a television licence fee right and proper nowadays? I believe that there is no need for such a licence. It is time that the BBC was placed on a more commercial footing. The elderly and everyone else should have the option to buy a television set that receives commercial channels only. If someone does not want the BBC services, he should be able to buy a television set that will receive the commercial channels only.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my hon. Friend agree that in a short time satellite television broadcasting will make that option available to the consumer? It will mean that it will be possible to subscribe to individual channels. If pensioners prove that they are pensioners, the cost will be reduced for them. Is that not the future? If hon. Members ask how or why, I can suggest two British colonies which receive extremely good satellite broadcasts —the Turks and Caicos islands and Bermuda. If hon. Members want to learn about satellite broadcasting, they should go to those islands.

Mr. King: I shall do the debate a service by pointing out that fully commercial television operations enable consumers to choose whether to take those services. We definitely should encourage that.

Returning to the principle of a television licence, we should examine much more carefully how the BBC spends its money, because that is reflected in the cost of the licence.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: No. I wish to get on because other hon. Members wish to speak in this very short debate.

Millions of pounds are being gambled by the media on allocating television time for soccer coverage. I understand that many pensioners do not watch soccer on television, yet their licence money is helping to provide those services.

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Mr. King: We are told that if we were to introduce advertising to reduce the level of the licence fee on the BBC, the editorial content would be altered as a result of demands on the BBC to respond to the whims of the market place by down-marketing its programmes.

Mr. Grocott: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that he is advocating a subscription to the BBC, and that if pensioners want to watch the Cup final, the Grand national or Test match cricket, under his system they will have to pay for those services provided by the BBC? Will he confirm that that is his view and tell us how much he estimates they will have to pay?

Mr. King: I am not sure that I advocated that. I said that if pensioners wished to buy a television set that was adapted to receive only commercial television, and not the BBC, they could watch the programmes and not pay a licence fee. Those who wanted to watch BBC programmes would have to pay a licence fee, which we have at the moment and which we are discussing tonight. I believe that if we allowed sponsorship for sporting programmes on the BBC, the licence fee could be reduced dramatically, if not wiped out altogether.

We are told that there are not enough advertisers to use the BBC services. It is considered that if more commercial channels and more sponsorship were announced, there would be a dearth of advertisers. Of course that is not so.

Our commercial systems are extremely expensive to advertisers—the most expensive in Europe—because they have a monopoly within the United Kingdom. By encouraging more competition, particularly in sponsored programmes, we can reduce the cost of the licence fee. Why should soccer not be sponsored by Barclays bank, or motor racing by Shell?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a wide-ranging debate on what is likely to happen in future. Incidental references are in order, but the hon. Gentleman must direct his remarks to the merits of the new definition and the new fees payable.

Mr. King: The present policy of increasing the concessionary licence fee from 5p to £5 is a step in an unavoidable and necessary direction, and most people should welcome it as entirely realistic. However, we should look towards a better system which would enable all pensioners to benefit from a reduced licence fee, and eventually eliminate the greater part of it, if not all of it. I accept the regulations, but hopefully this will be one of the last occasions on which we have to debate them.

10.58 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall be very brief. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, in its 30th report, drew the attention of the House to the instrument. The House should be grateful to the Opposition for tabling a prayer against this negative procedure instrument. I remind the House that negative procedure instruments are never debated unless a prayer is tabled. They are brought before the House by agreement, and many prayers are entirely ignored. We have this opportunity because the Opposition have taken the trouble to bring the matter to the House.

The 30th report of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has not been referred to so far. The Committee does not consider the merits of regulations. We are charged with considering ambiguities and drafting. The Committee says that the drafting appears defective because the definition of those who qualify for concessionary television licences are people who live in

"a group of at least four dwellings within a common and exclusive boundary".

Such people in sheltered accommodation include retired people of pensionable age. The question arises whether the exclusive definition in paragraph 7 applies to a warden's residence. The services of a warden are an important qualifying provision when obtaining concessionary licences.

It is important that delegated legislation is clear beyond peradventure, because it is subject to action in the courts. This is an area that has been subject to court action. It therefore seems right that the Committee should have drawn the House's attention to this ambiguity, which is best avoided in case the matter is subject to further challenge.

The Committee is obliged to give the Department an opportunity to provide an answer before it reports to the House. The Home Office replied in a memorandum that the warden's residence was included in the exclusive zone and that the regulations could not operate unless it was taken in that way.

The Committee believes that, when an order is made, it should be absolutely clear in writing, rather than by means of implication—hence our report to the House. I hope that the Minister can give us some assurance about that, so that it is on the record.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman is making a useful contribution to the debate. I also listened carefully to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). Am I right to assume that the regulations do not take account of the High Court judgment in favour of the Kirklees local authority? Am I right to think that the cheaper television licence for the elderly is not being extended to people in private retirement, residential warden-supervised accommodation, in accordance with the recommendation of the High Court in the Kirklees judgment? If so, it seems extraordinary for us to debate regulations which make concessions but do not extend them in accordance with the judgment of the High Court.

Mr. Cryer: The Committee was certainly not competent to comment on that, as that would involve considering the merits of the regulations. It appears, however, that the Minister has not met the requirements of the court.

It is poor of the Government not to meet clearly the court's comments in the Kirklees case and not to give pensioners who have spent years working for the country —many of them fought for it in the 1939-45 war—this concession. Many of them feel strongly about the matter. Many of us receive letters on the subject and meet pensioners who recognise the anomalies. The regulations are a little confusing, so some of the anomalies will continue. Pensioners feel that those anomalies are unjust. They would rather have a £5 licence fee for all pensioners as a stage towards free licences, which is what the Labour party believes is the correct answer.

Opposition Members can tonight vote positively in favour of the prayer to revoke the regulations, as a step in the right direction. We hope that the Conservatives will not act as organised scrooges and go into the Lobby to deny pensioners justice. They may do so, but we shall vote positively for the prayer to ensure that pensioners know that there is a party in the Chamber that is concerned for decency and justice.

11.5 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) sought to equate his proposals with the idea of free bus passes and said that no hon. Member could oppose those. He wanted free bus passes for all. I must inform him that there is at least one hon. Member who will speak against them, for exactly the same reason that I shall speak against the principle of concessionary television licences for all.

There is no such thing as a free television licence—or a free bus pass. When the late but little lamented Greater London council in its infinite wisdom sought to give every Londoner a free bus pass, it was in effect laying a rate levy of £20 per pass on every Londoner. We know that many of those passes were issued to people who, because they were free, threw them into drawers and did not use them.

I represent a constituency in which 30 per cent. of the population are over retirement age. They range from people on state retirement pensions and supplementary benefit right up to some with private pensions and incomes who are very rich. I want the greatest possible help to be

[Mr. Roger Gale]

given to those in maximum need, and the minimum unnecessary assitance to be given to those who patently do not need it.

Mr. Greg Knight: Do not the Government deserve credit for introducing, as from next year, the pay-as-you-go scheme, whereby those who cannot afford to take out a licence in one go will be able to obtain one on payment of the first instalment?

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend touches on the crux of the argument and something that represents a major step forward. It will be of tremendous assistance to many of my constituents.

I see no point in giving unnecessary aid that is supposedly free. It is not free: it will be a charge on others. The hon. Member for Walsall, North said—when he reads *Hansard* he may regret this—that if every pensioner paid £5 Labour Members would have no quarrel with the Government. That was slightly at variance with what his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said—that a Labour Government, if ever elected, would phase out the TV licence fee for all pensioner households. So a pensioner living in Cliftonville with a Rolls-Royce or Jaguar parked in the drive and a large house would get an unnecessary free licence while a disabled single parent would still pay the full fee. That is arrant nonsense.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) drew attention to the crux of part of this argument—the anomalies that existed in the past. Thanet district council has tried to unravel the regulations over the years and has made a pig's ear of the job. The net result has been blocks of flats in Thanet in which pensioners living on the ground and first floors get concessionary licences—at 5p, they are effectively free—but pensioners on the second floor, which is deemed, because there is no lift, to be unsuitable for pensioners, do not—in spite of their being roughly the same age and on the same incomes, although perhaps more agile. That is wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst went on to draw a correct comparison between those who happen to live in housing associaton sheltered housing or public sector sheltered housing, and those living in private sector housing—for example, the developments built by McCarthy and Stone Developments. The disposable income—that is what really counts—of those living in both kinds of accommodation is probably similar, but one group gets concessionary licences, and the other group does not.

Through these regulations my hon. Friend the Minister has sought to begin—I trust that this is an interim measure—to unravel some of the anomalies. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) correctly drew attention to the pay-as-you-go scheme. I am certain that my constituents will welcome and take advantage of the scheme, because the lump sum that they have had to pay previously will now be payable in smaller doses, and therefore will be more affordable.

All this begs the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) raised. In its unanimous report, the Select Committee on Home Affairs recommended the retention of the licence fee, and for one simple reason. Although there is the technology to provide an alternative, it is not yet in place. For some time some of us have been advocating the installation of Peritelevision sockets in sets that would enable fee collection by subscription, but a system for that is not yet in place, so the Select Committee recommended, correctly and unanimously, that for the forseeable future, the licence fee should be maintained.

The Select Committee went on to recommend, as a matter of urgency, that, by 1990, every set sold should have a Peritelevision socket. That will lead, I hope, inevitably and inexorably, to the abolition of the licence fee in toto, so that all television is paid for by advertising or subscription. Conservative Members look forward to the day when all pensioners are not given concessionary bus passes or licences, or anything else.

Ms. Mowlam: They should have a decent pension.

Mr. Gale: The Conservative party is working towards the adequate pension provision that the Labour party failed to provide when it was in power. We believe that the elderly should be given the right to choose what they pay for, whether it be private or public transport, television, concert tickets or anything else. The way forward will be, ultimately, the abolition of the licence fee in its entirety and the payment by those who view for what they choose to view.

11.13 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North East): The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) is correct to say that there is no such thing as a free bus pass or a free television licence. Both these concessions have to be paid for. However, the Opposition are prepared to pay for these concessions, while the Government are not.

This is not so much a broadcasting issue as a social one. It is universally recognised that for the elderly and the disabled, television, metaphorically and in some cases literally, is a lifeline. That is particularly so for those who live alone and want to be independent, and those who, in that often repeated and somewhat pathetic phrase, do not wish to be a burden. Those who want to preserve their privacy and dignity and to remain integrated in the community are, paradoxically, the people who get no benefit from these regulations.

I welcome the fact that some additional institutions will qualify, but the definition that the regulations embrace of individual homes is most curious, because it endeavours to make individual homes assume the character of an institution. They must have a common and exclusive boundary, a resident or full-time warden and something archly described as a communal facility. The present arrangements occasion great aggravation. I suspect that sometimes the postbags of all hon. Members contain letters from constituents complaining of the anomaly that exists. They do not appreciate the fact that they do not qualify, while people elsewhere in exactly the same position do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) told me of three tower blocks in his constituency, one of which qualifies, but the other two of which do not. All three contain pensioners who, for all practical purposes, reside in the same circumstances, and who find it amazing and aggravating that some qualify and some do not.

The increase in the concessionary licence fee from 5p to £5 provides the opportunity to extend the concession to all old-age pensioners, because previously the costs of collection far exceeded the revenue that the concessionary licence generated. The concessionary sum of £5 allows for economic collection and is probably within the scope of most pensioners to pay. A simple solution would be to put the concessionary television licence on the same footing as a bus pass, which has already been referred to as something that has enjoyed unqualified success.

I have said already that this is a social issue, not a broadcasting one, and the inevitable consequence is that the shortfall in revenue should be met, not by the BBC, but by general taxation. I am happy to advocate that, and I suspect that outside the House there would be considerable support for that view.

Like many hon. Members, I wish that it was not necessary to have concessions for pensioners. If the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) is correct in saying that the Government are moving to a day when that will not be necessary, he will receive applause from me and other hon. Members when that occurs. However, I beg leave to display some cynicism about how soon the millennium for pensioners will arrive.

The concession that has been allowed in the past has become selective and discriminatory. It would be right and proper to make it universal, and there is hardly a person in the country who would not applaud the Government if they were to do so.

11.17 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The question of the concessionary television licence has been with us for a long time, because my predecessor, John Mendelson, raised it in 1976, 1977 and 1978, and I carried it on in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and each year since, and I will continue to do so. As for voting, I remind the House that on one marvellous occasion on a ten-minute Bill, one of my colleagues decided that I had not gone far enough. He said that I was putting my toe in the water to test the temperature, but he would prefer to go in a little further. He divided the House and there were 197 votes for and none against, which meant that no Conservative Member had the courage to go with us or to go against us.

Those hon. Members did not go against us purely because of the voting patterns. They knew that they would infuriate millions of old-age pensioners by voting against. They decided not to take their courage in their hands, but to sit on their seats. I remember the Whips running round keeping them in their seats. If we are talking about voting, 197 to nil is worth mentioning.

I would like old-age pensions to be so high that pensioners had no need for concessionary television licences or travel warrants. But we should be fooling ourselves if we thought that that could be achieved in the near future. It will not. We have been talking about adequate pensions for some time. The link between earnings and pensions was cut, thus reducing considerably the value of pensions. We have not given people a large enough pension to make such concessions unnecessary.

Some hon. Members said that people buy newspapers, some of which cost 30p, and that television costs only 16p a day. But many pensioners in my constituency do not buy newspapers, because most of them must save every penny. I cite the example of my mother in that respect—I buy newspapers for her since she said that she could not afford them. I do not know what world Conservative Members live in, but pensioners in my constituency use the reading rooms of local libraries if they want to read the newspapers.

Television is a source of company for some pensioners. I again cite my mother as an example. I telephone her every night—she will not go to bed until she knows that I am all right—and the first thing that she says is, "Wait until I turn off the television. I have had it on for company." There are thousands like her. Pensioners with Rolls-Royces are few and far between. By far the majority of pensioners in my constituency have never seen a Rolls-Royce.

Let us talk about the real world and about what the regulations will mean. Why did the Government decide to limit their provisions to

"a group of at least four dwellings within a common and exclusive boundary"?

Why four? Why not two, three, five or six? Where has that figure been plucked from? On what basis are we legislating for groups of four dwellings? What is a "common and exclusive boundary"? How far can it extend? At present, the concessionary licence is granted to a local authority house that has communal facilities and a warden. There are resident wardens, walking wardens where there are no communal facilities and walking wardens where there are communal facilities. The dwellings are in goups of twos, threes and fours, sometimes stretched out over a large area.

What is the Minister after? He does not want the High Court ruling to be implemented. He is wary about granting an extension that could be considered unfair, so he is trying to stabilise the position. The Minister is creating a launching pad for the future. The BBC has calculated that the cost of the licence must increase each year by 2 per cent. above the retail price index. The £5 fee will not remain for long. Will the Minister say definitely whether this is the be-all and end-all, or are the regulations a launching pad for fees of £6, £7, £8 or £9? The Government have decided to remove the anomaly in their usual way—not by increasing the number of people who can obtain the 5p concessionary licence, but by increasing the fee to £5. They can say that there is no longer an anomaly because everyone must pay the same.

When considering the cost of the concessionary licence, we should remember the Conservative Budgets of the past few years and all the money that the Government have given away to people who do not need it much. Using the basic rate of income tax as a guide, we know that it would cost only 0·2p for every pensioner household to have a concessionary licence. Using VAT, it would cost 0·24p for every pensioner household to have a concessionary licence. The House could decide on a combination of VAT, tax and an increased licence fee, provided everyone got the £5 concession.

With each Budget, the Government have willingly given away money and have forgotten the old-age pensioner's television licence. This is the biggest anomaly for years. It is time that we did away with it. This system is archaic and an insult to the 4·9 million pensioners in private and public dwellings who do not enjoy the concessionary licence fee.

11.25 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Durham city council has about 4,000 pensioners linked to its pioneering sheltered accommodation scheme, and for the past 13 years many have qualified for the concessionary 5p licence scheme. For almost the past two years, because further applications were made as more pensioners joined the council's innovative scheme, the National Television Licence Records Office has not granted any concessionary television licences. The delay and uncertainty have caused anguish and confusion to many of my elderly constitutents who have been harassed and threatened by the licence office.

Some bungalows and flats qualify automatically, but 3,000 tenants were left without cover while the dispute about what constituted a group dwelling rumbled on. Many old folk received warning letters about holding valid licences and some were visited by licence investigators. There is the example of an 80-year-old widow who was petrified about being sent to prison because of the threatening letter that she had received from the licence office. It brought on an angina attack. That innocent old lady was caught in a trap brought about by the Government's callousness and deviousness. I can quote dozens of such cases.

The local authority was blamed for the Government's incompetence. Many old people could not sleep because of the worry about having to find £60, for which they had not budgeted. Some paid for the licence when they were entitled to it for 5p. The old people of Durham were caught in limbo, not knowing whether they were covered by a licence or were facing prosecution. Despite frequent attempts by me and the city council to get a positive response from the National Television Licence Records Office and the Minister, the council's efforts went unanswered, apart from the council being told that the office was awaiting advice from the Home Office.

Why were those people who had received concessionary television licences in accordance with the criteria laid down by the 1984 legislation and those pensioners who had joined the scheme later and qualified for the concession now unable to get it? Those pensioners included those living in sheltered housing; those with the services of a resident warden, good neighbour warden or mobile warden living in flats, houses or bungalows; and all those who had the city care alarm system fitted—the Home Office had previously accepted it as a modification to a property when occupied by a person of pensionable age —together with other associated facilities, such as the services of a warden, the presence of a luncheon club and meals-on-wheels service and any other welfare facilities.

The Government did that because they were proposing a change in the concessionary licence scheme which they were not prepared to divulge to those asking the questions. The Government were proposing to inhibit the regulations and prevent many old people from getting a concessionary licence. It is now clear that the new criteria apply only to purpose-built accommodation for the elderly in groups of not less than four dwellings with one continuous boundary and shared facilities, such as a communal hall and a resident warden who shall spend at least 30 hours a week devoted to that scheme. The criteria do not apply to mainstream housing.

Many new applicants in Durham who would have qualified under the old regulations will not under the new regulations. Apart from being extremely uncaring and spiteful, they will cause anomalies and distress to many old people in my constituency, and, I assume, to many old people in many other constituencies throughout the country. There will be neighbouring dwellings where one person will receive the concession and the other will not, yet they will be living in the same conditions, where one received it previously under the old regulations and will keep it, yet another in exactly the same type of property and conditions will now not receive it.

Purpose-built accommodation is virtually no longer being constructed because of the Government's massive cuts in housing capital. Local authorities are looking at other ways of caring for their old and elderly population. As I said, central control care schemes can give protection to thousands of pensioners in both the public and private sectors. For the cost of, say, two sheltered schemes, which would cover only a handful of old people, one can now cover thousands of people with a controlled city care system such as Durham has.

Surely it would not have been too much to expect the Government to allow all in those schemes a concessionary television licence. Ideally, I should like to see a free television licence for all pensioners, regardless of where they live, their incomes and their circumstances, and regardless of the cost. We have heard about that. That is the least that we can do for our elderly citizens who have served this country through two world wars and been prepared to give their lives for it. I am certain that the next Labour Government will be committed to doing that. I shall fully support them, as my comrades will.

To cut the number who will get the concession—*[Interruption.]* I have sat in the Chamber for about five hours today, and I intend to have my say regardless of the interruptions from the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) whom I hardly ever see in the House *[Interruption.]* I am talking no more drivel than the rubbish that I have heard from Conservative Members in the debate.

To cut the number who will get the concession and to raise the concession fee from 5p to £5 is, to say the least, mean and uncaring, but that is exactly what I have come to expect from that lot on the Conservative Benches.

11.32 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): In this short debate I found the hypocritical indignation of the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), to mention but two Opposition Members, extraordinary. What are we doing tonight? We are extending the concession for all those who have had it before. We are extending it for the first time to those in residential nursing homes, and we are bringing in restrictions on further extensions. All that is at the cost of increasing the fee from 5p to £5 a week—[HON. MEMBERS: "A week?] A year. Let me remind the House that the 5p has not changed since the scheme was introduced in 1969. In that time the colour licence fee has gone up by over £50, and the single pension by nearly £37 a week. The increase in the concessionary fee is less than £5 a year, a mere 1½p a day, which is less than one hundredth of the increase in the single pension that we introduced in the Budget.

Listening to Opposition Members, one would think that we were increasing the licence fee by perhaps 50 per

cent.—by £31—yet that would be the precise effect if we followed what the hon. Member for Walsall, North has suggested. If we were to introduce free licences for every pensioner it would, as my hon. Friend for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) said, mean an extra £360 million a year. If that had to be found from every other television licence holder, as it should be, it would mean an increase of 50 per cent. That is the Peacock point that the hon. Member for Erdington misquoted—that if anyone needed a concession on his television licence it was those on what used to be called supplementary benefit, now income support. It is precisely some of those who would have to pay the extra £31 a year, this extra 50 per cent., if we were to follow the Opposition's suggestions.

In the short time available I should like to recount the brief history of the scheme and what we are doing as a result of the Kirklees judgment. The licence scheme has existed in more or less the same form for nearly 20 years. The aim and scope of the scheme have been accepted by every Government, whatever their political persuasion, since 1969. A few improvements have been made over the years, the most notable being the extension of the scheme to disabled people in 1984. Typically, that was done by a Conservative Government, just as we have now extended it to nursing homes.

The underlying intention of the scheme, which was to benefit pensioners and, latterly, disabled people living in residential homes or in sheltered housing run by a local authority or housing association, remained unchanged for many years. The High Court judgment in the case brought by Kirklees metropolitan council changed all that. One of the three tests under the old rules was whether accommodation provided a common facility for the use of all residents. The Kirklees judgment widened that part of the definition to include housing stewards with some responsibilities for the care of residents.

In the light of the Kirklees judgment, it was also clear that the scope for the other two tests—that the housing formed part of a group and was specially provided for retirement pensioners and disabled people—had become wider than originally intended. That undermined the long-standing principle accepted by Governments of both parties and opened the way for the extension of the scheme to many people in mainstream housing. Such people were never intended by the Labour Government or, it must be said, by this Government, to benefit from the scheme.

I listened with great interest to my hon. Friends who suggested that the days of the BBC television licence might be coming to an end. We are not yet at that point.

Mr. Grocott rose——

Mr. Renton: No, I shall not give way, because I have only a few minutes left in which to reply and I want to deal with a point raised about the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

If we had not acted, the finances of the BBC would have been under great pressure and we would have had to increase the television licence fee by up to 50 per cent. for everyone else, including many people who are less well able to afford it than pensioners. The whole basis of the concessionary scheme would have broken down, giving rise to indefensible anomalies.

I should now like to deal with the important matter raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I assure him that we carefully considered the point raised by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. I think he will accept that it goes to the drafting rather than to the substance. In our reply to the Committee we tried to make clear our firm view that there is no internal inconsistency in the regulations. They require a sheltered housing scheme to have an exclusive boundary and a resident warden. The scheme must contain no dwellings other than those meeting the requirements of the regulations and that of the resident warden. In practice, that is the interpretation that we are placing on the regulations. We have had no complaints on this score and we do not expect any.

I should like to deal with the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst (Mr. Sims). In his moderate and friendly speech he dealt with a matter about which he is greatly concerned—the right to extend the scheme to privately run or sheltered housing schemes. As I have said before, that would not be justified, because this is an attractive and fast-growing sector of the owner-occupier market. We recognise that many private sheltered schemes display characteristics that are similar to those in schemes run by local authorities or housing associations. To include privately run or sheltered housing schemes would once again lead to an extension of the scheme far beyond its original intention. The regulations aim to get back to the original intention.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Renton: No. With great respect to my hon. Friend, I must deal with questions asked by other hon. Members.

Mr. Winterton: It was a very inadequate answer.

Mr. Renton: I always appreciate my hon. Friend's robust comments.

I listened with great interest to the challenging speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who said that, with the growth of satellite channels and the greater choice that that will bring, there may be no television licence fee. The logic of having no television licence fee is that no one will pay for the use of a standard television set, and that would apply to pensioners as well as everyone else.

One might have thought that the Labour party would have welcomed that proposition when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary touched on it in a speech the other day. Instead, they sucked their teeth in horror. That is typical of their lack of logic. They appear to believe in having free television licences for pensioners, but much more expensive licences for everyone else, including some of those on income support.

The hon. Member for Erdington returned to a well-known bribe—the fantasy promise of the Labour party that it will provide free television licences for all pensioners. If that point had been made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who was originally booked to open the debate, I might have understood it. It would have been an election bribe. We all understand that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is fighting an election at the moment. Doubtless his good comrade the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) would have gone around hatching a scheme to give not only free television, but free video recorders and lots of other freebies to every Labour dowager on the books. It is a nonsensical scheme.

[Mr. Renton]

It is not serious policy. It is a mere gesture. It is a substitute for reflective thought and practical action, and in his heart the hon. Member for Erdington knows that full well.

The Government of whom I am proud to be a member, on the other hand, have maintained the value of the state retirement pension, presided over a record growth in pensioners' incomes, protected pensioners' savings, and seen pensioners' total income rise by 18 per cent. in the years between 1979 and 1985—twice the increase for the population as a whole, and four times the increase under the Labour Government.

The Government's record on pensions is far better than anything that the hon. Member for Erdington and his colleagues can offer. The support that pensioners gave us in the general election and in every opinion poll since then shows that the pensioners know that we are a Government whom they can trust to deliver the goods for them. Neither they nor we——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to the Order of 11 July.*

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 195.

Division No. 408] **[11.43 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hind, Kenneth
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*

Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Saatchi, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Chlorofluorocarbons and the Ozone Layer

[Relevant Document: First Report of the Environment Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 270 of Session 1987-88) on Air Pollution.]

11.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8335/87 and 4997/88 + COR1 on control of chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer; supports the implementation of the Montreal Protocol through Community-wide action; endorses the control of consumption of ozone-depleting substances through control of their overall supply; and encourages continuing action by all sectors of industry on a voluntary basis to reduce use of these substances to the maximum possible extent.

Document No. 8335/87 is a proposal for a decision seeking the Council's authorisation of Community signature of a protocol to the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer. The proposal was submitted on 11 September 1987, at a time when international negotiations were reaching their conclusion. The Council's authorisation was given by means of urgent written procedure in time for the conference of plenipotentiaries held in Montreal from 14 to 16 September. On 16 September, what is now called the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer was signed by the Community, the United Kingdom and most other member states.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained on 13 January in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), the House was in recess at that time and it was not possible for the normal scrutiny procedures to be carried out. The Government, however, kept the House informed of developments, including the outcome of the diplomatic conference. The text of the protocol was published as a Command Paper and laid before both Houses in January, in accordance with the usual practice, before ratification by the United Kingdom.

The protocol contains measures to control the production and consumption of two groups of chemicals with the potential to damage the ozone layer: chlorofluorocarbons—CFCs—11, 12, 113, 114 and 115, and halons 1211, 1301 and 2402.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The purpose of halons for manufacturing industry is connected mostly with fire retardants. This involves major policy. There is obviously great advantage in using halons, as any chemist knows. Could the Minister explain—either in the winding-up speech or at his convenience—the Government's policy towards the non-use of halons, given that it will make fire retardant materials far more difficult, and certainly far more expensive, to manufacture?

Mr. Moynihan: I shall certainly elaborate the point during my winding-up speech. However, I shall take this opportunity to tell the hon. Gentleman that he is absolutely right: halons are widely used in fire extinguishers, and we need to promote active research into alternative substances that have the same effect without depleting the ozone layer. That will require time. One of the problems is the substitution of halons in fire extinguishers, particularly in developing countries. As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out, that is expensive.

[Mr. Moynihan]

CFCs are used for such purposes as refrigeration, foam-blowing and aerosol propellants. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has said, halons are used primarily as fire retardants. The protocol provides for production and consumption of CFCs to be reduced progressively to 50 per cent. of 1986 levels by 1999. Production and consumption of halons is to be frozen by 1993. There is some flexibility to exceed the production limits, but solely for the purposes of industrial rationalisation and to guarantee supplies to low-consuming developing country parties. Such countries have more time to comply with the measures. Unlike the provisions limiting trade with non-parties, the special provisions for developing countries are designed to encourage countries to join the protocol.

We are keen that there should be the widest possible participation in the protocol, and we are doing what we can, through diplomatic and industrial channels, to encourage as many developing countries as possible to sign the protocol.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Minister recognise that many people will be disappointed by the approach that has been taken tonight? Will he assure the House that the Government will give speedy consideration to the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, which deals with CFCs, and that the Government's response will be published as soon as possible? At that stage there should be a further debate. Perhaps the response to the section of the report on CFCs should be speedier than the response to other parts.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have considered the Select Committee's recommendations seriously and will take on board the importance that the hon. Gentleman has attached to them. We are taking a tough line on production, as we did with the Americans during the negotiations. We have been —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) laughs, but that is a fact. We have been pushing extremely hard for a comprehensive ban on CFCs rather than a selective one. We are aware that CFCs, wherever they come from, have a depleting effect on the ozone layer. As the Select Committee urges, we must tackle the overall problem.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the Minister denying that the Americans wanted a greater cut in production than that for which the EEC was arguing, and that within the EEC Britain was one of the countries arguing for a smaller cut than that proposed by the Community?

Mr. Moynihan: I am denying that. I am saying categorically that we are looking for a greater cut in production during the negotiations. We were urging the Americans to move from specific bans to an overall ban for the reason that I have outlined. It is important internationally to ensure that we control CFCs, reduce them and take into account any new technology that makes it possible to take further measures. An important part of the protocol is the opportunity to review in the light of new scientific developments and technology.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister clarify the passage on the second page of the memorandum, which, referring to article 7, states:

"There are also measures limiting imports from countries not party to the protocol."?

Is it not a fact that it will be difficult administratively to do that? I am told that it will be extremely difficult.

Mr. Moynihan: It will be difficult, but not impossible. It is our intention to put in place appropriate measures to ensure that the objective is achieved. I shall deal with them later.

We are keen that there should be the widest possible participation in the protocol. For example, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in his forthcoming visit to China, will seek to persuade the Chinese to adopt the protocol. If he succeeds in doing so, that will bring 1 billion people within it, many of whom are important users of CFCs and halons. If we can ensure that China is persuaded during my right hon. Friend's visit, that will be an important move forward. Incidentally, today he persuaded the Swedish Minister who is responsible for these matters to take this line.

The protocol expressly provides for the control measures to be reviewed in 1990, and at least every four years thereafter in the light of available scientific, environmental, technical and economic information. Since Montreal, our understanding of the science has continued to develop. The Department's stratospheric ozone review group—an independent advisory body of experts—has been keeping a close watch on the situation. At the Department's request, the group agreed to the release on 14 June of the executive summary, of its forthcoming second report. In the summary the group says that it is now virtually certain that the hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic is caused by CFCs, which are also implicated in ozone depletion above other parts of the globe, including the United Kingdom. The group gives a clear warning that unless emissions are greatly reduced, and possibly phased out, more severe depletion of statospheric ozone is likely to occur.

The Government will be studying the report carefully as soon as it is available, but we are already taking careful note of the summary and its warning about the need to strengthen the protocol. Our first priority, however, shared with our partners in the European Community, is to ensure that the protocol enters into force on 1 January 1989, as planned, and with the widest possible participation. This will allow the protocol's own review procedures to be put into effect.

That brings me to document No. 4997/88, which comprises two proposals. These are a decision on ratification of the Vienna convention and the Montreal protocol by the European Community and member states, and a regulation laying down common rules for implementing the protocol within the Community. The document COR1 merely makes some minor drafting changes to the proposals in document No. 4997/88.

As the House will be aware, on 16 June, the Environment Council reached agreement in principle on the proposals, subject to parliamentary reserves from the United Kingdom and several other member states. The United Kingdom parliamentary reserve was entered because it had not been possible to arrange before then a debate called for in the reports of the Select Committee on documents 8335/87 and 4997/88 and because the scrutiny process in another place had not yet been completed. When both Houses are satisfied, the United Kingdom will be able to lift its reserve on the proposals.

The United Kingdom ratified the decisions at the Vienna convention as long ago as 1987, and it was the first European country to do so. France is the only other member state to have ratified. All other member states have now signed the protocol, except Ireland and Spain. The proposed decision originally sought to achieve simultaneous ratification of both instruments by 15 September 1988. In discussion, the deadline has been extended to 1 October for the convention and 31 December for the protocol.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. Friend has mentioned the pressure that we put on the Americans to reach agreement with us. Has he been able to put any pressure on the Russians to abide by the terms of the protocol?

Mr. Moynihan: It is not a matter of applying pressure, but there is joint recognition with the Soviet Union of the importance of ensuring that the protocol is properly implemented. I shall come to those countries which have signed since Montreal, not least the Soviet Union and the Ukrainian SSR and Byelorussian SSR.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister confirm or deny that the British Government argued in the Common Market that there should be 90 per cent. ratification of the protocol before it was implemented, and that that gave the Soviet Union a veto?

Mr. Moynihan: I can confirm that that was the thrust of discussions at that time. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have moved forward considerably from that. Obviously, we want to ensure that we achieve further signatories. For example, we understand that the United States and Mexico have since ratified.

Turning to the regulation, the United Kingdom has consistently supported implementation of the protocol through Communitywide action by means of a regulation which is directly applicable in all member states. This is the only way of ensuring that the necessary legislative framework for implementation is in place throughout the Community in good time before the protocol comes into force.

The regulation reflects the dual control of production and consumption in the protocol and applies the protocol limits directly to individual firms. There are limits on the amounts produced by each company. Consumption is controlled through the control of the overall supply of CFCs and halons by limiting the amounts which producing companies can sell within the Community, or use themselves, and the amounts which firms may import from outside the Community. The United Kingdom has firmly supported controlling consumption by controlling supply rather than controlling specific uses, a method which has been shown elsewhere to be inefficient and inflexible—for example, the aerosols in the United States to which I have referred. Rather, it is left to market forces to determine the use to which available supplies are put as prices rise.

In addition to the central control provisions, there are measures, in parallel with those in the protocol, to limit imports from non-parties. There is a management committee to advise the Commission on detailed matters of implementation and provisions for data reporting, inspections and for action if the regulation is infringed.

I shall keep the hon. Member for Linlithgow in touch on that point as we receive further information, because he was right to say that it is technically difficult to ensure that we achieve that objective.

Inevitably, in discussion of the Commission's proposals by member states, some changes have been made, but the regulation agreed in principle does not differ substantially from the original proposals. The main changes are to the provisions relating to import licences, production, inspections and infringement. Import licences are now to be issued by member states rather than by the Commission. Production increases allowed under the protocol for the purposes of industrial rationalisation and to meet the basic domestic needs of developing countries have to be agreed with the member state concerned, and there is now express provision rationalisation within member states. The provision whereby production quotas could be reallocated in the event of a producer beginning production after 1986 has been dropped.

Several changes have been made to the provisions for inspections, including a requirement for the agreement of the member state concerned to Commission officials assisting those of the member state in carrying out inspections, and for the Commission to take appropriate measures to protect the confidentiality of the information obtained. The provisions dealing with infringements have been simplified on the basis that member states should take appropriate legal or administrative action in the event of the regulation being infringed.

In its report, the Select Committee said that it did not understand the statement in the Department's explanatory memorandum on document 4997/88 that the measures in the regulation were not inconsistent with the Government's preference for achieving the reductions required by voluntary action.

The regulation lays down the basic minimum legal framework within which there is complete flexibility for industry to take steps to reduce the use of CFCs and halons on a voluntary or self-regulatory basis. This self-regulatory approach has already worked well with existing Community measures to establish a production ceiling for CFCs 11 and 12 and to effect reductions in aerosol use. We are keen to encourage a continuation of this kind of approach. Indeed, an essential element of the package agreed at the Environment Council on 16 June was a political resolution which stressed the importance of further voluntary measures to reduce the use of CFCs and halons to the maximum possible extent.

Mr. Dalyell: In its 32nd report of Session 1987-88, the Select Committee on European Legislation states:

"The resolution also invites the Commission to seek voluntary agreement with industry on a common Community label for CFC-free products."

Has such agreement been reached? Its importance was emphasised at a meeting that my hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) arranged with his constituent, Mr. Beckitt, and others, of ICI Runcorn. This is a matter of some importance.

Mr. Moynihan: To the best of my knowledge, agreement on that has not yet been reached, but voluntary action by individual producers has progressed. If more information has emerged since I was briefed on this subject, I shall let the hon. Gentleman know in my winding-up speech.

[Mr. Moynihan]

In the United Kingdom, the aerosol industry has announced that it will phase out non-essential use of CFCs in aerosols by the end of 1989. As aerosols represent over 60 per cent. of CFC use in the United Kingdom, we shall be well ahead of the Montreal timetable for CFC reductions, but we are anxious that all sectors of industry should reduce consumption on a voluntary basis, and officials of my Department and of the Department of Trade and Industry have regular meetings with users of CFCs and halons to establish what steps they are taking to reduce consumption. Moreover, the United Kingdom producers are actively engaged in research and development work to identify and test suitable and safe substitutes and have joined with other firms in Europe, The United States and Japan to hasten the process of commercial development.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre)): What steps are the Government taking to encourage research into other, safer, CFCs? Is the research being carried out quickly enough?

Mr. Moynihan: It is important that we push ahead with research urgently. Much research has borne fruit in terms of industry's immediate response, but we are committed, through the protocol, to give suitable assistance to further research in the Community and abroad. That has financial implications which have been taken on board, not least by the Overseas Development Administration. I am satisfied that considerable research is pushing ahead. There is clearly much more work to be done in the light of further evidence of the science attached to depletion of the ozone layer and the range of substances involved. More needs to be done, but I am satisfied that a good deal of initial work has been beneficial.

The Montreal protocol is a major environmental achievement. Since its adoption last year, our understanding of the science has developed and there have been calls for the protocol to be strengthened. In view of the new evidence, we need to prepare for an orderly assessment of the science for the first scheduled review of the measures in 1990. This process of review is already beginning and there will be a series of international scientific and technical meetings in the Netherlands this October, in which the United Kingdom will participate fully. The report of our stratospheric ozone research group, the full version of which should be published in September, will form an important contribution to the review, but the first priority must be to get the protocol into force. I commend the motion to the House.

12.15 am

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Minister and I will not disagree to the same extent as we did in the recent debate on acid rain, but we will disagree about the scope of the Montreal convention and how effective the Government's response to the issue has been. We shall disagree, too, on the Government's role in getting the EEC to water down its joint approach to the discussions that took place in Montreal.

Everyone—not only the Minister—has problems pronouncing chlorofluorocarbons. Our Chief Whip had to rehearse it before the parliamentary Labour party meeting last Thursday, at which he had to say the word in the course of announcing the business. I am pleased to see that so many Conservative Members are interested in chlorofluorocarbons. Either that, or they represent the chemical industry constituencies—there is nothing wrong with that—or they think there will be a vote. I cannot imagine why so many of them are here at this late hour. I used to complain regularly that important environmental issues were put to too late at night and that we should have more serious debates at earlier times so that more hon. Members would be present to discuss them.

There is a theatre called the Theatre in Conservation. It is an environmentalist theatre, a non-party organisation, that puts on shows for children. It is putting on a pantomime at the moment, in which Fluorocarbon is the wicked witch, who comes out of the aerosol can, the ugly sisters are SO_x and NO_x and the heroes are Dick Whittington and his catalytic converter and the Greenpeace warriors. So if, in future, the Minister has problems pronouncing chlorofluorocarbons, he has only to think of the Theatre in Conservation and the wicked witch Fluorocarbon, who is destroying our ozone layer.

This is a serious matter. The closing statement from the 330 policy makers and scientists from the 48 countries represented at the Montreal convention began thus:

> "Humanity is conducting an enormous, unintended, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war."

That was not said by the Labour party, or by me. It was said by those policy makers who discussed the changing atmosphere implications for global security in Toronto in June.

It is imperative to act now to avert an impending crisis of atmospheric pollution. The ozone layer is the only one that we have. If we do not take action now, on the grounds that the link is not proven, and it is later proven, it could easily be too late. The conference identified CFCs, the chemicals believed to be the primary cause of ozone depletion, as important contributors also to the greenhouse effect and called for their near-complete elimination by 2000—a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and by the Select Committee.

In the debate on acid rain I was a little critical of the Select Committee's recommendations for not going far enough, but on this issue the Committee has got it virtually perfectly right. I hope that the Government will respond to its recommendations—

Mr. Thurnham: What does the hon. Gentleman mean when he says that the Select Committee has got it virtually perfectly right? With what does he disagree in the report? Is he aware that the British Refrigeration Association has said that it would be almost impossible to replace existing systems if the Committee's report on R22 were accepted? The Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association has said that the consequences for keeping food refrigerated would be unthinkable.

Mr. Roberts: I thought that Conservative Members were here because they represented certain interests. Industries always say that it is impossible to act until they have to, and then find a way of doing so. "Impossible" merely means that the chemical industry might have to spend too much and is worried about its competitors.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Might there not be something rather more genuine, in that the chemical industry does not want to produce new poisons, and there is such a thing as toxicity testing, which takes some time?

Mr. Roberts: The argument now is that the industry does not want to get rid of one poison because it might introduce another. Conservative Members are here in force. I shall come to these issues in a minute. I do not want to restrict the British chemical industry so much that it is not in a position to compete with the other chemical industries. However, the industry has to be careful about saying that things cannot be done when it does not know how to do them. As a member of the all-party chemical industries group, I believe that the way forward for the British chemical industry and Imperial Chemical Industries plc is to do the research and produce the substitutes for CFCs. It is sad that the American firm Du Pont is ahead of us, because that is the result of the American Government and, as a consequence, American industry, taking the issue more seriously than we did. We fell for the belief that CFCs were not doing the damage, and that if they were the extent was not proven. The research stopped, and now ICI is fighting desperately to catch up with Du Pont. I hope that it does; I do not want to harm our chemical industry.

The Montreal protocol is an international agreement to cut production and consumption of CFCs by 35 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively by 1999. The House should be clear that that is not a 50 per cent. cut in production, but a 50 per cent. cut in consumption, and only a 35 per cent. cut in production. That means that we can sell CFCs abroad if we do not use them. We can sell them to the Third world, as though the Third world has a different ozone layer. That is where this protocol falls down. It does not go far enough. If the 50 per cent. cut had been in production and not just in consumption, we might have been on the way to having a significant protocol to ratify. Instead, hidden in the fine print is the fact that we may not be using as much, but our industries can produce it and sell it abroad. That is not the way forward, because just as much of the ozone layer will be lost as a result.

Many scientists believe that the cuts do not go anywhere near far enough, and that cuts of 85 per cent. are needed to stabilise the atmosphere. The Select Committee on the Environment recommended that the Montreal protocol be reconvened to negotiate reductions in consumption of CFCs to 15 per cent. of the 1986 levels. That is an 85 per cent. cut. It received good and expert evidence to that effect. That is also in line with the level regarded as necessary to stabilise the atmosphere, and the Government's response is still awaited.

On 14 June 1988, in a Department of the Environment press release—the only response that we have had from the Government—Lord Caithness, the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water, announced:

"a group of prominent British scientists have advised the Government that unless emissions of CFCs are reduced much further than the levels required by the 1987 Montreal Protocol more severe depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer is likely to occur."

Those scientists are right. It is not clear what Government thinking about the extent and level of emission reductions required is, and the Minister's speech tonight neither made that clear nor answered the point that the Minister of State made.

On 16 June the EEC agreed to ratify the Montreal protocol. Each EEC member state will be required individually to fulfil the requirements of the protocol. However, we are worried, as we were about the acid rain protocol, about monitoring and implementation of the reduction. Questions need to be asked. It is not clear how effective monitoring of the implementation of the protocol would be put into effect.

The Nordic countries, rightly concerned about their environment, have already announced their intention to aim for reductions of over 90 per cent. by 1995. They have refrigerators, although it is colder there than it is here. They also have air conditioning systems. If they can do it, why can we not? It is exactly the same as retrofitting power stations and reducing acid rain—the Germans can do it, but we cannot. We always find an excuse.

Major problems remain, including the number of countries that are not party to the protocol which the Minister mentioned. There is the monitoring of imports and exports of CFC to ensure that CFC havens are not set up in countries not party to the protocol, which could easily happen. The protocol provision allowing for a 10 per cent. increase in production for low consumer countries to increase their per capita usage during industrial rationalisation is also an important issue.

The hon. Members who represent chemical industry constituencies are worried about British products. It is of considerable concern that the figures for United Kingdom production and consumption of CFCs are not available to the public. We learned only recently that more than 60 per cent. of United Kingdom CFC usage is in aerosols and that figure was much higher than expected.

In June 1988 the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association reversed its previous position and recommended that its members should label aerosols. The Select Committee on the Environment recommended mandatory ozone-friendly labelling schemes, but the Government are still saying, "Leave it to market forces." How we can leave the market to decide whether people should buy ozone-friendly aerosols or non-ozone-friendly aerosols when we do not have them labelled defeats me. I share the all-party recommendation of the Select Committee on the Environment that it cannot be left to market forces and that it should be a mandatory requirement for aerosols that do not have CFCs in them to be labelled "ozone-friendly".

The Select Committee also recommended banning CFCs in aerosols except for medical use, if the phasing out of CFCs is not rapid enough. In March, when giving evidence to the Select Committee, Lord Caithness said that the voluntary approach had worked. I dispute that. Articles in the industrial press suggest that consumer pressure and the fear of falling sales have been the key factors.

I am concerned about the amount of self-regulation by industry. The British Aerosol Manufacturers Association reports that by the end of 1989 only 10 per cent. of aerosols will use CFCs as propellants. That figure represents essential uses and, if that is true, it is good, but there is currently no procedure for challenging the definition of a product as an essential use, and the Government must consider introducing legislation. Furthermore, 10 per cent. is higher than in many countries which have already banned CFCs in aerosols, and because of the high proportion of CFC aerosols used in the United Kingdom, 10 per cent. is not negligible.

[Mr. Roberts]

The Select Committee on the Environment recommended that the Department of the Environment should take a strong lead in co-ordinating European research and that Government funds should be made available for that purpose. On 9 July 1988 newspapers reported that the Natural Environmental Research Council, which has been losing Government funds, is shedding 130 scientific posts. If the Minister is serious about those environmental issues, it is an absolute tragedy and a scandal that environmental research is not given higher priority by the Government.

There is massive scientific evidence of ozone depletion, the most up-to-date and reliable of which was published in March 1988 in the report of the Ozone Trends Panel. That body was made up of more than 100 international scientists and was backed up by, among others, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. It concluded that there has been a large, sudden and unexpected decrease in the abundance of springtime Antarctic ozone during the past decade. Ozone decreases of more than 50 per cent. in the total column, and 95 per cent. locally between 15 and 20 km altitude have been observed.

Everyone knows about the hole over the Antarctic, but what about other areas? In the northern hemisphere there have been measurable decreases between 1969 and 1986 of ozone ranging from 1·7 to 3 per cent. at latitudes between 30 and 64 deg. The decreases are most pronounced and range from 2·3 to 6·2 per cent. during the winter months. That depletion occurs over densely populated areas, including Britain, Europe, the United States of America, Japan, much of the Soviet Union, China and the middle east. The observed changes may be due wholly or in part to the increased abundance of trace gases, primarily CFCs. Once the CFCs get into the atmosphere, they hang around for 100 years. They will be a danger for a long time.

The scientists say:

"The weight of evidence strongly indicates that man-made chlorine species are primarily responsible for the observed decrease in ozone within the polar vortex."

It is as provable as the link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer and the causes of acid rain.

Summing up all the scientists' comments, Dr. Robert Watson of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration said:

"The mean values of the observed decreases at mid and high latitudes in winter are larger than the mean values of the predicted decreases."

I do not really understand that. He continued:

"Things are far worse than we thought."

I understand that, though. The Government admit that there is a problem. We are worried about the extent to which their actions will solve it.

It is all very well to quote the scientific evidence and technical information, but the reality is that the depletion of the ozone layer will cause skin cancer. The herpes virus, hepatitis and parasitic infections of the skin will increase, as will senile eye cataracts. Significant changes in total column ozone will disturb crop yields. Increases above 10 per cent. of UV-B—the ultra-violet rays that get through the ozone layer—will affect fish. There will be many other consequences, and that is why it is important to regard this as an important issue. It will affect the entire planet and the relationships in the ecosystem. It is not something that does not matter to the British people.

We want the Government to be more decisive in acting to persuade—and if necessary to legislate—industry to stop using CFCs. Of course it cannot be done overnight, but we believe that this protocol does not go far enough. The Government have been guilty of back-pedalling in the EEC. They should assist the British chemical industry by funding research into finding CFC substitutes. Du Pont has discovered such substitutes.

The Government should re-evaluate the reductions required, taking into account the comments of the Ozone Trends Panel and the Toronto conference. We wish to clarify the role of the United Kingdom in pushing for the urgent reconvention of the Montreal protocol and exertion of diplomatic activity to encourage other nations to join the process. The Minister seemed to agree with that proposition.

We wish to clarify the procedures for monitoring implementation of cuts in the United Kingdom and the possibility of aiming for more radical measures similar to those being adopted by the Nordic countries. We must step up research and investment, and we must have legislation to label products and a timetable for bans on non-essential uses of CFCs as soon as alternatives become available.

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in its evidence to the Select Committee, ICI made it clear that extra resources would not speed up the search for alternatives to CFCs?

Mr. Roberts: ICI said that, but I do not necessarily believe it. It is a matter of resources, research and co-operation among the chemical industries of all the developed countries.

The British industry is selling itself short. Its future lies in competing in a world that is worried about the environment, especially the ozone layer. It must carry out the research, develop the alternatives as quickly as possible and get on with the job. ICI and others will take the lead from a Government who seem to be the dirty men of Europe, who do not push or press, who want to drag their coat tails on this issue and who are not as concerned about the environment as they should be. I am concerned about jobs in the British chemical industry and about its future. If the United States—our main competitor—and the British Government sign the international agreements, there should be fair competition to produce alternatives.

The protocol is inadequate. To some extent it is a con, in that it refers to a 50 per cent. cut in consumption but only a 35 per cent. cut in production. Even after the protocol is ratified we shall still produce 65 per cent. of our 1986 production. I hope that the Minister will take the issue seriously and will return from his Department with assurances on legislation, labelling and further action to get international agreement that goes much further than the protocol.

12.35 am

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to make what I hope will be a brief contribution to the debate in view of the number of hon. Members who want to participate.

I have two concerns about the Montreal protocol. The first is contained in the developing countries exception. Under the protocol, developing countries are given special rights to produce up to 0·5 kg per head of new production

of CFCs and to consume up to 0·3 kg per head. Among those developing countries are the People's Republic of China, which on its own would be permitted to increase world production of CFCs by 50 per cent., and India and Thailand, which would be able to increase production by 0·5 kg per head. Therefore, under the protocol, it is possible to double production of CFCs in 10 years. That is frightening. It makes what we are doing under the protocol look like stubbing out a bookmatch in our backyard while a forest fire rages elsewhere.

I hope that, when the nations again get together to look at the Montreal protocol, they will look not so much at the interests of the developing world in terms of building its industry as at overall world production of CFCs. As the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) rightly said, most of our production is exported. I see no reason why that production should be ignored in terms of world production and should not be substituted for production that would otherwise arise in the developing countries.

My second concern about the protocol relates to the concept—which is rather odd when analysed—of the calculated level index, whereby some CFCs and some halons are worse than others. It applies complex mathematical formulae to the number assigned to each chemical in order to arrive at future production levels. That is fine, until one realises that the original index to which the mathematical formulae apply is a complete mystery. It is just plucked out of the air. In the Montreal protocol, we are multiplying apples and pears and, as any school child knows, to do so is purely fruitless.

The calculated level index is important when we consider controls on production because, however meaningless it is, it is the base on which future changes in production levels can be made. EEC document 4997/88 calls for periodical revision of the indices. The protocol provides for a two-thirds majority of parties to the protocol to be able to make revisions to the indices and for representatives of 50 per cent. of world consumption, not production, who are parties to the protocol, to be able to call for revisions.

As we know, the United Kingdom is low in its use of CFCs. It is high on production and low on consumption. Therefore, in any future revision of the Montreal protocol, if one pools those facts, and pools the majorities, one can see who will come out worst on the deal. Because we are high producers and low consumers, and because of the way in which the majorities under the Montreal convention are structured, inevitably we shall get the short straw. That needs to be examined again on a revision of the convention from the point of view of making sure that the undoubted pain that the industry will go through over the next few years is not unfairly borne in this country.

Much has been said about the speed with which the industry should react. I was very worried by what appeared to be the attitude of the hon. Member for Bootle, who seemed to brush aside the possibility that, because we are dealing with substances that are known to be highly dangerous and we are looking for substitutes, we might rush ahead and produce substitutes, which, because of the chemicals that we are dealing with, could prove far more dangerous than the chemicals that they are designed to replace. The industry is doing everything that it can to produce the chemicals that are needed as quickly as possible. It is already known that the chemicals that are needed as replacements for some industrial purposes are not yet available. If we were just to go blindly ahead and rush into production with the first chemical that was available, we could end up with the industrial equivalent of another Thalidomide disaster.

We must replace CFCs with chemicals that are non-flammable, of low toxicity and have a good thermodynamic performance. For many uses, such as low-temperature refrigeration, those new chemicals are not yet available. The industry is doing everything that it can.

Mr. Allan Roberts: As the Minister and I said, the major use of 60 per cent. of CFCs is for propellants in aerosols. I grant that there are now difficulties with substitutes for the other uses, but there are not for the production of substitutes for propellants in aerosol cans. If that alone were done, it would make a major impact—bigger than that of the protocol.

Mr. Stern: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman, but the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association has already announced that, under present rules, it will be able to reduce use in aerosols to 10 per cent. of the 1976 levels by the end of next year. So the hon. Gentleman is biting on a bullet that does not exist.

The research must be done and the new chemicals found. In this country, we need to use the Montreal protocol and the convention that we are now discussing to encourage the industry to produce what we know it can produce, but at the same time let us not fall into the trap of assuming that it is easy or that there is a quick substitute for any of those uses. There is not.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend said that this country might suffer disproportionately because we produce more in proportion to our consumption than other countries, but has he reflected on what will happen to the price of the product if restrictions are placed on supply? Perhaps we shall gain in that way.

Mr. Stern: I must leave my hon. Friend to develop that point. I admit that I am concerned more from the point of view of the industry to make sure that it is given the chance of producing the product before it can price it, and from the point of view that there are undoubted dangers in those products, so, as the protocol permits and encourages, we must allow the price levels to reflect the relative toxicities of the products.

12.44 am

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) talked about chlorofluorocarbons. The Minister spoke about them, as I shall, as CFCs because it is much too late at night to try to pronounce chlorofluorocarbons.

Hon. Members have talked about chemical substances, CFCs and protocols. Let us try to put the debate, late at night though it is, in perspective by defining the substances that we are discussing. We are talking about everyday substances in products in everyday use in the home. My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle said that 60 per cent. of the product goes into aerosols. I do not know where he got that figure, but I shall accept it.

Increasingly, CFCs are being used in refrigerants. The ordinary refrigerator in the home and refrigerators in shops and abattoirs use them. They are also extensively used in the plastics industry, in which their use is growing. Until a few years ago CFCs were regarded as scientific

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

miracles. They were looked upon as safe products and, as the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) has said, were economical to manufacture. An important feature of CFCs is that they are non-flammable, while many alternatives, including those in aerosols, are flammable and highly dangerous. CFCs are also non-toxic.

CFCs were regarded as wonder products and in my constituency ICI, which manufactures them, expanded enormously and put tens of millions of pounds into increasing production. Rock Savage in Runcorn in my constituency is the biggest plant in the United Kingdom —and probably the biggest plant in Europe—producing CFCs. I had the privilege three or four years ago of opening an extension to that plant. I was proud to say at that time that it provided jobs for my constituents and exports for Britain. I admit that not many jobs are provided by the direct manufacture of CFCs because this is a highly capital-intensive industry, but many spin-off jobs are provided. There are jobs in administration and sales and in transporting the material and there are jobs in exporting.

A few years ago I was proud of what ICI and Rock Savage were producing for Britain, but then we had the attack, mainly from the United States of America, on CFCs. Suddenly, they were responsible for damage to the ozone layer. That is accepted by the United Kingdom, which is a signatory to the Montreal accord. As the Minister said, it is also accepted by the Soviet bloc and by most countries.

As a result of the ozone layer theory, many things happened. I am not convinced that CFCs are responsible for the hole in the layer over the Antarctic. I am not a scientist, but I have been an officer of the all-party chemical industries group since its existence and I have taken a keen interest in scientific development and in our chemical industry. I think that you too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were a founder member of the group in 1967. The group is approaching its 21st birthday.

As a trained lawyer, I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle that I do not accept that there is proof to the same extent as the proof that cigarettes damage one's health and lungs that CFCs damage the ozone layer.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I should like to quote the words of Dr. Joe Farman, a British scientist and member of the British Antarctic Survey, which discovered the hole in the ozone. Initially, he was very open-minded about the cause of the ozone hole above the Antarctic, and he remained so for several years. However, intensive scientific studies have persuaded him that CFCs are, indeed, the cause, as all the leading scientists agree. He said:

"Debate is over among those competent to judge."

That comes from someone who is uniquely competent to judge. I advise my right hon. Friend to follow world opinion and the opinion of all the leading scientists in this matter.

Mr. Oakes: If hon. Members followed scientists and outside organisations in the hysteria that is sometimes engendered, we should be in a sorry state. Hon. Members should be sceptical of experts, whoever they are. We should apply a little common sense. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) mentioned a member of the British Antarctic Survey, which discovered the hole over the Antarctic a few years ago. That hole could have existed for a million years. No one had looked for it before and no one knew it was there.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am following the right hon. Gentleman's argument closely, and I know that he is putting a layman's or a lawyer's point. Can he tell the House whether a single scientist has suggested that the causes of the problems are other than those that the House is discussing?

Mr. Oakes: I am saying that few scientists would say that there is absolute proof. Scientists say that there is circumstantial evidence, and nations have accepted that. I am not opposing the documents; I am merely advancing my view, which is that we need to have a healthy scepticism. I agree with what a great comedian said on television last Sunday; indeed, I thought that I had invented it. I cannot believe that the fact that I spray deodorant under my arms in my bathroom can have caused a great hole in the ozone layer in the Antarctic. It stretches credulity. Some scientists say that it is so, but we must be sceptical.

As I said, the proposition has been accepted not only by Governments but by the industry. I mention that for one reason. The Minister rightly said that in 1990 there is to be a proper review, on proper evidence, of what is happening. I hope that all nations are continuing their research. I hope that the British Antarctic Survey will continue its research and that in 1990 or 1994, if there is alternative evidence —as there may well be—scientists will say that they have made a mistake. I hope that we shall not crucify a very useful industry on the ground of what may have been a mistake.

There is hope in the documents that the 1990 date can still be achieved if further evidence comes to light between now and then. I hope that the Minister and the House will take that into account.

What worries me is that at first the attack was on aerosols—perhaps rightly, perhaps wrongly; I do not know. The attack will now move on to refrigerants and then, inevitably, to plastics. Any use of CFCs—not only in aerosols—will be regarded as a potential source of danger. Indeed, motions have already appeared on the Order Paper—I have tried to amend them—calling for an immediate ban on aerosols and other uses of CFCs. At the moment, no adequate, economical, non-toxic and non-flammable alternative exists. If we were to use carbon dioxide, for example, as a refrigerant, can we imagine what size our refrigerators would be? If we were to use butane aerosols, there would be an immediate danger of flammability, which we have not got with CFCs.

These documents are reasonable in that they give time for the development of a practical and economic alternative to existing CFCs. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to the excellent briefing that we had from ICI, explaining clearly and openly to hon. Members the current position and what it was doing. Already ICI has begun a massive programme of research in its laboratory at Runcorn and in a pilot plant which is in production at Westbank in Widnes. Funnily enough, that plant is on the site of the old Deacon works, which was one of the first chemical plants in the United Kingdom. The foundation of part of our chemical

industry began on the very site where ICI's pilot plant is. It is very close to the Halton chemical museum, of which I am a trustee and which we are working hard to establish as a major chemical museum not only in the United Kingdom but in Europe.

I have seen the pilot plant which is in production. Millions of pounds are being invested by ICI in CFCs which will be non-malign to the environment. Over the next two years £3 million per annum is to be spent on a rapid expansion of the plant. That is a lot of money in investment terms. What about manpower? By 1990, 200 scientists and technicians will be working on this alone.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) talked about the need for speed. I agree with him, as does ICI. One sensible development by ICI to achieve speed is that engineers are working with the chemists now so that there will not be production problems when the product is invented. They are working together now so that the production will flow quickly and evenly when the right product is found.

The research must be centred on CFCs which are ozone-benign. Not all CFCs are malign to the ozone layer. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West was right when he said that three qualities are needed for the new product: it must have good thermodynamic performance, it must be non-flammable and it must have low toxicity. I agree entirely with him that the new product must be thoroughly tested so that we do not invent a product which could be alleged to be more damaging that the product we already have because of toxicity. That is why ICI honestly and openly in its evidence to the Select Committee said that no matter what the research might be and no matter what expenditure is made, we still come back to the essential problem of the possible toxicity of a new product.

No matter how fast the research goes or how well the production problems can be overcome, proper testing for a safe product will take a minimum of five years. That is only for the testing. Just as drugs have to be tested over a period, so will this product. If it is thought to be all right, after being tested over only 12 months or two years, and there are subsequent defects or harmful consequences, it would not be right for British industry to launch that product on the world. Therefore, a five-year testing period is essential. I say that clearly to the House. It is a crucial element, no less crucial than achieving the maximum possible safety for the public.

I ask the Minister to resist any demands from hon. Members, from organisations or—because one never knows when it will change its mind—from Europe to speed matters even faster, to the detriment of safety.

The documents as drafted will allow that essential research to take place within a feasible time scale. I am convinced that, because of its investment and the dedication of its scientists, technicians and engineers, ICI will find a practical alternative to the existing CFCs and that that alternative will be British.

Mr. Stern: The hon. Gentleman has rightly paid tribute to the work of ICI in this sphere and reference has been made to the work being done by Du Pont. We should, to complete the triangle, mention the work of ISC in my constituency.

Mr. Oakes: The Chinese have an expression about allowing a thousand flowers to bloom. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. But I have seen the work that ICI has been doing and I know how advanced it is. I am proud of that research, and I hope that the future production of the alternative products about which we have been speaking, which will be so useful to mankind, will occur in my constituency, in the birthplace, the first home, the very heartland, of the British chemical industry.

1.2 am

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I shall cut short my remarks in view of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate, and concentrate on document 4997/88. There seems to be a discrepancy between what is said in the explanatory memorandum and in the document. The memorandum states:

> "Recent scientific reports on the depletion of the ozone layer over Antarctica in Spring and other studies on the total ozone layer indicate that a reduction in the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons is appropriate. The use of these substances is thought to be a probable cause for the depletion of the ozone layer."

Note the weasel words in that memorandum, whereas—I am happy to say—the document is more positive, in that it states:

> "Whereas it is established that continued emissions of chlorofluorocarbons and halons at current levels are likely to cause significant damage to the ozone layer; whereas there is international consensus that significant reductions in both production and consumption of all such substances are necessary . . . whereas it is necessary for the protection, promotion and improvement of the environment to conclude the Vienna Convention and its Protocol, which is based on the principle of preventive action to avoid further damage to the ozone layer".

That is the right way to put it. We cannot afford inaction. Even as we speak, more and more of these wretched substances are being pumped into the stratosphere. Production is now running at between 700,000 and 1 million tonnes per annum. Even if that level were reduced, those substances would still be going into the stratosphere, and, as the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) pointed out, once they have undergone the metamorphosis into chlorine, that remains there for 100 years, continuing to do damage.

Much has been said about jobs, and I do not denigrate any of those remarks, but if we end up without an ozone layer, the results will be absolutely horrendous.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman may be right or wrong, but is it not rather important to get at the truth of his assertions? Does he accept that the view of John Pyle —chairman of the Minister's stratosphere ozone layer review group—that Europe urgently needs a research aircraft like the American ER2 to do some basic research, especially over the Arctic, is really the litmus test of whether his assertions and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) are right? The truth is that we do not know yet, and a research aircraft is desperately needed.

Mr. Summerson: We already know a great deal following the American airborne Antarctic ozone experiment, which finished only a month or two ago, but I agree that we need to do more research, especially over the Arctic. An expedition is at present looking into conditions there, but we need to learn more.

There are two important things that the European Community could do to avoid further damage to the ozone layer. First, it should permit no imports of such substances—and, by the same token, permit no exports.

[Mr. Summerson]

Secondly, there should be mandatory labelling of aerosols. Many other things could be done, but I consider those the most important.

Let me conclude by quoting what has been said by Dr. Joe Farman of the British Antarctic Survey. I also take this opportunity of paying tribute to the survey and the important work that it has done: long may it continue. Dr. Farman says:

"Had the delegates at Montreal seen the latest profiles of ozone, chlorine and the like from Antartica, then the cuts in the protocol would probably have been more stringent, and with fewer exceptions allowed. Just what, one may wonder, made it essential for the protocol to be agreed when it was? Was it really concern for the ozone layer? There is a simple test of this. Paragraph ii of Article 2 of the protocol reads: 'Nowithstanding the provisions contained in the Article Parties may take more stringent measures than those required by this article'

I am glad that the Government have done what they have done already, but we need to do much more, and I hope that they will give the lead.

1.6 am

Mrs Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I want to make a brief contribution to the debate, which is welcome and well timed in view of the Toronto summit in June. The summit recognised that CFCs are important contributors to the so-called "greenhouse effect" and called for their near-elimination by the year 2000.

The Montreal protocol, as we have heard, seeks a reduction in worldwide CFC production by the end of the century, but most scientists believe that that will not be enough. I urge the Minister to give an international lead and begin negotiations to reduce levels by the 85 per cent. now being called for. We have heard about the Nordic countries, which have announced that they are aiming for reductions of over 90 per cent. by 1995.

No country can tackle the task in isolation, and I was interested to note the Minister's remarks about the attempts to involve more countries in signing the protocol. That is obviously important, but what kind of monitoring will be carried out to ensure that countries that are not party to the protocol do not become havens for CFCs? I agree that all aerosols should be labelled, and we welcome the moves made voluntarily by companies and the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association to label goods. McDonalds is to abandon the use of CFCs when making its fast-food cartons. The general public have also played their part by putting pressure on manufacturers to label goods, but I believe that labelling should be made compulsory.

I too, commend ICI for its work and hope that it will be ahead of the Department in coming up with substitutes for CFCs.

The Government say that they are committed to improvement, especially by means of research. I hope that the Minister will explain what benefits will be gained by shedding 130 scientific posts from the Natural Environment Research Council. It is extremely worrying that so many scientific posts are disappearing in this and other areas. We must move faster in seeking to have CFCs banned altogether from manufacturing, except for medical products.

The situation is so serious that it is essential that we act with real urgency. I know that it is difficult for many to imagine what will happen with further depletion of the ozone layer. There is no doubt, however, that the climate will continue to become warmer. We have already a modern-day dust bowl in the United States. The sea level will rise. We have heard about beaches being eroded in Australia. Research that has been undertaken at Cambridge university shows that British plants and trees have begun to change.

Mr. Stern: The hon. Lady is talking about the greenhouse effect as a certainty, but there is considerable scientific dispute about it. If she is right, does she agree that instead of concerning herself with the minor contribution that CFCs make she should argue for a reduction in the fossil fuel burn, which has an effect five times greater than CFCs? If the hon. Lady is right, the quickest way to deal with the greenhouse effect would be to close the fossil fuel plants and introduce more nuclear power generation.

Mrs. Michie: We must address ourselves to that issue as well, but we are discussing CFCs tonight. I shall confine myself to the motion and the implications that CFCs have on the depletion of the ozone layer.

We would be foolish to ignore what could happen, such as food growth diminishing and fresh water supplies being depleted. Such consequences would increase political instability and the potential for international conflict. Nothing could be more telling than the first sentence of the draft conference statement from Toronto, which reads:

"Humanity is conducting an uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war."

We must take these issues seriously. I accept what the Minister has said this evening—I am sure that I shall accept what he says when he replies—but I do not accept that we are going far enough or fast enough.

1.13 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I was disappointed by the speech of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said that we must keep an open mind and arrive at decisions in a balanced way, but the hon. Member for Bootle merely read out passages from Select Committee reports and said that he was in virtually complete agreement with them. He did not say where he differed from them. It is obvious that he does not know where he differs from them, which leaves us wondering whether he has any thoughts of his own.

I was especially disappointed when the hon. Member for Bootle failed to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on achieving the first ever international agreement on the prevention of environmental problems. It is greatly to the credit of the Government, and to the work of my hon. Friend, to have brought the protocol about.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon, Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thurnham: I do not have time to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

The hon. Member for Bootle did not give credit to the voluntary work that has been done by industry. The aerosol industry has said that it can reduce the use of CFCs by 90 per cent. The packaging industry has said that there will be voluntary phasing out of their use by most of the firms in the retailing industry.

I shall comment briefly on the refrigeration industry, of which I have personal experience. The use of CFCs as refrigerants is only about 11 per cent. of all uses, but the reduction and elimination of harmful CFCs presents a considerable challenge to the industry and there has been a strong and positive response by the trade associations.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be well aware of the work of the Institute of Refrigeration, as he presented the opening address to the helpful, useful and positive conference which was held on 18 May. The British Refrigeration Association has just announced that it is to hold a user group conference on 13 October, and I am sure that that will play a useful part in leading the industry. The Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association has issued a pocket guide, with six dos and six don'ts. Individual firms have also made contributions. We have heard of the work of the three manufacturers of refrigerants. I should like to mention one particular user, Sainsbury, for its work in developing a pressure relief valve with much less leakage than the valves which were used previously.

There has been no mention of the rigid urethane foam manufacturers. Five times as much CFC is used in the insulation in domestic refrigerators as in the refrigeration system itself, so obviously there is scope for searching for new alternatives for insulation.

It has been said that 50 to 75 per cent. of the consumption of CFCs in the refrigeration industry is in the maintenance of existing systems, and that 10 per cent. of the gas in existing systems has to be replaced each year. That represents a major challenge to the maintenance and service industry which has been something of a Cinderella industry in the past, but I am confident that it will respond and follow the lead of the trade associations and large firms in the industry. The HVCA guide will be very useful, and the conference shortly to be held by the British Refrigeration Association has the objective of

"establishing voluntary codes of good practice for the care and use of CFC refrigeration in commercial installations, as well as developing responsibly engineered solutions for the future, as acceptable replacements for existing refrigerants are developed."

The lead given by the users will encourage contractors to develop good practices. It is an industry which in the past has not always the dos and donts listed in the HVCA guide, which I am sure will be helpful. But there is a word of warning. If the industry does not respond positively, there is the question of further controls on R22. The 85 per cent. cut mentioned by Opposition Members would have a very serious effect both on the industry and on the people in general who would suffer.

If the hon. Member for Bootle had done more than read the Select Committee report, and had read the Library reference note, he would have seen that any rash further restrictions could lead not only to job losses in this country, but to deprivation in technologies in Third-world countries, and that people's lives could be immediately endangered by too rapid introduction of new, untested products.

The industry must respond positively so that too strict control should not be imposed, in the interests of the protection of the environment, above all. In winding up the debate, I should be interested if my hon. Friend will say what action the Government are taking on some of the problems, such as the scrapping of old fridges and the saving and recycling of some refrigerants.

Perhaps he will have a word with his colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the EC directive on frozen foods which calls for much lower temperatures to be used in that industry and would impose greater burdens on that industry when we are being asked to use less refrigerant. In this country we consume more frozen food per head than in any other country, which is one reason why we should pay more attention to the practical aspects of this convention. The Minister has said that we should strike a balance and that he will be keeping the issues strictly and closely under review, but I am sure that he can expect a good response from the refrigeration industry.

1.19 am

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I endorse the Government's support for the Montreal protocol, but although these documents are welcome, they do not go far enough. We will have to take this problem must more seriously during the next 10 years.

I am a chemist. Chemistry was my degree subject. Many years ago, while at Oxford, I wrote an essay on the organic compounds of fluorine. I found the subject fascinating. The essay ran to 26 sides of paper, but my speech will be much shorter.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I do not know why my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is not speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, but he told me that his thesis was on CFCs and that he would lend it to me so that I could read from it.

Mr. Williams: I am afraid that my thesis was on a different subject. I found freons fascinating 25 years ago when I wrote that essay but, 10 years ago, when I was a college lecturer on environmental science, I started to read about the effects of freons and CFCs on the ozone layer. That effect was predicted theoretically before it was discovered practically.

CFCs are almost completely inert. They are non-flammable and non-toxic. It was predicted in the early 1970s that, once they were released, they would persist and could not be broken down or be leached out of the atmosphere by rainwater. It was established that they could be removed only by drifting to the upper reaches of the atmosphere, where they would be broken down by ultra-violet rays and where there was a danger that they would damage the ozone layer.

The prediction alone was enough to persuade the United States to ban aerosols in 1978. Through Dr. Joe Farman in the 1980s, we received evidence of a hole developing in the ozone layer above the Antarctic. It is not a trivial hole, as the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) suggested. It is massive—it is as big as the United States and as deep as Mount Everest. It appears every year between August and October, and the extent of the ozone depletion grows each year. The ozone concentration today is less than half what it was in the 1970s.

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As we are in the last minute of the debate, I should like to put it on record that hon. Members on both sides of the House have raised important issues and I shall write to them in full as soon as possible. If hon. Members who have not caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would care to write to me, I shall respond to their arguments as well.

Mr. Williams: I thought that this was an open-ended debate. Anyone who treats this topic lightly does a great disservice to life on the planet, as CFCs——

It being one and half hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 [Exempted Business].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8335/87 and 4997/88 + COR1 on control of chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer; supports the implementation of the Montreal Protocol through Community-wide action; endorses the control of consumption of ozone-depleting substances through control of their overall supply; and encourages continuing action by all sectors of industry on a voluntary basis to reduce use of these substances to the maximum possible extent.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the intervals between stages of Bills brought in upon Ways and Means Resolutions, more than one stage of the Finance (No. 2) Bill may be taken at any sitting of the House. *—[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Education (Rochdale)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Lightbown.]*

1.25 am

Sir Cyril Smith (Rochdale): I am delighted to have the opportunity to fire the first public salvo at national Government level at the proposals now with the Secretary of State for Education and Science to reorganise education in Rochdale—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that if hon. Members wish to discuss matters other than the Adjournment they will do so outside the Chamber.

Sir Cyril Smith: I have no hesitation in urging the Secretary of State to reject the proposals from Rochdale. For the children in my constituency, the proposals will lead to a lowering of standards, a reduction of opportunities and the abolition of choice. What is more, they will do so at an increased cost to the ratepayers.

As I do not consider cost to be the main argument—it is merely a complementary one—I shall deal with it first. Figures ranging from £10 million to £21 million are floating around as representing the cost of reorganisation. Such expenditure inevitably adds up to £1 million a year to the revenue estimates—to educate fewer children in fewer buildings. That extra cost comes not from more books, materials or even teachers, but basically from interest on capital borrowed and the repayment of loan charges.

I said that the scheme now with the Minister was not properly costed—a fact which was openly admitted at a recent public meeting by the chairman of the Rochdale education committee. That leads me to my first important submission. It is extremely doubtful whether the scheme presented to the Minister meets the requirements of procedure laid down in DES guidelines. The proposals are procedurally flawed in other respects, too—most notably in the manner in which the consultation process was practised. No alternative scheme was put before parents in the 12 months before the submission to the Minister. Any alternatives that were put to them were put in 1981 or 1982.

The consultative process was a sham. The authority informed parents; it did not consult. Parents were often denied the right to vote at meetings, and the propaganda issued before the meetings at considerable expense to the ratepayers blatantly promoted only one scheme of education in Rochdale. Such meetings as were held were conducted not at a formative stage of the proposals but after the local education authority was firmly committed. Despite parental objections, no significant changes were made to the plan.

As required by the procedures, the local authority has received a document of objection to the plan from CARE, a spontaneously organised body of parents who formed themselves into a voluntary organisation to promote a campaign against the reorganisation of education—CARE. The organisation has done a superb job, and I commend its objection document to the Minister, who will receive a copy from the local authority. It is quite a substantial document. It is now with the local authority, and I hope that the Minister will ensure that CARE is allowed to see a copy of the authority's reply to it. The Minister will be able to read in the objection document

some of the disgusting procedures that went on at some of the so-called consultative meetings. I urge him, on receipt of it, to look at examples of Chawfield, Sidall Moor and Calder hill schools.

The chairman of the education committee in Rochdale, who is paid a salary by one education authority and then released for two or three days a week, on salary, to act as chairman of the Rochdale education authority, with another fee of thousands of pounds, is on record as saying:

"The people who attend the meetings are those who are opposed to the proposals."

Perhaps that explains why parents were not allowed to vote at the meetings that were held. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure me that the objections submitted by CARE will be given full emphasis in his consideration and, further, that he will agree to meet a deputation of the parents, led by me, before a decision on the proposals is taken, presumably in the autumn.

My first submission is that the proposals have resulted from a highly suspect procedure and improper consultation and that they have not been properly costed and do not provide alternatives. I hope that the Minister will duly consider that aspect of the submission.

I was a member of the Rochdale education committee for 23 years, and its chairman for over six years. It has a superb education record. I am not anxious to see that record washed away because of political ideology at worst, and the desire for change, any change, at best. The existing system has much to commend it, and I see no reason to change it. Uniformity of system throughout the borough is not an adequate reason.

Let us look at one school—Calder hill—which has a superb record. I have selected it because all the parents there overwhelmingly rejected the proposals, in another document, which has been sent to the local authority, and which the Secretary of State will also soon receive and be able to read. I hope, again, that the Minister can assure me that that submission, from the staff-parents association at Calder hill school, will have his full consideration, and that the parents from that school will be able to meet him. We would love to welcome the Minister to the school.

The subjects available in the school at fifth and sixth form level number close on 30. The external examination pass rate is well above the national average. There is an open sixth form of 325 students, of whom, last year, 105 went on to the upper sixth. Of those 105, 75 pupils gained entry to various universities and similar institutions to read for degree courses. Seven of those went to Oxford.

That is a wonderful record, and it includes subjects such as business studies, chemistry, creative art, drama, economics, English, Urdu, electronics, geology, history, computer technology, statistics and many others. Despite that record of achievement and that breadth of success, in the proposals submitted to the Minister is the proposal to destroy it. That is an act of sheer criminal vandalism of the worst order.

The total abolition of sixth forms in our schools is the most disgraceful part of the scheme because it denies choice in the future. There are young people at 16 who can best succeed in a college-like discipline, but others need the informal adult, but none the less more formal, sixth form discipline in secondary school. All my experience teaches me that that is a fact. This scheme will deny that choice to all the 16-plus young people wishing to continue in education in Rochdale, because the only choice that will be offered to them will be a tertiary college.

I stress that it is hoped that that tertiary college can be provided at what is now De La Salle training college. Young people from my constituency will be bussed several miles to the site of that college. I stress again that it is hoped that the tertiary college will be there, because, if the site is not obtained by the local education authority, the proposed tertiary college will have to be on a split site, and that would be an even bigger education disaster for the students.

I understand that even if the De La Salle site is obtained, a split site will still be necessary for the proposed tertiary college for up to 10 years. During that interim period the education of 16-plus youngsters will be adversely affected. Those young people—like all other young people—cannot live the years again during which they will have been denied educational opportunity. If De La Salle is not ultimately available, presumably new proposals would again have to be submitted for consultation at local level.

I have used Calder hill as an example, but other schools have excellent sixth forms which can be equally defended and which, too, will be destroyed.

In Rochdale we have the middle school system. Those schools do and have done a superb job. It is a wilful waste of expertise and experience to abandon such a system merely to impose a uniform scheme of an extremely different type. The CARE document excellently argues the case for middle schools, and I again commend it to the Minister's attention. In his consideration he should not overlook the fact that those middle schools do the foundation work of the upper schools.

I understand that last year Her Majesty's inspectorate reported on those middle schools in Rochdale, but the report has not been published. As we have some grounds for having an idea of what that report contains, we welcome the publication of the HMI comments.

The local education authority proposes to establish 12 schools for 11 to 16-year-olds. Six of those schools will fail to reach six-form entry. That is despite the fact that the local education authority's own study showed that a six-form entry school, let alone a smaller one, would be more restricted in the range of options available for individual students.

This is an Adjournment debate, so the clock is always against one. The case against those proposals is overwhelming. I have merely touched on the basic outline of that opposition. I say again that I hope that the Minister will agree to meet us in a few weeks' time for further discussion.

We have a Minister who constantly and publicly declares his belief in parental power. I now urge him to put his money where his mouth is. If he does that, he will reject these proposals because parents wish him to do so. He will reject them because they abolish excellence and choice, because they are economic nonsense, are based on political dogma and ignore what is in the best educational interests of children in my constituency.

The Minister's decision within the last 14 days on Cronkeyshaw primary school in my constituency gave great joy to parents, and I am grateful to him for it, but we have had a stupid reaction from some councillors, who cannot be grateful in defeat—a fact demonstrated by some of them on previous occasions. They are now threatening to punish the children by refusing to repair the roof of the school. I believe that at last week's town council meeting the chairman said that the decision was based, not on

[Sir Cyril Smith]

educational grounds, but on the personal relationship between the Minister and me. The chairman would have a shock if she saw some of the letters that I have written to the Minister in the past few months.

I warn the Department that it is dealing with a petulant chairman and an authority a few of whose councillors are not in the first flight. One of them joined us recently from West Bromwich or Southampton—somewhere like that. I am sure that the Minister can be relied upon to back his judgment, and that of the parents, and to reject the proposals before him. I join the parents in inviting the Minister to reject those proposals. I commend to him the documents produced by CARE and the parent-teacher association of Calder Hill school, and I look forward to the ongoing dialogue which I am sure the Minister will promise in his reply.

1.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) on obtaining this Adjournment debate on the proposed changes to primary and secondary schools, and to first, middle and upper schools, in Rochdale. I am aware that the issue is stimulating much local interest and discussion. I know the area, because I am a native of south-east Lancashire. We are grateful to see in the Chamber, supporting the hon. Member for Rochdale, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), and, in support of me, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder). We have quite an attendance for this Adjournment debate.

On a more personal note, may I say how delighted I was when the hon. Gentleman recently joined the ranks of the knights of the shires. I am sure that it gave him as much pleasure as it gave to his friends on both sides of the Chamber.

Perhaps the most important challenges to the education system in the late 1980s and 1990s are the need to improve standards of achievement among all pupils of all abilities, to improve the quality and range of the curriculum and the effectiveness of its delivery, and to secure the best possible return from the resources that are found for education.

For many schools, internal changes in the organisation of classes or the distribution of teaching duties will be needed. Planning is called for and some hard decisions will need to be taken by local authorities everywhere. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has asked all local education authorities to examine how the education service can provide a more effective response to national and local needs and circumstances, and to undertake systematic reviews of their school provision, area by area.

Although financial considerations are important, above all, local education authorities must take full account of educational considerations when planning changes. New arrangements must offer an education better suited to the needs of pupils of all abilities than the ones that they replace. They must also reflect, wherever possible, parental preferences for schools of particular types. The viability of a school does not depend solely on the number of pupils. It depends on the age range and character of the school, its ethos, the quality and balance of expertise of its teachers and its non-teacher support, links with neighbouring schools, the fitness for purpose of its building and the extent to which all those can be maintained.

That is the background against which the Rochdale LEA has examined school provision within the borough. Let me explain the standard set of procedures that come into play when a local education authority wishes to change the organisation or pattern of provision in its schools. Those procedures are laid down by sections 12 to 16 of the Education Act 1980.

Briefly, the requirements are that when a local education authority or, in certain circumstances, the providers of a voluntary school wish to establish, discontinue or alter the size or character of a school they must publish proposals explaining their intentions. During the two-month period following publication it is open to interested parties to submit objections to the proposals. If such objections are made, if the Secretary of State has given appropriate notice to the local education authority, or if the school concerned is a voluntary school, the proposals fall to the Secretary of State to decide and may not be implemented without his approval.

On 13 April this year the Rochdale education authority and the Manchester diocesan council for education published statutory proposals to replace the existing mixed pattern of primary, first, middle, secondary and upper schools in the borough with a system of primary and secondary schools, with provision for children aged 16 to 19 being made in a tertiary college, as the hon. Gentleman said. I understand that those proposals have attracted a number of objections, which the Rochdale authority will shortly be required to send to us, together with its comments on them.

When the Secretary of State is deciding proposals to reorganise schools, he is under a general duty to act fairly. In other words, he must judge each proposal or set of proposals on its merits, taking into account the arguments of those making the proposals and the views of those objecting to them.

I know that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it is important for the Secretary of State to avoid pre-judging the issues where such proposals are concerned. He will not, therefore, expect me to say anything about the particular reorganisation that is the subject of this debate. I know he will accept my assurance that I have listened carefully to what has been said tonight and that his points will be taken into account, along with any other representations that we may receive before a decision is reached on these proposals.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I would be prepared to meet deputations about the proposals. He knows that the answer is yes and that I shall be happy to meet deputations when dates and times can be arranged between us. I am conscious of the fact that I have met the hon. Gentleman many times and that our arrangements have always been worked out amicably. I thank him for the tenor and tone of the debate and for the way in which he put forward his arguments on behalf of his constituents, some of whom are much nearer to us than they might have been a little while ago.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

1. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has recently met the chairman of British Shipbuilders to discuss North East Shipbuilders Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I last saw John Lister on Thursday 7 July. North East Shipbuilders was among the subjects that we discussed.

Mr. Clay: The Minister will be aware that hundreds of lay-offs are to take place in the next few weeks because of the situation at NESL. Does he agree with Mr. Lister, the chairman, that the immediate hope for the yard is the Cuban order? If so, will he immediately give the intervention fund subsidy and suitable credit arrangements, rather than insist on privatisation first? The Minister's insistence and ideological obsession over privatisation are causing uncertainty and delay and could lose the one order that could save the yard. Will he now agree to the intervention fund and let us clinch the Cuban order? We can talk about privatisation and takeover later.

Mr. Clarke: Negotiations are continuing on the Danish contract, but I accept that, because of the unfortunate situation, substantial lay-offs appear to be forthcoming in Sunderland and are likely to take place over the next few weeks.

We do not yet know how much the Cubans would pay for any ships that they bought and we cannot say whether the Cuban order would be likely to occupy all the yards in Sunderland. I made it clear that we would give intervention fund support at an acceptable cost to the taxpayer, but we are not in a position to do that at the moment. It is likely that the proposition will be attractive only if we can find a suitable private sector purchaser.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Has not the nationalised shipbuilding industry lost well over £1 billion over the last decade? Is it not also a fact that the industry's decline in this country from controlling over one third of the world market to controlling just a paltry 1·5 per cent. has been due to excessively high wage demands, thus pricing British shipbuilding out of the world market? Is there not also huge over-capacity in the industry?

Mr. Clarke: The decline has been due to a combination of features, including the last point made by my hon. Friend. There is a vast excess of shipbuilding capacity throughout the world, compared with any likely demand for ships from purchasers. For a variety of reasons, British Shipbuilders has made heavy losses, well above the intervention fund support that European rules allow us to give it. It would be reckless for contracts to be placed in yards on unacceptable terms to the taxpayer, with the likelihood that the British taxpayer would pay more than the Cuban for the resulting ships.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister realise that the industry has been hugely slimmed down and that what remains of shipbuilding skills on the Wear and the Tyne is of great potential importance to this country? It would be industrial vandalism if the Minister did not safeguard the industry's future either in this case—as he does not appear to be doing sufficiently—or in the case of the Tyne, after the order announced on Monday.

Mr. Clarke: Some shipbuilding is doing extremely well. The order won by Yarrow earlier this week was very good news on Clydeside. The shipbuilding industry is slimmed down, as it is in the rest of western Europe and the far east. The yards that will survive are those that have realistic prospects of continuing to find customers at an acceptable cost to the taxpayer. The taxpayer has proved his willingness to put money into British Shipbuilders when there is a worthwhile proposition to pursue.

Mr. Gould: Is the Minister aware that if, for reasons of dogma and because the yard is in public ownership, he refuses to provide intervention fund assistance and, as a consequence, the Cuban order is lost and the yard has to close, he will not be forgiven for that act of vandalism? Would it not make sense to secure the order first and then decide the question of ownership, if the Government's obsession with privatisation dictates that that is a real question? May we have an assurance from the Minister that the House will have an opportunity to call him to account for his part in this quite unnecessary drama before the House rises for the summer recess?

Mr. Clarke: The Cubans have not yet placed an order and no price has been negotiated with them for those ships. If the Cuban order were obtained, it would not occupy the whole yard at Sunderland. My reservations about the prospects for the Cuban order are based, not on dogma, but on the fact that the last time British Shipbuilders built ships for Cuba it lost between 12 and 17 per cent. on the cost over and above the intervention fund support that we then gave for that order. I know that the Labour Government went in for a notorious Polish ship deal shortly before the 1979 election. The Government have poured money into British Shipbuilders, but we must do so on a common sense basis when we know what the cost is likely to be.

North-West

2. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the role and extent of foreign investment in the economy of the north-west.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): There are over 600 overseas

owned firms operating in the north-west, making a major contribution to the region's employment and output. In addition, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, new inward investment brings wider benefits through innovation in products, technologies and management practices, as well as generating additional demand for local sub-contractors and component suppliers.

Mr. Butler: With 75 American companies in Warrington-Runcorn alone, does that not provide much-needed employment and wealth in the north-west, and should that not be encouraged rather than narrow mindedly dismissed?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is, as ever, right in drawing attention to the fact that the north-west is a success story. In particular, Warrington-Runcorn in his constituency is the jewel in that success story. I congratulate him on the work that he has done to encourage further investment in that area.

Mr. James Lamond: If the Minister is so keen on inward investment, why does he not give a little more encouragement to initiatives such as that taken by Oldham metropolitan borough council, which is organising a trade mission to China, but which has received little support from the Government despite the desperate need to bring investment and jobs to the area?

Mr. Atkins: As a senior and distinguished Opposition Member, the hon. Gentleman will know that the organisation called INWARD is well involved in encouraging inward investment in Britain. It is not difficult to go to China to encourage inward investment. Preston borough council, which is also Labour-controlled, recently sent a delegation to do just that. If the hon. Gentleman has particular difficulties in relation to Oldham with which I am not immediately familiar, and he cares to write to me, I shall be more than happy to look into the possibilities to which he draws attention.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend will be aware that foreign investment brings greater employment. He may also be aware that unemployment in my constituency is now down to about 7·5 per cent. Does he agree that if Opposition Members truly wish to encourage more enterprise and jobs in the north-west they should concentrate on talking about the positive aspects of the north-west, instead of the negative, which they so often portray?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. The north-west is booming at the moment. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have plenty of examples to demonstrate that fact. If the Opposition drew the same attention to it as do my hon. Friend and many of my other hon. Friends from the north-west, the virtues and strengths of the north-west could provide an even better future.

Mr. Alton: Is not a properly trained and skilled work force one of the keys to attracting more inward investment to the north-west? Therefore, does the Minister agree that it will be disadvantageous to our prospects of attracting new industry if the employment training initiatives are turned away by some local authorities in the north-west, particularly Liverpool, where some £30 million-worth of Government funds and some 16,000 employment training places are at risk as a result of the turning away of training opportunities?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent point in his own way. I do not have particular responsibility for the training initiative, but the hon. Gentleman is right. I and many other Members of Parliament from the north-west think that the work force there is one of the best and most flexible in Britain. Given the right training, management and encouragement, it can do anything that it sets out to achieve.

Post Office Counters

4. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to respond to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on Post Office Counters.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Post Office will be producing an initial response to the findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission within three to four months of the date of publication of the report. I will then consider that response and report to the House.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Chancellor accept that there is wide scope for the expansion of services at Post Office Counters within existing services and in the provision of new facilities? Why does he not welcome such initiative and enterprise by the public sector, as he would undoubtedly do if the same enterprise and initiative were being shown by the private sector?

Mr. Clarke: I hope to have a further discussion with the chairman of the Post Office and some of his colleagues about that very subject this afternoon if other matters do not intervene and delay the meeting. We accept that it is right for the management of counters to take a more commercial approach and look for other activities which may be brought into the Counters business. We must ensure that the result will be fair competition with other private sector competitors and that we are not needlessly extending the Post Office, with its cross subsidy, into areas where that is not necessary.

Mr. Key: As my right hon. and learned Friend will no doubt be aware, there is considerable concern in rural areas about Post Office Counters management of rural sub-post offices. Does he agree that the only way to ensure that sub-post offices continue to exist is for people to use those sub-post offices and the village shop usually associated with them? Will he also agree that it would be helpful if new initiatives could be taken, like that at Laverstock near Salisbury, where the local pub has taken on the business of the sub-post office?

Mr. Clarke: The Government are entirely committed to the maintenance of the sub-post office network in rural areas. I have a rural constituency and I agree that it is right to remind the residents of villages that they should use the local post office and associated store if they want it to remain. We are constantly on the lookout for imaginative ways in which to strengthen the rural sub-post office network. Anything that increases the prospect of the network's survival will be welcome.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that many years ago the Prime Minister used to work in a little shop in Grantham in which cross-subsidisation used to take place? That shop was owned by Alderman Roberts, who did not believe in Sunday trading——

Mr. Speaker: Order. But was it a post office?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. In the corner of that little entrepreneurial outfit there was a post office. In those days the Prime Minister, along with her father, used to believe in the public sector and milked it if necessary.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has studied the biography of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister more closely than I have. Off the cuff I am not sure whether Alderman Roberts ran a sub-post office. I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, together with other members of the Government, is committed to the maintenance of the sub-post office network. We are encouraging the Post Office to take a more commercial view of the management of the network, which will enhance the prospects and future of all the offices.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Post Office's insistence that a rural post office should be a full mile from another post office can be unduly restrictive and cause hardship? For example, at Cabus in my constituency the only suitable premises, a newsagents, is 0·8 of a mile from the nearest post office, but many elderly people must struggle a long distance to get to the existing post office. Will he consider bringing the problem of the mile restriction to the attention of those who run the counter services?

Mr. Clarke: Depending on events, I might have the opportunity to raise that matter with the chairman of the Post Office this afternoon. It is a matter for him. I am sure that he will take steps to ensure that sensible rules are applied which improve the prospect of survival of rural post offices and their continued contribution to the network.

Mr. Stott: The Chancellor of the Duchy will be aware that among the largest customers of the Post Office counter services are the 2 million people with individual Girobank accounts. In addition, Girobank has large corporate accounts which also use the post office counters. Recipients of DHSS pay and unemployment benefit also use the counters. Will the right hon. Gentleman give an absolute guarantee that whoever buys Girobank when it is privatised will honour the five-year contract that the Post Office board has negotiated with Girobank for the continued use of Post Office Counters?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, I will. Any purchaser will be bound by the contract that has been freely negotiated between the Counters business and Girobank.

Sir Anthony Grant: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of the Post Office, will he raise the subject of security for the people who work in sub-post offices, who are at risk from criminal assaults? In my constituency there have been the most appalling attacks on sub-post offices in the rural areas, one of which involved a most horrific murder.

Mr. Clarke: Again, I will undertake to raise that point with the chairman. That is a serious problem for the Post Office, because sometimes substantial sums of cash are handled in quite remote rural areas and the Post Office must help sub-postmasters to protect themselves against risk.

Manufactured Goods

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest balance of trade in manufactured goods.

9. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative trade deficit in manufactures so far in 1988.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): In the five months ended May, there was an estimated deficit on trade in manufactures of £5·2 billion.

Mr. Canavan: What excuse does the Minister have this month for the ever-worsening deficit in manufactures and the worst-ever deficit in overall trade? As the official Budget forecast of a £4 billion overall trade deficit by the end of this year has already been exceeded, is it not about time the Government gave us a revised estimate, or are they too ashamed to admit that their's is the most deplorable record of any Government in history?

Mr. Clark: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has stated that he will issue a revised estimate. Over 70 per cent. of the deficit is accounted for by increased consumer spending. That is a function of high earnings and a raised standard of living. We know that the Labour party objects to that and that it lost the last three general elections.

Mr. Allen: The Minister will be aware that his manufacturing industry policies have decimated manufacturing in Nottingham, North. There have been job losses at Plessey, Boots, Raleigh, Players, and the closure of Thorn EMI and three neighbouring pits. Are they what the Minister would call the problems of success? When will unemployment in my constituency of Nottingham, North be reduced to 1979 levels?

Mr. Clark: The decimation of manufacturing industry is a pure myth. Since 1981 our share of world trade has remained absolutely constant, and world trade continues to expand.

Mr. Roger King: Does my hon. Friend agree that British manufacturing has never been in a finer state? The magnificent order that British Aerospace won with Saudi Arabia, for a huge sum in the region of £15 billion, is further evidence that we are producing the finest products at the right price to do the job that people want.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Further testimony to the vigour of British manufacturing industry is offered by the readiness of foreign private sector capital to come here and start manufacturing operations. That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Leader of the Opposition only last week, just before he ran away to Africa for a fortnight's holiday.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is undoubtedly true that British manufacturing industry is now doing better at home than it has done for many a long year? However, companies such as British Aerospace, Jaguar, Plessey and many others are finding their margins being squeezed because of the high rate of the pound. We must not go back to the days when we thought that a high pound was good for the country. We need a competitive pound, so that industry can export and compete with foreign manufacturers.

Mr. Clark: I do not know what my hon. Friend means by "competitive pound". The only solution that the Labour party has ever offered to that synthetic problem is continuously to depreciate the exchange rate. The most successful exporting countries are those that have the strongest exchange rates.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: What will the £5·2 billion deficit be at an annualised rate? What will be the consequences for British manufacturing industry of the massive deflation that is now beginning?

Mr. Clark: I have already told the House that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will issue a new forecast. Why does the hon. Gentleman not have the honesty to recommend to the House the Socialist solution to the gap, which is the return of exchange controls and import controls, with all that they mean for confidence in investment and consumer choice?

COCOM Control List

6. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he plans any new initiatives to reduce and simplify the COCOM control list.

Mr. Alan Clark: Senior officials from COCOM member countries met last January and agreed steps to streamline control lists and improve the general effectiveness of COCOM. Work on the implementation of those steps continues.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my hon. Friend aware of the dramatic increase in American high technology exports to the Soviet bloc? Does he accept, from the evidence that I recently sent him of the experience of my constituent, Mr. Andrew Kuzan, who is now in an American gaol, that United States customs officials are not adverse to setting up and entrapping British exporters of equipment that is now obsolete but which remains on the COCOM list? Will he raise that matter with his American COCOM colleagues as soon as possible?

Mr. Clark: The particular case that my hon. Friend raises is still under investigation. I agree with him that there are elements within it that seem unsatisfactory. However, as both he and the House know, because I have said this before, the Government are anxious to reduce the scope and impact of the COCOM list. We have introduced a rolling review whereby one half of the list is examined in two parts every year, and we have had some success in deleting certain items from it.

Mr. Dalyell: Which are the "unsatisfactory" elements?

Mr. Clark: One must always be on one's guard that an international agreement is not manipulated by interested parties to gain commercial advantage at the expense of other parties who are more scrupulous in their observation of it.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am not reading. Does my hon. Friend agree that when exporting electronic goods to the Soviet Union, and importing them from the Soviet Union into Europe, we must safeguard against dumping of such goods by the Soviet Union? One lesson to be learnt by British and European manufacturers is that they should make full use of the European Court to prevent such dumping.

Mr. Clark: There is something in what my hon. Friend says, but the question of dumping is entirely separate from strategic considerations affecting items included on the COCOM list and their export.

Regional Industrial Activity

7. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to introduce new measures to increase industrial activity in Britain's regions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department's enterprise initiative, launched earlier this year, is specifically designed to encourage enterprise and economic growth in all parts of the country.

Mr. Murphy: Bearing in mind that we now have the lowest and least generous industrial regional incentives for many years, with the completion of the Channel tunnel and the introduction of the single European market in 1992, will not south-east England become even more congested and overheated at the expense of other regions?

Mr. Clarke: Too many people in the regions place excessive emphasis on automatic subsidies to capital investment as an instrument of regional policy. We have abandoned the automatic regional development grant and are making very good use of selective regional assistance in order to encourage firms that would not otherwise become involved. In south Wales, the Valleys initiative of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is giving a further boost to development there. South Wales is one of the parts of the United Kingdom that are reviving most strongly, with a very encouraging level of investment, many new jobs and steadily declining unemployment.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most effective ways of encouraging regional industrial development is by improving the transport infrastructure available to industry? Does he further agree that the biggest boost he can give west Yorkshire industry at the moment is to support the creation of a freight depot at Stourton and rapid transit from it, through the Channel tunnel, into Europe?

Mr. Clarke: I shall certainly draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, because I agree that the right transport infrastructure is essential. One thing that has happened is that northern England's economy has revived so rapidly that all of us can see the result of that in traffic congestion. There is a great demand for more railway freight services, and we must rapidly respond to it.

Dr. Reid: Do not the Scottish steelworks make a major contribution to industrial activity? I put to the Minister the point that I made yesterday. The House has been misled by discrepancies in statements made by the Minister and by Sir Robert Scholey. Will the Minister take the opportunity today to make sure that the House is no longer misled, and will he confirm or deny Sir Robert's assertion that, some time ago, the Government were advised by him of the "probability"—I use Sir Robert's word—of the closure of

the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig? If that information was given to the Minister, why was it suppressed and not given to the House of Commons in the past few months?

Mr. Clarke: I have looked again at what I said in December, and at what Sir Robert Scholey said. I can see no inconsistency, and I do not understand what all the fuss is about in Scotland. In December I gave the House the forecast of the British Steel Corporation that, subject to market conditions, there was a continuing need for steel to be made at Ravenscraig for at least the next seven years. I also told the House that there was a problem with hot strip mill capacity, and that I therefore could not say the same about the hot strip mill, but that it would certainly be required until the end of this year. After that, as I made clear, everything will depend on market conditions. It is for the chairman and management of BSC to make their judgments about those conditions. As far as I am aware, BSC has as yet made no plans about the hot strip mill, and I do not imagine that it will do so until it sees the state of the market next year.

Mr. Oppenheim: Surely the best new measure for the regions would be to alter the employment policy of the Transport and General Workers Union, which seems to put employment in the prosperous south-east above jobs for the unemployed in Dundee—although Opposition Members still seem keen to accept the union's sponsorship.

Mr. Clarke: I would add to my hon. Friend's legitimate complaint the union's entirely irresponsible attitude towards the Government's employment training schemes for the unemployed. It seems only too anxious to frustrate the Government's concern to help the unemployed to obtain the new jobs that we are creating. I should have thought that it is only the union's role as a kingmaker in the Labour party that stops it being denounced by more people on that side.

Dr. Godman: Industrial activity in my region of Scotland would be enhanced if the Government responded sympathetically to the floating hotel project being negotiated by Scott Lithgow. What is the present state of the negotiations with the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Clarke: I can add nothing to what the hon. Gentleman already knows. We have well-established rules applying to shipbuilding projects, under which intervention fund support is available to certain yards and always has been. We also insist that any Government support must be based on economic common sense and at a price acceptable to the taxpayer. As far as I am aware, no negotiations on the Scott Lithgow project have yet come to a head.

Mr. Sackville: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the economic attractions of the north-west have never been greater, and that the massive investment in fibreglass making by Pittsburgh Plate Glass near Hindley Green is a good example of an American company realising that? Does he agree that the only thing likely to stop that favourable trend is the emergence of further loony Leftism among local councils?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that my Department gave considerable help to Pittsburgh Plate Glass. I agree about the attractions of the north-west, where we find that the take-up of the new enterprise initiative is higher than would be expected. In view of the number of eligible firms, there is a great deal of inward investment. We need to get rid of the last councils that remain hostile to this kind of investment and take foolish actions that discourage investors from coming in.

Mr. Salmond: Would the Minister care to address the impact of the dismemberment of Ravenscraig, on industrial activity? How can he argue that the continuing anti-Ravenscraig bias shown by Sir Robert Scholey is in any way compatible with his claim that Ravenscraig is somehow in genuine competition with other steel plants? Does the Minister really believe that, through privatisation, the Government can wash their hands of such a disgraceful betrayal?

Mr. Clarke: I can never understand why Scottish interests so often lead to descriptions such as "the dismemberment of Ravenscraig" when nothing of the kind has happened. In December I gave a careful assessment based on British Steel's own forecasts of its needs and of the market place. That made our position clear, and nothing has changed since then. We can say only that the future of the hot strip mill is guaranteed until the end of this year. Thereafter it must depend on the market place and on British Steel's need to provide hot strip products in the most cost-effective and competitive way.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. and learned Freind agree that the upward trend in imports of capital goods, which accounted for nearly all the deficit last month and which adds to our productive capacity, is the best way in which our industry can expand to meet the great demand that is currently being met by imports, and that it will spread industrial prosperity through the region?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. Much of the deficit to which my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade referred a moment ago is accounted for by imports of capital goods, which are part of industry's investment. Many consumer imports are attracted here by the growth of our market. There is nothing to worry about in that deficit, much of which is the inevitable result of the continued expansion of this country's economy. In the old days the trade deficit was based largely on public sector deficits, which is why they caused so much more concern than this deficit ought to cause now.

Mr. Caborn: Has the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had time to read the latest publication of the Institute of Civil Engineers, which deals with urban regeneration? If so, does he agree that, like many other reports from both academic and professional bodies, it suggests that there is now a real call for planning and regional co-ordination, something which this Government have not done?

As the Minister responsible for the inner cities and the regions, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House what lead is given by the Government in moving their Departments to the regions and encouraging research establishments to locate in the regions? So far as the regions are concerned, what input has the right hon. and learned Gentleman had in the work of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which has been of real concern to many in the north? Will he now deal with industrial regeneration and stop playing about with the cosmetics and with glossy pamphlets?

Mr. Clarke: There has not only been a great deal of co-ordination, but a great deal of decision-making and action in relation to urban regeneration. The hon. Gentleman could visit many of our major cities in which he would see the physical and other signs of the revivals that are taking place in our inner-city areas.

I agree that the costs of maintaining such a large Civil Service in London will inevitably lead to sensible decisions to relocate parts of the Government machine outside London. Indeed, that is being done and I expect the majority of my Department of Trade and Industry to be located outside London shortly, the major move being that of the Patent Office to Newport in south Wales. I know that other Departments are contemplating similar moves.

On the question of industrial activity, we have already described the way in which industrial investment is going to south Wales, the north-west and other parts of the country. The forecasts of the Confederation of British Industry for manufacturing investment in this country are extremely high and expect a growth of about 18 per cent. this year, with continued growth in investment into 1989.

Transport (Inner Cities)

10. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning transport in relation to inner city policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Inner city transport is, of course, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but transport issues are raised from time to time in discussions I have with inner city business men.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend concede that the infrastructure of the north-west is second to none in the United Kingdom and that, coupled with many other excellent qualities, that wonderful infrastructure is attracting inward investment to the north-west and to towns such as Oldham and Rochdale? Will he also concede that many companies—not only international companies, but many from the expensive south—are coming to the north-west, an area which historically has always produced the lion's share of the wealth of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend makes his case perhaps better than I could. As a fellow north-west Member of Parliament, I can only agree exactly with what he has said. We have a superb infrastructure and there is every reason why not only the transport successes of the north-west but its many other successes will continue to attract many people to the north-west, which, as he rightly says, is the jewel in the crown of manufacturing in this country.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister accept that transport of any kind is important for industrial development, and that in that sense the A1 and M1 can no longer cope with the desired capacity of traffic and there is a need to extend the M11 up to the north-east, across the Humber bridge? Does he also accept that it would help the development of the region to abolish estuary tolls in general, and those on the Humber bridge in particular?

Mr. Atkins: The matters that the hon. Gentleman raises are largely for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. We are in constant touch with our colleagues in that Department to make them aware of the necessity for industry and commerce to use the roads to a greater extent. Obviously, the Department will have to examine the pressures on those roads in the normal course of events.

Airbus A320

11. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the manufacturing technology employed in the production of the Airbus A320.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The latest developments in materials and manufacturing technology are employed on Airbus production to achieve benefits in terms of costs, weight, strength and ease of manufacture.

Mr. Forth: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that helpful answer. Will he expand on it and tell the House whether he is satisfied that progress is being made on achieving more effective control over the manufacturing process of that product, given that it is spread over a number of different locations? Can he respond to the recent investigations into the production process of Airbus and give us some encouraging news about cost control and increased future competitiveness?

Mr. Clarke: Every time that I have attended an Airbus Ministers' meeting I have pressed the case for better management and financial control of the Airbus project. I believe that the four partner Governments and the four partner companies are broadly agreed. We have endorsed the report that we commissioned from the so-called four wise men—one leading industrialist from each of the four countries. We have another meeting in September, when I hope that the companies will report to us on progress and confirm that they intend to set up new and much better methods of running the project by 1 January next year.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the fly-by-wire technology employed on the A320 is not only the most advanced in the world, and has contributed to the fact that that aircraft received the most advance orders of any civil aircraft since the war, but that it was British-inspired? Does he further agree that the decision of British Airways to put the A320 back into service shortly after the recent crash fully confirmed the technological safety of that system and that all passengers should be reassured that the technology is well proven, sound and tested?

Mr. Clarke: The A320 is certainly the market leader in its field. I agree that it has the most advanced technology of any of its competitors. The Airbus products are the next generation of aeroplanes, and some of its competitors are still producing face-lifted versions of older aeroplanes using older technology. We are awaiting the inspectors' report on the tragic French accident. I cannot possibly anticipate that, but I share my hon. Friend's confidence that it is likely to prove that the technology of the aircraft is as safe and spectactular as we believe it to be.

Mr. Dalyell: Could the curious among us be told what factors led the Minister to take the initiative in talking to the management about management control? Is that not rather unusual? It may be justified, but will he explain to the House why he did it?

Mr. Clarke: The Government do not believe that the best way to build a modern technological product is by having the management in the hands of what is, in effect, an enormous committee of four Ministers from four different Governments and representatives of four different companies, all collaborating in partnership with a selling organisation based in France and detached from the remainder of the management. We want a new management structure, but I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that it is not my intention that I or any other Minister should take over commercial management decisions. We want managers to take those decisions, and we want the managers to have the right authority and the right information to run the project in the ordinary way.

Industrial Lasers

12. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the potential market for industrial lasers; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. John Butcher): The Department commissioned a study of the industrial laser sector in 1986 and has access to assessments made under Eurolaser, the Eureka programme, to promote the development of high power lasers and their use for materials processing in manufacturing industry. However, it is principally for industry to assess the market potential for industrial lasers.

Mr. Marlow: I thank my hon. Friend for that wideranging, full and eloquently delivered answer. Has he the statistics with which he could illuminate the statement that he has just made?

Mr. Butcher: Yes, Sir. About £260 million was assessed as the total market for industrial lasers two years ago. I am advised that that is growing by about 18 per cent. per annum.

Northern Region

13. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will next be visiting the Northern council of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss industrial progress in the northern region.

Mr. Atkins: I have no present plans to visit the northern council of the CBI, although I regularly meet northern businesses. During my most recent visit to the region I was encouraged to hear business people themselves confirming the report of industrial progress and prospects for further growth which have figured in successive CBI surveys.

Ms. Quin: Will the Minister seek an urgent meeting with both sides of industry in the north to discuss the proposed closure of Marconi Radar in my constituency? Does he agree that the loss of 450 high-quality jobs such as those, and the decision by Marconi to concentrate production in the south-east, represent a trend opposite to what we wish to see? What action will he take to ensure that the jobs are not lost to the northern region?

Mr. Atkins: I am extremely concerned to hear that Marconi has decided to reduce or close capacity at Gateshead and Chelmsford. However, those are matters for the company management, which is best placed to judge the market, or lack of it, for particular products.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that if he goes to the north-east to meet the northern council of the CBI, the Northern Regional Association of Councils or the Teesside chamber of commerce in my area, he will find nothing but expansion, growing job expectations, declining unemployment and the regeneration of the area improving day after day?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend does his area and region a great service by never ceasing to tell us how strongly and how importantly the north-east features in the scheme of things. My hon. Friend is right to say that, although there are still difficulties in the north-east, things are improving. Opposition Members would do better to talk about the successes, rather than continually talking about the weaknesses.

Mr. Radice: May I remind the Minister of the acute shortage of large-scale factory space in the northern region? Can he tell the House what measures he will take to bridge that gap, thereby not holding back the recovery in the northern economy and helping us replace the jobs that have been tragically lost at Marconi and those that will be lost at Swan Hunter as a result of the announcement the day before yesterday?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman and many of his colleagues have rightly and understandably raised the problem of the shortage of factory space in the north-east. He will know that when I answered the Adjournment debate that he raised in the House I said that that was a problem of success. I have received a number of representations and contributions, not least from the hon. Gentleman, whose paper we are considering, and I have discussed the matter, together with my right hon. and noble Friends, with English Estates. We hope to be able to tell the House a little more about progress in the not too distant future.

Mr. Cran: Is my hon. Friend aware that if he consults the regional reports of all the councils of the CBI for the past year, including that for the northern region, he will find that they are couched in terms of unremitting confidence and that the only problems they outline are those associated with growth, such as temporary shortages of labour and so on?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is quite right. There are things happening in the north-east and the northern region that are extremely good for the local and national economy. We have to ensure that that success is built upon. The problems to which hon. Members have referred, such as the shortage of factory space, have to be addressed. I repeat that that, ironically, is a problem of success.

Industrial Competitiveness

14. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how he measures changes in the competitiveness of British industry in the last year; and what comparative information he has for West Germany.

Mr. Butcher: A variety of factors affect the competitiveness of British industry. Price and non-price factors are both important and there is no single measure of competitiveness.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister accept that we are now at least 10 per cent., and probably 15 per cent., less competitive than the West Germans than we were at the beginning of last year? When will Government policy on exchange rates and interest rates do something to help rather than hinder British industry?

Mr. Butcher: As has been said, an appreciating currency has been a trend that German manufacturers have coped with brilliantly over the past two and a half decades. They have concentrated on non-price as well as price factors, and we should do the same. They have concentrated on things such as quality, design, marketing and so on. The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. If we take an independent measure from the IMF, which incorporates movements in exchange rates, productivity and labour costs, we find that on an index of 100 the United Kingdom, compared to West Germany, was at 112 in 1981, 93 in 1984, moving down to 79·6 in 1986 and 72·2 in 1987. Our productivity is improving in great measure.

Mr. Dykes: Jaguar's motor car production is about 49,000 cars. Is my hon. Friend aware that, in Germany, BMW alone produces 490,000 vehicles? Is not one of the ominous realities that, despite the welcome recovery, we remain a low-output economy in leading manufacturing sectors? As my hon. Friend has attested, the Germans have managed with a high-currency policy to build up their industry and output, mainly through massive investment in new assets and innovation in high technology. When is my hon. Friend confident that we shall be able to do the same? Will he join me in setting a target of overtaking Germany, and how many years does he think that that will take?

Mr. Butcher: I ask my hon. Friend to study the policies that were the foundations for the German economic miracle. He should look at the three principles of those policies, which were put together by Euchen and Erhardt, and he will find strong parallels with British domestic policies today.

Mr. Cousins: Is the Minister's complacency not shaken by the fact that industrial production in engineering has fallen by 2 per cent. in the first three months of this year? Does he not realise that it will take us 25 years to catch up with Japan in the number of industrial robots that we have? Is he not aware that in advanced technology industries we fall further and further behind, as was instanced by the closure of Marconi Radar in Gateshead a day ago?

Mr. Butcher: No, I do not accept that for a moment. At long last British industry is showing a real return on capital. There are very healthy trends in investment programmes in crucial sectors. We are hauling in on the lead of some of our major international competitors. To catch up with Germany, we would need to grow at a faster rate than Germany well into the 1990s. I consider that to be a legitimate objective. If we continue with current policies, what has been mooted as a British economic miracle can happen.

Barlow Clowes

15. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will undertake to compensate investors in Barlow Clowes at an early date in respect of any responsibility borne by his Department which may be discovered in the course of the current investigation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): It would be wrong for me to prejudge the outcome of the consideration my right hon. and noble Friend and I shall give to the Barlow Clowes case, including the report of Sir Godfray Le Quesne's inquiry into the facts.

Mr. Day: Is my hon. Friend aware that in 1983, following the intervention of the parliamentary ombudsman in the case of the collapse of Langford Scott—a holder of a Department of Trade and Industry licence, which was a key element in the ombudsman's recommendations that the DTI pay compensation—his Department did, indeed, pay compensation? Will he take account of that precedent in dealing with the case of Barlow Clowes?

Mr. Maude: I am aware of the case to which my hon. Friend referred, but he will understand as well as anyone that no two cases are the same. I do not think that I can add to what I have already said. We shall have to await the outcome of the report and consider what to do then.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Has the Minister read the ombudsman's comments to me on this major scandal? Is he still satisfied that a Department of Trade and Industry inquiry is enough, when at least one other Department may be involved in the scandal? More important still, can he tell me what immediate help he can offer my constituent, Leslie Mullard, who, in his mid-70s, has lost his life savings?

Mr. Maude: The Parliamentary Commissioner has felt unable to comment on the terms of his correspondence with the right hon. Gentleman, as it was written to the right hon. Gentleman in confidence. I was surprised to read reports in today's newspapers that the Parliamentary Commissioner had felt able to conclude that there was an apparent case of maladministration for my Department to answer. I gather that he has since clarified his views in a statement issued earlier today. He stressed that any decision that an investigation is warranted in principle in no way indicates a view as to the merits of the case. Indeed, it could not possibly do so. The Parliamentary Commissioner had not been in contact with my Department at all and the statements by Ministers on which he is reported to have based his view carried no implication of maladministration. It is entirely a matter for the Parliamentary Commissioner whether he investigates individual cases. He is not in any way inhibited from undertaking his own investigation by the independent inquiry that is being undertaken by Sir Godfray Le Quesne.

Mr. Redwood: Is my hon. Friend aware that several leading financial institutions wrote letters to many people encouraging them to invest in Barlow Clowes? Is he further aware that one of my constituents received a letter from the head of marketing of Age Concern, which gave him considerable comfort in becoming an investor in that organisation? Will my hon. Friend give a pledge that the

DTI inquiry will look into the activities of intermediaries, financial institutions and charities, such as Age Concern, in this saga?

Mr. Maude: The activities of intermediaries is obviously an important matter in the investigation and it is certainly an area which has been carefully examined. My hon. Friend will be aware that FIMBRA has already taken steps in respect of two intermediaries which applied for membership of it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does not the principle of compensation in the case of Barlow Clowes have implications for the wider over-the-counter market? Will the Minister reject the comments of Mr. Wilmot, of Harvard Securities, who talked about the loss of one third of an investment portfolio as being acceptable? Is it not clear that the over-the-counter market is just a gigantic con? Will he close it down before many thousands of small investors lose more money that way?

Mr. Maude: It is only fair to say that a good many small companies manage to raise money and create jobs by the over-the-counter market, but it is nevertheless well understood to be a risky form of investment. Those who sell securities on the over-the-counter market make that clear.

Mr. McLoughlin: Has my hon. Friend seen the leader in *The Times* today, and is he aware that it says that his Department's inspectors are good at producing colourful, well-researched reports after the event, but are poor at prevention? What steps will he take to improve his Department's performance on that?

Mr. Maude: One development is that we now have a completely new regime of investor protection, which is being undertaken by organisations outside my Department. Lessons from the developments which have taken place recently will be an important aspect of our considerations. We shall need to look at what happened and what the outcome of the investigations is, and decide what steps we need to take.

Mr. Beith: How many people invested their redundancy money through this organisation and saw their only prospect of a cushion in retirement being lost, relying when they did so on the existence of the DTI's inspection system? Will the Minister take that into account when considering the issue of compensation?

Mr. Maude: I am certainly well aware and, I suspect, better aware that most hon. Members, of exactly how many people invested all their spare money in this company and of the anxiety and distress that has been caused. It is important to make a distinction between the two companies involved: Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers, which was United Kingdom-based and subject to United Kingdom regulation, and Barlow Clowes International, which was Gibraltar-based and not subject to United Kingdom regulation.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend make it absolutely clear to the House that whatever the Parliamentary Commissioner may or may not have said, he would want to ensure that the report of Sir Godfray le Quesne is with him in September or October, so that this matter can be brought to some sort of finalisation as soon as humanly possible?

Mr. Maude: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that these matters move fast, and they are moving fast. The Parliamentary Commissioner may well prefer to wait for Sir Godfray's report before undertaking his investigation, but that matter is entirely for him. He is not in any way inhibited from undertaking his own investigation before then.

Mr. Gould: Is not the Barrow Clowes case yet another instance of the unacceptable face of capitalism? What comfort can the Minister offer the thousands of people, many of whom are retired, with life savings at stake, who relied on his Department's supervision and who suffered calamitous loss as a result? Does he accept that what they require of him is not that he should take refuge in the delaying tactic of a departmental investigation, but an acknowledgement of his Department's responsibility in this matter and its willingness to compensate them for the loss of their life savings, which they have suffered by virtue of his Department's default?

Mr. Maude: It is pretty disgraceful that the hon. Gentleman seeks to exploit the genuine distress that many people have suffered in this way. It is frankly outrageous that he should suggest that my Department is in any way seeking to delay matters. We have been extremely frank. We have set up an independent inquiry headed by someone of great distinction and independence, and for the hon. Gentleman to say that we should give our response to that inquiry at this stage is manifestly absurd. We must wait to see what it says—wait for an authoritative version of what happened—and we shall decide what to do then.

Single Market

18. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives his Department is taking to help small firms understand and take advantage of the legal consequences of the 1992 single European market; and what information he has on the 1992 advertising campaign initiatives in the rest of Europe.

Mr. Maude: Our "Europe Open for Business" campaign aims to encourage firms throughout the country, large and small, to prepare for completion of the single market. About 45 per cent. of all business inquiries we have received on the single market have come from firms with fewer than 20 employees. I understand that only France and Ireland have so far launched major Government awareness campaigns, although I understand that several other countries are planning them.

Mr. Bellingham: I am grateful for that encouraging reply. Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the reasons why unemployment in west Norfolk has almost halved in the past four years has been the effort and contribution made by the small firms sector? Is he also aware that small firms in west Norfolk will not sit back and let 1992 happen? They are already getting geared up to make the most of it. What extra help, assistance and advertising will be given by the small firms service? What effort will it make to help small firms get geared up for 1992?

Mr. Maude: As my hon. Friend said, small firms are already gearing themselves up very well. We shall continue to provide such help as is appropriate for them. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that small

firms, as much as big ones, have a great deal to gain from exploiting the opportunities that the single market will bring, and they must look to their laurels to ensure that they remain, and become more competitive, to meet the challenge that will come from the continent.

Rover Group

3.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Rover Group.

I told the House when I announced the agreement we had reached with British Aerospace for the sale of the Government's shareholding in Rover Group that I would try to return to the House before the summer recess to report further developments.

This morning the European Commission decided the outline terms upon which it would be willing to close its state aid procedure. These terms effectively reduce the amount of the cash injection from the Government into Rover Group to £547 million with the consideration remaining at £150 million, but there would have been important relaxations in the tax conditions. Until lunchtime today, it appeared that British Aerospace was prepared to accept these terms. However, at the last minute it has asked for more time to consider the implications of other conditions attached to the Commission decision. Discussions between British Aerospace and the Government are continuing, and I will report to the House further as soon as I am able.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Is not this brief and astonishing statement an embarrassing confession that the Government have got themselves into an unholy mess—a mess that remains unresolved even at the cost of a humiliating rebuff to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State and of conceding to the EEC control over everything, including the Government's pet privatisation projects, that might still be called British industrial policy?

Does not this mess leave the Government having to answer one or two difficult questions? If British Aerospace were to decide, as now seems in doubt, to go ahead with the reconstructed deal, how is it that the Secretary of State offered it £250 million more than it was prepared to accept? Why was the EEC so much more effective as a negotiator on behalf of the British taxpayer than the Secretary of State? Why was he so profligate with taxpayers' money? Is not this further evidence of how careless the Government are when they dispose of public assets without thought for the taxpayers' interest?

If, on the other hand, British Aerospace shareholders refuse to back the deal, what do the Government have to put in its place? After the Government have put all their eggs in this one basket, where is the fallback position for which we have pressed the Chancellor repeatedly in recent months? Where is the guarantee of the future of the last British volume car manufacturer? Do not Rover's excellent results today show what has been and can be achieved under public ownership, and do they not demonstrate that this ill-starred foray into privatisation is an expensive and shortsighted folly?

If the key to the deal is the tax arrangement whereby British Aerospace hopes to use Rover's tax losses to offset its own tax liability, will this not fall foul of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988? Is it perhaps this potential illegality that is now worrying British Aerospace?

Above all, where is the sense of commitment to the British volume car manufacturing industry that this sorry episode shows is so signally lacking both from the Government and now, sadly, from British Aerospace? Where is the recognition of the importance of this industry and the guarantee of its future? What reliance can be placed on an arrangement born only of the Government's obsession with privatisation and which even then the Government have bungled?

Mr. Clarke: My statement may have been surprisingly short, but it is not in the least embarrassing for me, my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State or the Government.

When I last appeared before the House, it was clear that the agreement that we had reached was conditional upon the discussions with the European Commission. My right hon. and noble Friend conducted with considerable skill the negotiations with the European Commission and with British Aerospace. He produced an agreement satisfactory to the Government, to the Commission and, as far as I was aware until an hour or two ago, to British Aerospace. At the last moment, British Aerospace has decided that it wishes to reconsider part of the deal. It is my opinion that the point troubling it is not especially important or material, but that is for British Aerospace, not me, to determine. When we have the result of its deliberations, I shall straight away make a further statement to the House.

The hon. Gentleman's other questions are based, not surprisingly—inevitably in the circumstances—on his ignorance of the precise deal arrived at, but that does not stop him, as usual, speculating or trying to make points out of it. The scale and structure of the original agreement has been changed to reflect the negotiations with the Commission, the compliance with the state aid procedures that the Government support actively inside the EEC, and the considerable improvement in the trading position of the Rover Group since we first entered into our agreement. In my opinion, an agreement can now be reached that is satisfactory to the Government, and I can speak on behalf of the Government.

The hon. Gentleman guessed that the key to the deal might be the illegality of the tax arrangements, but he is wrong. He has made a false guess. The proposals for the tax arrangement are entirely consistent with the law of the land and are not being queried by anybody who understands what he is talking about—which is not the case with Opposition Members, who are speculating. The time to give the details to the House is when we are satisfied that the negotiations are concluded. That is now in the hands of British Aerospace, which I trust will soon come to a decision. I undertake to inform the House fully as soon as I can.

Mr. Norman Tebbitt (Chingford): Is it not entirely consistent with the Opposition's usual attitude that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) should damn the deal whether or not it goes ahead? He approves neither of successfully floating it into privatisation nor of keeping it nationalised. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although great progress has been made by the Rover Group, and despite what the hon. Gentleman called splendid results, it is taking £400 million or £500 million in cash to persuade anyone to take the business away?

In his further talks with Commissioner Sutherland, will my right hon. and learned Friend express the hope that if this is the sauce which is applied to the British goose there had better be the same sauce for the German gander when

[Mr. Norman Tebbitt]

the proposed merger between MBB and Daimler Benz comes forward, with a proposed subsidy of about £1 billion?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the first part of my right hon. Friend's question. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) condemned the conditional agreement we reached; although he could not make up his mind whether we were making too big or too small a cash injection into the company, he was against it. He has condemned today's agreement without knowing what it is. He will continue to condemn whatever emerges. To be fair, I think he prefers a nationalised Rover Group. That is the regime under which the company cost the British taxpayer £2·9 billion since British Leyland was nationalised in 1976.

We must sort out the matter. I have to make it clear that our problem is not with Commissioner Sutherland. We have entered into a satisfactory agreement with the commissioner, consistent with the state aid proposals which this country supports. We do not think there should be competition in subsidies throughout western Europe. The British Labour party thinks that, but we and the Commission do not. I agree with my right hon. Friend that we will expect the Commission to take seriously talk in the press of massive German injections of state aid into companies like MBB.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that not only are all the changes confusing but they put in doubt the nature of the deal which might be expected? Is he aware that the Public Accounts Committee will certainly want to scrutinise carefully the various changes to make sure that he is getting the best possible deal on behalf of the taxpayer and is ensuring that we get value for money at the end of the day?

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman is a careful man, so he rightly expresses doubt at a time when, for obvious reasons, he cannot know the full details of the agreement. I hear what he says about the Public Accounts Committee rightly wishing to take an interest once the matter has been concluded. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the Government have been careful to make sure that the interests of taxpayers, the company and the economy are taken care of in the discussions.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Regardless of what the shareholders of British Aerospace may think about this —surely they are entitled to reconsider the matter when there has been such a significant change in the terms—is it not the case that the deal offers much the best future for the Rover Group? When the company was to be offered for sale to foreign owners, the Opposition did not like it, and when it was to be British ownership they did not like that either because they have not go a constructive thought in their heads about it.

Mr. Clarke: Of course, the shareholders in British Aerospace have not yet entered directly into the matter. Anything that emerges from the discussions now taking place will have to go to an extraordinary general meeting of the shareholders if the British Aerospace board continues to be in agreement with the deal. Certainly I have made it clear throughout, as has my right hon. and noble Friend, that we see considerable attractions in a satisfactory agreement of this kind. We think that the uniting of British Aerospace with the Rover Group would be welcomed by those who work in the company and by all who supply and deal with the product as well.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is not the Minister aware that we have now got the worst of all worlds? Unless the uncertainty created by the Government's policy is resolved quickly, it will be unnecessarily difficult for the Rover Group to sell cars during August, one of the most important selling months in the year.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that it would be worrying if uncertainty surrounded the Rover Group for any longer than was necessary. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern that that should not be so. I trust that any difficulties are resolved rapidly and that I can report to the House in the very near future. I expected to be able to make a statement to the House this afternoon expressing in full the terms of the agreement. I thought that British Aerospace was in agreement with that, but as it has asked for more time neither I nor my right hon. and noble Friend had any alternative but to agree.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Can the Minister say something about the great distress and uncertainty caused to the splendid Rover Group whose cars I have always bought and found satisfactory? Is he really saying that the Government are reducing the aid to be given to Rover because Commissioner Sutherland has asked it but that they will make it up by what he calls tax concessions? Is that a sensible state of mind?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate the views of British Aerospace, which, like many British companies, feels rather aggrieved that we always reveal full details of financial transactions, yet, in the case of Airbus, where British Aerospace is carrying a horrendous loss, the other three participants never reveal any details about the money given by their Governments? Is it not time to ask the Commission to ask other countries to act as cleanly in financial terms as Britain does?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with most of what my hon. Friend has said, except that, in the case of the Airbus project, not one of the four partners reveals full information to any of the other three, nor does the Commission take any part in the matter.

In principle, I agree with my hon. Friend that we should establish in Europe a regime whereby state aids are fully exposed to the Commission and other members, needless competition between countries is avoided and the matter is policed by the Commission in accordance with the Community's agreed policy. Last year the Commission changed our deal on Leyland-DAF. It changed the French Government's recent Renault proposals and we shall expect it to take a close interest in the Italian Government's proposals for the restructuring of its steel industry in southern Italy and in the German proposals for the aircraft industry and the Daimler Benz-MBB deal.

There is, therefore, no disagreement between my hon. Friend and me. We discussed the deal, which was satisfactory, with the Commission and we shall wait to see whether British Aerospace confirms the impression with which it left us this morning, that it found the deal satisfactory.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Is not the Minister looking as red today as would do credit to the Labour Front Bench, not only as a result of the fiasco in which he has involved the House this afternoon, but also because the golden give-away terms of the deal have been exposed by the Commission and it has been shown that British Aerospace is not interested without a golden give-away? Will the Minister at least be honest enough to tell the House what the sticking point is with British Aerospace and what he will do about it if the deal falls through?

Mr. Clarke: My florid complexion is a natural result of my healthy lifestyle. I agree that it contrasts somewhat with the pallor of the hon. Gentleman, who does not appear to get into the open air very much in the south-west of England.

The agreement reached is based on changes to the structure and scale of the original agreement, which was always conditional upon Commission consent. However, I hope that the House will agree that it is obviously not sensible for me to relate the exact nature of the agreement until the final snag with British Aerospace—if it proves to be a snag—has been resolved. It would be wrong for me to start trailing in discussion the points at issue, particularly as I am still somewhat puzzled to discover that British Aerospace believes the matter to be so significant.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, basically, the most important thing is that Austin Rover should remain a British national based on another excellent British company, British Aerospace? Does he further agree that, although British Aerospace may be a little coy at this time, it may work out that, with the tax concessions and the excellent future of Austin Rover, which has turned a £39 million loss into a £7 million profit, this is a great venture for it?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend further agree that, although the Opposition are suggesting that the deal should be allowed to fall through, British Aerospace is willing to commit £1,000 million to the future of the great technological advance of this country, which is what we need, should have and, I believe, can have?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is a significant voice in such matters in the west midlands and in the House and I hope that those people concerned with the last-minute consideration of the agreement will bear in mind his opinions.

British Aerospace is one of the key manufacturing companies in this country. It produces extremely advanced, high-technology aircraft. The Rover Group has announced extremely encouraging results today and is doing very well, thanks to Graham Day and the management and work force of the company. I note my hon. Friend's opinion that a purchase by British Aerospace would be to the advantage of all concerned.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Are we not having today a demonstration of breathtaking incompetence on the Government's part in this matter? Will the Minister tell us what the snag, as he described it, is—or does he not know? He confessed to being puzzled. Does that not show the irresponsibility with which the Government are handling the matter? Will not the uncertainty generated by the statement damage the interests of car workers in this country and all those who depend on their work? Have not the Government made a mess of this? What will the Minister do if the deal falls through and British Aerospace will not go along with Rover?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman cannot reasonably cast doubts on the Government's position. I know exactly what the agreement is. My right hon. and noble Friend negotiated a satisfactory conditional agreement a few months ago, on which I reported to the House, and he has negotiated a satisfactory agreement with the Commission and BAe. It is BAe's management which decided at the last moment that it wanted a little more time to think about one detail. I know what that detail is. It is not for me but for BAe to reach a decision on that. I am merely saying that I am surprised that the management attaches so much weight to it. However, I trust that that problem will soon be resolved.

I have already explained that it plainly is not sensible for me to start conducting the next stage in the negotiations in this forum; it would not help the Rover Group or anybody else. I hope that I shall soon be able to bring fuller and more satisfactory news to the hon. Gentleman who has a perfectly valid and legitimate constituency interest.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in view of today's events he is now open to receive alternative bids for the Rover Group, whether from Britain or abroad; and if not now, when?

Mr. Clarke: I have been avoiding hypothetical questions. My hon. Friend is jumping the gun more than somewhat. As I received the news that BAe wanted more time in a message from its chairman only two and a half hours ago, it may be that in two and a half hours' time all will be resolved. It remains the Government's clear commitment to return the Rover Group to the private sector, and the continuing good performance of that company under the leadership of Graham Day with the support of the work force is taking us encouragingly in that direction by whatever route.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): As a determined opponent of Rover privatisation and the Common Market, may I at least welcome the Minister's statement on the delay on the basis of any port in a storm? If he wants to stop speculation in the disagreements—not the agreement—that have emerged in the past two and a half hours, after Sir Raymond Lygo said that the basis of BAe's wanting Rover was on the basis of no cost to the company, apart from the risk, will he confirm what happened this morning at the commissioner's meeting in terms of amendments and conditions that has caused BAe to back off? If Commissioner Sutherland can negotiate a £253 million reduction in BAe's bribe, why could not the Minister?

Mr. Clarke: There was a full meeting of the Commission this morning, at which it approved the terms negotiated by Commissioner Sutherland, just as the Government have supported and approved the terms negotiated by my right hon. and noble Friend. I shall let BAe know that the hon. Gentleman approves of its last-minute request for more time; it might encourage it to make up its mind and to look at the deal with more interest again. As is invariably the case as a result of discussions with the Commission because of its duty under the state aids regime, there have been changes in the scale and

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nature of the deal, as there were last year in the case of Leyland-DAF and recently in the case of Renault. What has emerged is, I believe, satisfactory to all the parties, but it is not for me but for the BAe board to decide whether it is prepared to go ahead and recommend it to its shareholders.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): My right hon. and learned Friend is still to be congratulated on the zeal with which he is pursuing the deal, and I am glad to hear him say that he is satisfied with what Commissioner Sutherland has to say on this issue, but, in view of the problem that has occurred, what time limit has he placed on BAe to make its decision clear, since it is surely BAe which has failed to respond to what was a good offer originally?

Mr. Clarke: We are not in a position to impose a time scale. BAe is entitled to ask for more time to consider the matter and it will appreciate the need to come to a final decision as rapidly as possible. I cannot give my hon. Friend any more information than I have, since I discovered only at half-past one that BAe wished to delay a final decision and at half-past two I was on my feet here answering questions. Perhaps by the time I return to the office all will be resolved so that I can come back to the House as soon as possible to give the final details.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a very long day ahead of us. I will allow questions to continue for a further five minutes. As the Chancellor of the Duchy has just said, this is an interim statement.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that any questions from me will be extremely gentle and cautious as I spent 25 years involved in the motor industry and I am aware how the industry may change its mind at the last moment? He has my personal sympathy for these difficulties. Having said that, will he say something in the new statement about Bathgate, where the Rover Group still owns what was the biggest concentration of machine tools under a single roof in Europe? That may not be a central problem, but it is very important for my constituents.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has reminded me yet again of his concern about the Bathgate site. I believe that that is a planning matter to be resolved by the local authority and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, I will bring myself up to date with events. I share the hon. Gentleman's desire to see the site brought back into productive use and providing employment for his constituents once again. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland shares that desire.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Is it not clear that those who work for the Rover Group will be much better off under British Aerospace than they would be if the Rover Group continued to go cap in hand to the Government for more funds? After the expenditure of £2·9 billion, is it not a matter for congratulation and in the public interest that the House has the prospect of staunching this endless flow of money?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that, apart from this unexpected last-minute hitch, our present position is so much more satisfactory than anyone could have thought possible had the Rover Group continued to be in public hands. The Rover Group's performance is steadily improving and plainly we have reached the stage where it should be returned to the private sector where I am sure that it would be much better off than it used to be as a pensioner client of the Government.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is the Department of Trade and Industry so inefficient that it takes an EEC commissioner to point out the bare-faced robbery of the British taxpayer through this proposed deal by British Aerospace? Does not the Chancellor of the Duchy realise that in his zealotry and bigotry to sell off a publicly owned company he is causing uncertainty in the private sector? Major component suppliers such as Hepworth and Grandage in Bradford which supply the majority of the pistons to the Rover Group inevitably must face a degree of uncertainty, like the rest of the industry, including the Rover Group, as a result of this shilly-shallying. Why cannot the Chancellor make a commitment to retain public ownership so that every company in the components supply industry knows precisely where it is?

Mr. Clarke: I will not explain again the basis on which everyone who has any experience of the state aids case knows that the deal was bound to emerge in the course of discussions with the European Commission. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) sounded as if he was endorsing the final decision that we reached with Commissioner Sutherland. That is very welcome, and I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's support when he finds out what he is talking about and when he sees the scale and structure of what we have negotiated.

We are satisfied, the Commission is satisfied, and I believe that the taxpayer should also be satisfied. The component suppliers to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred have always been strongly in favour of the sale of British Aerospace. As I explained in an earlier statement, I think that it is in their interest that an agreement of this kind should be entered into.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that in my constituency the Rover Group plant at Longbridge, the Lode lane Land Rover plant, the Cowley plant and others have worked outstandingly well to produce the good results for the Rover Group, as we have seen? Is he aware how much each and every one of the employees looks forward to working for an excellent company like British Aerospace? On behalf of all the employees, will he convey to the British Aerospace board the message that faint heart never won fair lady?

Mr. Clarke: I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the work force on the welcome improvement and results. The half-yearly results show a profit before interest of £28·8 million, compared with a loss of £10 million for the same period last year. That improvement in the group's performance had its bearing on the negotiations about the agreement as it ceased to be conditional and we talked about a final agreement which we believed should be accepted to achieve the result that my hon. Friend desires.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Would it not be a good idea if the Chancellor of the Duchy

of Lancaster were to nip off to his office to find out the up-to-date situation? He might then put us all out of our misery. We shall keep the debate going while he is away.

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with that suggestion. I am dying to get back to my office to find out what is happening.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this is a bad day for the Opposition? Does he agree also that, on a day when the Rover Group announced good results and when the partnership between two great British companies is still continuing, it is quite devastating to find Opposition Members laughing and negative and that they do not regard the matter as important? My final question is on behalf of the components industry and dealers. Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask Opposition Members whether they would prefer a deal with a foreign cartel?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. Opposition Members came to the House prepared to denounce the agreement, whatever it was, and they are still trying to denounce it, but they cannot find out what it was or what it might be. They do not know what they want, so I shall not put the final propositions to them. I do not believe that there is any undue cause for concern among dealers and others in the industry. I hope to be able to report back to the House as soon as I can.

Dunstaffnage Marine Research Laboratory

4.1 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the loss of 20 jobs at the Dunstaffnage marine research laboratory, near Oban, in my constituency.

The announcement, made at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, deals a double blow. At a time of concern for the sea and the management of the resources that it contains, the announcement underlines the need to do more rather than less marine research. Because of the huge development of the fish farming industry in the Highlands and Islands and in my constituency of Argyll and Bute in particular, research should have a high priority.

The laboratory is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council, and the issue is not just one of straightforward, all-round reduction in NERC activities. The lastest cuts hit marine science more than anything else, and they are illogical and misconceived. The laboratory is one of the largest employers in the area, employing 70 people. Staff redundancies of that magnitude will undoubtedly affect the non-tourist element of the local economy and have damaging and grave consequences for a small town such as Oban. I urge that the issue be debated.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the newly announced job losses at Dunstaffnage marine research laboratory near Oban and their effects on the Government's research programme."

I have listened with great care and concern to what the hon. Lady has said on behalf of her constituents, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that she has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit her application to the House. I hope that she will find other ways of raising it.

Nurses' Pay Award

4.3 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing an urgent, specific and important matter with which you have dealt favourably in the past, Mr. Speaker, namely,

"the underfunding of the nurses' pay award."

The matter is important and should have priority over all other business in the House if we are to avert the crisis in our National Health Service, in its 40th year, which was almost on the cards earlier this year, and which was averted only as a result of your actions, Mr. Speaker.

It is urgent because it has just come to light in an article in *The Guardian* today that it looks as though the Government's promises to meet the nurses' pay award in

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full are not now to be met. I do not wish nurses' morale to be so low that our National Health Service crumbles as a result of the Government's broken promises.

It is important that the promised grading review should be done in an objective way. Those who are employed by the National Health Service can have no confidence in the Government if they consider that their pay is to be determined by a top ceiling and that their work will not be properly evaluated. In my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, North and in the west midlands, I have seen nursing staff leaving the National Health Service. They are not leaving in great numbers because they are banking on the review. They have still not received the 4 per cent. in their pay packets. If we are to avert a further crisis, we should have a debate.

Health Service workers, and nurses in particular, need reassurance from the Government. We need a debate before the summer recess. The Secretary of State may well have said that he received a standing ovation when he last met the nurses, but if he is to be true to his policies full reassurances need to be given by the Government. They can be given only if we adjourn and fully debate the matter now.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Government's underfunding of the nurses' pay award."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Lady has said about the matter. As she knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given precedence over the Orders set down for today or tomorrow and whether it meets the criteria laid down by the Standing Order. I regret that I cannot submit her application to the House.

Order Paper

4.6 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that, among your many responsibilities to the House, it is your responsibility to ensure that the items that appear each day on the Order Paper are in order, acceptable and relevant to the House, and that you do that through the excellent work of the Clerks and, through them, your instruction to the Table Office? Will you confirm also that this week you gave particular instructions to the Table Office and the Clerks to ensure that any hon. Member who might seek to put an item on the Order Paper would be present in the House, would present it and, if necessary, vote on it? Have you particularly drawn attention to the fact that, if he should seek to put anything on the Order Paper, the Leader of the Opposition is far away and indulging in business that is detrimental to this country and is quite unable to fulfil any obligations that he may have in respect of the Order Paper?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for what he has said about my responsibility for the matter. The whole House will agree that anything that appears on the Order Paper is in order; otherwise it would not so appear.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the excellent services that the Clerks provide, will you ask them to place on the Order Paper or in *Hansard* a list of all orders and motions in the name of the Prime Minister that have been tabled when she has been out of the country?

Mr. Speaker: We should move on.

BILL PRESENTED

Compensation Advisory Board

Mr. Jack Ashley, supported by Dr. Michael Clark, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Alfred Morris and Mr. Roger Sims, presented a Bill to establish a Board to make recommendations for the levels of compensation awarded to injured persons; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 200.]

Education (Right to Nursery Places)

4.9 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to place on local authorities the statutory duty to provide free nursery places for all children at local authority nurseries.

Education begins from birth. The true value of our society is the way in which we prepare for our future. Investing in our children and securing for them the best possible opportunities and facilities is the greatest investment that we can make. What I propose is neither radical nor new. In 1936, the Board of Education on nursery schools and classes described pre-school classes as "on the fringes of official organisation, more or less acknowledged, better or worse provided for as opinion varied in regard to them."

The Education Act 1944 placed a duty on local authorities to provide a discretionary power to provide nursery education. In 1967, the Plowden report strongly advocated nursery provision for all three-year-olds and four-year-olds. In 1972, a White Paper on education published by the Prime Minister in her previous incarnation stated that the Government's

"aim is that within the next 10 years nursery education should become available without charge . . . to those children of three and four whose parents wish them to benefit from it."

Sixteen years later, the Goverment's position has changed but it is still hampered by the Treasury. The White Paper "Better Schools" stated:

"In view of the benefits of education for the under fives, and parental demand for provision, the Government will make it its aim that its plans for local authority expenditure should allow provision attributable to under fives to continue in real terms".

The Select Committee report on primary schools dealing with provision for the under-fives strongly set out the arguments for pre-school education.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for children from the beginning of the term after they reach their fifth birthday. In 1983, only 23 per cent. of three and four-year-olds received any form of nursery education, and 700,000 of them received none. Today, a little more than 1 million of them are receiving some kind of education. The state provides only half in formal classes, for a total of 308,000 children. There are more than 3·5 million children uder the age of five. Ninety per cent. of parents with three or four-year-old children, and 40 per cent. of parents of children under three years of age, want some form of nursery places for them.

Over the past decade, the voluntary sector has flourished. It is right that I should pay tribute to two organisations that have led the fight. They are the Pre-School Playgroups Association, which links an estimated 600,000 families in 430 branches, and the National Children's Bureau, which launched an under-fives unit in 1986. Playgroups provide 34 per cent. of the places for under-fives, and it is estimated that 52 per cent. of all three and four-year-olds in England attend playgroups compared with 22 per cent. of the same group in nursery schools and classes and 23 per cent. in primary schools. Although playgroups account for more than half the number of pre-school places, local authority financial support is low in most areas and non-existent in others.

Government statistics reveal enormous differences between one part of the country and another. Some have reached impressive levels of three and four-year-olds in nursery schools—Hounslow, 69 per cent.; Newham 63 per cent.; and Wolverhampton, 56 per cent. Others ought to be ashamed of themselves, with the percentage of three and four-year-olds in nursery schools in Suffolk being 13 per cent.; Norfolk, 5 per cent.; and Bromley, 1 per cent.

The chances of a nursery place depend entirely on where one lives. In Leicestershire, where only 23 per cent. of three and four-year-olds are in nursery classes, there are huge differences within the county. Fifty-nine schools have provision for three-year-olds, 52 schools for four-year-olds, and 188 schools no provision at all. Lack of staff, capitation and accommodation are the reasons given. In my constituency, as in those of other hon. Members, I am sure, other groups and organisations provide certain facilities, ranging from playgroups in local churches—such as at St. Mary's, Humberston—to the Avalon youth project, and to the mothers' and toddlers' groups that meet in the neighbourhood centres of Netherhall, Northfields, Evington, Coleman and Thornby Lodge. I have visited all of them and they are all starved of resources.

In terms of child care, we are sliding behind the rest of Europe. Belgium and France provide free nursery education for children from the age of three, and Sweden is working towards an integrated system of child centres, community care and education under the same Ministry.

The role of women has changed dramatically, and that has added to the demand for nurseries. Women now make up 43 per cent. of the work force; 23 per cent. of all women with children under five work, and many more would like to do so.

In this area, there is a multiplicity of organisations with which to deal—playgroups, mothers' and toddlers' groups, child minders and nursery places. But separate management and planning systems for pre-school provision remain one of the greatest barriers to the development of a coherent policy. Only Strathclyde authority, whose record I commend to the House, has so far centralised the management of services for the under-fives in one department. A further 21 authorities have an under-fives sub-committee.

My Bill would establish a national policy framework for under-fives provision that will include a statement of objectives of provision and regulations for the co-ordination of statutory and voluntary sector provision. It will give three and four-year-olds an opportunity for pre-school education and care in whatever setting. It will establish the fact that statutory provision does not mean just nursery schools and classes but includes playgroups, mothers' and toddlers' groups, and possibly child minders.

My Bill will also ensure that local authorities will have an obligation to consult with and be empowered to fund the voluntary sector. Parents will be consulted, so that resources will be based in the community, within pram-pushing distance.

There should be a national, interdepartmental body concerned with the under-fives. The dispute between education and social services must cease. At a local level, local authorities will be made to establish new under-fives sub-committees and submit plans for the provision of pre-school services. Finally, my Bill will give workers access to training and opportunities.

All recent surveys show that some form of pre-school education gives children an enormous intellectual boost. This Bill is a toddlers' charter. With a rattle in one hand and with a book in the other, our children can be endowed with the incalculable gift of knowledge. If we fail to

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respond, in later years our children will be able rightly to accuse us betraying their trust and squandering their future. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Alan Williams, Mr. Dennis Turner, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. John Battle, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Mr. Derek Fatchett and Miss Ann Clywd.

EDUCATION (RIGHT TO NURSERY PLACES)

Mr. Keith Vaz accordingly presented a Bill to place on local authorities the statutory duty to provide free nursery places for all children at local authority nurseries: And the same was read a First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Wednesday 27 July, and to be printed. [Bill 198.]

WAYS AND MEANS

Conversion of Building Societies into Public Limited Companies

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision may be made in connection with transfers in accordance with section 97 and the other applicable provisions (within the meaning of that section) of the Building Societies Act 1986.—*[Mr. Peter Lilley.]*

4.17 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I shall not detain the House for more than a moment, but it is worth placing on record at this stage, as we did during the Committee proceedings, the fact that the Opposition are deeply unhappy at the prospect of mutual building societies converting to plcs. We believe that much that is good about the building society movement will be lost if that occurs. However, this resolution relates specifically to the possibility that later in today's proceedings we shall have an opportunity to debate Government amendment No. 75, which enshrines a principle for which we argued in Committee. We are grateful to the Government for taking that issue on board. It would be churlish of us to do anything other than wish godspeed to this resolution.

Question put and agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Finance (No. 2) Bill

Not amended (in the Committee), and as amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

4.18 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will it be possible for you to reconsider the provisional selection and to include new clause 20? There are very special circumstances. If there were not, I would not mention it. First, if we do not discuss new clause 20, the House will have no opportunity of discussing in detail the application of VAT to hearing aids and spectacles, which is a very important issue. It also means that the House will not be able to discuss another issue that is constitutionally important—the decision of a foreign court in instructing the Government what tax to levy. Bearing in mind that a decision was made after the Bill's Second Reading, and that the House had no opportunity to consider those matters in detail, there is a case for having a straight debate on new clause 20.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has agreed to do something about vouchers for spectacles and the increase that will be necessary because of VAT being charged on them. Could he make a statement now, or get one of this colleagues from the Department of Health and Social Security to do so? Perhaps he could make such a statement if you selected the clause for debate.

Mr. Speaker: I examined the new clauses and amendments very carefully this morning, and I do not think that I can reconsider my selection at this stage. The hon. Gentleman will know, however, that clause 13 has been included in the Bill, and it would be perfectly in order to debate the matter on Third Reading.

Ordered,

That the Finance (No. 2) Bill, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely, new Clauses, amendments relating to Clause 1, Schedule 1, Clauses 2 to 4, Schedule 2, Clauses 5 to 35, Schedule 3, Clauses 36 to 50, Schedule 4, Clauses 51 to 57, Schedule 5, Clauses 58 to 64, Schedule 6, Clauses 65 to 94, Schedule 7 Clauses 95 to 106, Schedule 8, Clauses 107 to 111, Schedule 9, Clauses 112 to 142, Schedule 10, Clause 143, Schedule 11, Clauses 144 to 146, new Schedules, amendments relating to Schedule 12.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

New Clause 18

UNIT TRUSTS: RELIEF ON CERTAIN PAYMENTS

'. Section 469 of the Taxes Act 1988 (taxation of unauthorised and certain other unit trusts) shall have effect, and shall be deemed always to have had effect, with the insertion of the following subsections after subsection (5)—

"(5A) Subsections (5B) below applies where for any year of assessment—

(a) the trustees are (or, apart from this subsection, would be) chargeable under section 350 with tax on payments treated as made by them under subsection (3) above, and

(b) there is an uncredited surplus in the case of the scheme.

(5B) Where this subsection applies, the amount on which the trustees would otherwise be so chargeable shall be reduced—

(a) if the surplus is greater than that amount, to nil, or

(b) if it is not, by an amount equal to the surplus.

(5C) For the purposes of subsections (5A) and (5B) above whether there is an uncredited surplus for a year of assessment in the case of a scheme (and, if so, its amount) shall be ascertained by—

(a) determining, for each earlier year of assessment in which the income on which the trustees were chargeable to tax by virtue of subsection (2) above exceeded the amount treated by subsection (3) above as annual payments received by the unit holders, the amount of the excess,

(b) aggregating the amounts determined in the case of the scheme under paragraph (a) above, and

(c) deducting from that aggregate the total of any reductions made in the case of the scheme under subsection (5B) above for earlier years of assessment.

(5D) The references in subsection (5C)(a) above to subsections (2) and (3) above include references to subsections (2) and (3) of section 354A of the 1970 Act.".'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause addresses a technical problem affecting the rules for taxing the income of unauthorised unit trusts. We discussed the matter briefly in Committee. The present rules can produce an excessive tax charge on a trust. That occurs when the trust income for a tax year is less than the income that it distributes to its unit holders. The extra tax charge will reduce the amount that the trustees can distribute and will therefore disadvantage unit holders, including charities and pension funds.

The point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), who tabled a new clause that we were unable to accept. I said that we would table our own new clause.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): If we were living in the mid-17th century—and given the way our proceedings have gone in the past week one could be forgiven for being under such a misapprehension—the new clause would be known as the Concession of Arbuthnot, in honour of the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). That has a nice mid-17th century ring to it. The one late-20th century point of which the Financial Secretary should have informed the House is how much it will cost, and I wonder whether he would do so now.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost will be minimal.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 19

VALUATION OF INTERESTS IN LAND

'.—(1) In section 294 of the Taxes Act 1988 (companies with interests in land), after subsection (5) there shall be inserted—

"(5A) For the purposes of this section, the value of an interest in any building or other land shall be adjusted by deducting the market value of any machinery or plant which is so installed or otherwise fixed in or to the building or other land as to become, in law, part of it."

(2) This section shall have effect in relation to valuations which fall to be made after the passing of this Act.'—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In Committee the Opposition tabled an amendment which would have prevented the land and buildings description on the business expansion scheme from applying to manufacturing companies. At the time, I said that I did not want to favour a particular industry in the way that they suggested, but that I recognised the problem posed to companies with valuable fixed plant. As a result we have devised the new clause.

Where plant and machinery form part of a company's land or buildings, they are taken into account when the land and buildings are valued. The new clause will deduct the value of plant and machinery from that of land and buildings. The change will be of particular help to companies with valuable specialised plant and machinery. It is not confined to any particular sector, but will apply to all companies that qualify under the BES rules.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): In Committee we highlighted many of the problems that we saw in the operation of the business expansion scheme. One of those problems was the low percentage of BES companies within the manufacturing sector. That percentage is going down rather than up, and we fear that it will go down even further with the institution of the new rented accommodation scheme introduced by the Budget and the Finance Bill.

We argued strongly that some extra incentive should be given to assist manufacturing industry trying to raise investment through BES. The Government accepted the principle, but we are disappointed that they have not taken the route that we suggested, which was to single out enterprises within industrial use classes 2, 3 and 4. However, they have recognised the need to give some consideration to companies in this position.

We will give two cheers for the new clause. It is a concession of sorts to the points that we put in Committee, and although we do not feel that it goes far enough or takes the right approach, it is none the less welcome.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 23

DEFERRED CHARGES ON GAINS BEFORE 31ST MARCH 1982

'.Schedule *(Deferred charges on gains before 31st March 1982)* to this Act (which provides for the reduction of a deferred charge to tax where the charge is wholly or partly attributable to an increase in the value of an asset before 31st March 1982) shall have effect.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Brought up, and read the First Time.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second Time.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take Government amendment No. 73.

Mr. Lamont: In Committee a number of my hon. Friends expressed concern that the rebasing provisions would not apply where tax on gains had been deferred between 1982 and 1988. My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General undertook to review the position and see whether something could be done to meet those cases. We have also received a number of representations on the matter.

This is an issue on which the arguments of principle cut both ways. On the one hand, the full benefit of rebasing is available where the deferral took place on or before 31 March 1982. So to give no benefit from rebasing where the deferral was between 1982 and 1988 might appear a little harsh. On the other hand, we must recognise the opposite argument, which is the comparison with those who in the same circumstances opted not to defer tax and will have already paid it in full without the benefit of rebasing. None the less, we have concluded after careful consideration that on balance there is a case for providing some relief in the circumstances that I have outlined.

A huge range of provisions provide for tax deferral in one form or another. The circumstances in which the reliefs can apply, and the potential permutations where more than one relief is involved, are numerous. Some cases —for example, where gains on business assets have been rolled over within a group of companies—will be extremely complex. In other cases, records will frequently not be available of assets on which tax has been deferred. That is because for purely practical reasons it is often unnecessary to retain such information. An example is where a gain on the disposal of a business asset has been rolled over against the cost of a replacement asset. Once the gain to be rolled over—and hence the reduced cost of the replacement asset—have been established, there is no need in practice to retain records relating to the history of the old asset. Even the Inland Revenue does not keep records for ever.

The matter presents the Government with something of a dilemma. Where a deferral has taken place since 1985, a March 1982 valuation will probably have been made for indexation purposes. Other things being equal, it would be possible to confine the tax charge to the post-1982 component of the gain, although even here only if the records of what underlies the deferred gain have been kept.

On the other hand, if the deferral took place after 1982 but before 1985, there will not have been a March 1982 valuation. In the case of a gift made during that period, there is no reason why the donee should know when the donor acquired the asset, and the donor's records might well no longer exist. Accordingly, there would be difficulties in extending rebasing to even the most straightforward case.

At the other extreme, there will frequently be more complicated cases—perhaps where there is a chain of deferrals, one asset being rolled over into another under the same or more than one provision. A business asset may have been sold in, say, 1984, the gain rolled over against a number of replacement assets with rollover relief being claimed. Some of those assets may since have been sold with tax paid at the time. Others may have been replaced, and yet others may still be held by the taxpayer. Even where full records of all the transactions are available, it would be a formidable task to identify the pre-1982 component of the gain which had not already been brought into the charge. Some of the amendments moved by my hon. Friends during the debate in the Committee of the whole House recognised that difficulty and sought to provide relief, not by extending the 1982 rebasing, but in a different way.

We have considered the matter and although it would be possible to devise rules to give the full benefit of rebasing in the more complicated cases where records are still available, those rules would be highly complex and would impose considerable costs on the Revenue, the taxpayers and their advisers. Such rules would be wholly impracticable if complete records had not been retained. Accordingly, rebasing would not be possible in the more complicated cases.

4.30 pm

Effectively, the choice was between giving the benefit of rebasing in cases where the computations can be done with an arbitrary solution for the remainder, or an arbitrary approach across the board. However, having different rules for different groups of taxpayers would involve making unfair distinctions and would lead to anomalies. In principle, all taxpayers should be treated equally and on the same basis. As I have said, even where the precise calculations could be made, the costs of doing so would be high. For that reason, we concluded that the only solution which is both practicable and equitable is that there should be an arbitrary amount of relief in all cases. That is the approach that we have adopted in the new clause and schedule.

Broadly speaking, the provisions take the deferred gain that is now in charge and halve it where it can be established that part of the deferred gain results either directly or indirectly from the disposal of an asset that was acquired before 31 March 1982. In some cases—for example, where the first asset was acquired just before 1982—the relief is undoubtedly generous. In other cases —for example where the first asset was acquired many years ago—it is less generous. Therefore, I accept that the solution that we have adopted involves a degree of rough justice. However, for the reasons that I have outlined, the only alternative was to provide no relief in those circumstances, and we received many representations on that point.

The most common provision under which tax can be deferred are the gifts and replacement of business asset reliefs. But other less common provisions also provide for tax deferral, such as equities being converted into corporate bonds. The relief that I have described will extend to those provisions as well and will be available where there has been a chain of deferrals. Like capital gains reform generally, the relief will apply to disposals on or after 6 April 1988 and will be subject to a claim. That is because the Inland Revenue will frequently be unable to identify the cases where it is due. The relief will probably cost under £50 million in a full year.

I recognise that the solution is a somewhat rough and ready one to the problems that have been identified. However, it does have some merit. Although there are arguments both ways, on balance the solution that we have adopted should be widely welcomed by those who have been affected.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Financial Secretary has treated the House to a candid review of the two options that the Government considered in some detail when looking at the requests that have been made to them for reform in this area. However, although he referred to it, he did not spend much time discussing the third option, which was to do nothing and to leave the situation as it would have been without the new clause and accompanying schedule. That option was worthy of consideration.

The new clause and schedule relate to giving further relief from capital gains where deferred tax charges arise. However, the Financial Secretary did not put the emphasis on further relief but dealt with the detail, and I can understand why. Although the detail holds up to examination, the strategic approach does so to a lesser extent.

I do not want to go over the areas that the Financial Secretary covered in great depth but, as he explained, deferred charges arise in broadly two circumstances. The first is where deferral is allowed on an earlier disposal by one person, but where the cost of the asset to a successor or the cost of another asset to that person is correspondingly reduced. The second is under relieving provision where what would otherwise be a gain on a disposal is instead a charge on a subsequent event.

Before setting the latest concession and generosity to capital gains tax payers in its proper context, I should like to raise some points of detail with the Financial Secretary. The first is the obvious one. The Red Book estimate does not allow for the cost of the amendments that the Government are proposing, although there must be some cost. When the Financial Secretary replies to the debate, will he tell us his estimate of the cost to the Revenue of making that concession, if he believes that there will be such a cost? I believe that there must be a cost. If there are no such estimates, how does the Financial Secretary account for that?

My second point goes right to the heart of the Financial Secretary's explanation and relates to the arbitrary nature of the proposals. We accept that the cut-off point in the existing legislation is somewhat arbitrary, but that is inevitable. There will always be people who could have taken advantage of taxation changes if they had known about them. That would be the case under any taxation system and indeed it would not be possible to devise a taxation system where that would not arise. However, that does not necessarily mean that any group of people who complain that they have been disadvantaged should be able to ask for a concession, yet that is what has happened in this case.

The method of relief itself is entirely arbitrary. Although an asset to be disposed of may have only one day's worth of pre-March 1982 deferred gain—that is an extreme example, but it is possible—half the gain would be untaxed, and that is on top of the indexation and annual expenditure. Giving what amounts to 50 per cent. relief of gains on rolled-over business assets could weaken the incentive to reinvest in order to get the deferral. That is another criticism of the scheme and is a point to which the Financial Secretary should respond.

There is a strategic context to the current concession which really upsets the Opposition. I am sure that the Financial Secretary is not surprised about that. Capital gains stand at record levels, yet the number of people who are paying capital gains tax has decreased from 225,000 in 1978-79 to only 120,000 in 1983-84. Funnily enough, that is the latest year for which the figures are available for comparison. That decline is significant, yet those 120,000 people—the number may be smaller now—are to be given a further concession to help them to maximise their existing advantages in relation to the taxman.

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

In the past year, rich taxpayers saved themselves £1·2 billion in capital gains tax. That is enough to make a substantial impact on, to take an obvious example, hospital revitalisation, or on all the areas of public expenditure to which the parliamentary Labour party is so committed, and the interests of which the Government always seem to discount.

The top rate taxpayer has probably saved some £25,000 cumulatively in capital gains tax since 1979. That concession is not going to those who most need it; it is going to those who least need it. The Opposition stand firmly against that approach. That theme has underlined each of our debates on the Finance Bill, and was carried through Second Reading.

Treasury Ministers have omitted to mention that the Budget measures will reduce the capital gains tax paid by top rate taxpayers by some £50 million in 1988-89. The Labour party cannot support such a loss of revenue.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Top rate taxpayers will pay more.

Mr. Brown: I understand the sedentary intervention from the Conservative Benches, but the argument is between expenditure on public services, to which the Labour party is committed, and concessions to top rate taxpayers to which the Conservative party and the Government are still more committed. That issue divides us and goes to the heart of the debate.

Because of the definition of the tax, there can be no poor capital gains tax payers. Conservative Members seem to find that an astounding premise.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I wonder if I heard him correctly. Did he speak about the reduction in the rate of capital gains tax applied to top rate taxpayers? If he did, he has missed the point completely. The rate of capital gains tax that applies to top rate taxpayers is now the top rate income tax—40 per cent.—it has gone up, not down. It seems that the last five minutes of the hon. Gentleman's speech has been completely irrelevant.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood me. I am talking about the take from capital gains tax as a result of the new clause. *[Interruption.]* I have received some very good advice from the Conservative Back Benches, which is to ignore the interventions of other Conservative Members. That is probably right. Perhaps Conservative Members are motivated by some deep personal resentment that they will not be able to take maximum advantage of the concession. If that was an unworthy remark, of course I withdraw it.

Despite unheard-of capital gains, the City of London is paying less than it should pay in capital gains tax, because of bed and breakfasting. The Exchequer is undoubtedly losing hundreds of millions of pounds because of bed and breakfasting. When we last debated this matter on the Floor of the House, the Financial Secretary said that he rather approved of bed and breakfasting and that he was not proposing measures that would stop bed and breakfasting as a taxation loophole. I do not know whether the Government's position on that has changed.

In the endeavour to put forward a constructive alternative to how the Government should spend the money that they will put into quite an important concession, I shall treat the House to the results of a parliamentary question which I put to the Secretary of State for Social Services. I asked whether he would publish tables showing the expenditure and benefit figures relating to poor families in Kensington—to take an area at random. I notice that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has perked up. At last I have caught his interest.

The figures reveal that, contrary to the Government's assertions, the poorest households in Kensington will be net losers under the new benefit system introduced in April. They show the weekly spending power of families on low wages after tax and benefits as it would have been under the 1987-88 benefit system, if it had been maintained and updated in line with inflation, compared with what it will be under the new system. The figures are a shoddy contrast with the generosity of the Government's approach to those who pay capital gains tax. I understand that Conservative Members do not like a parallel to be drawn between those who will be advantaged under capital gains tax changes proposals and those who will be impoverished under the Government's social security proposals in Kensington and elsewhere.

4.45 pm

The theme of the Opposition's approach to the Budget, from Second Reading onwards, was that the Budget had a context. We hope to bring home that context to the country, although we realise that we will not change the Government's attitude. The figures—and they are the Government's figures—show that in Kensington a married couple with two children will be worse off if they are on wages between £70 and £110 a week. They will lose up to £1·95 a week. They will not be recipients of the Government's generosity to capital gains taxpayers.

Nor will a lone parent with two children, who stands to lose up to one tenth of his or her weekly earnings—if he or she is earning between £60 and £170 a week—as a result of the Government's benefit changes. All the one-parent families shown in the tables are net losers, losing between £2 and £8·79 a week. Those figures underestimate the loss that many families will suffer, as they do not take into account average water rates of about £1·78 a week which are no longer covered by housing benefit.

Those people do not pay capital gains tax and they will not benefit from the Government's new clause. They represent the generality of the population, rather than the 120,000 privileged few, who are privileged to have the capital gains in the first place and privileged to be able to take advantage of the new loopholes. That is what the Government are all about—capital gains tax concessions for the rich and benefit losses for the poor, particularly the poor in Kensington.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I listened with great care to the speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), but I could not follow what relevance much of it had to new clause 23.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): That is because the hon. Gentleman was not listening.

Mr. Smith: I have just said that I listened with great care. Clearly, the hon. Lady is not listening. I did not see what relevance the hon. Gentleman's speech had to new clause 23, which is entitled

"Deferred charges on gains before 31st March 1982".

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, but first I should like to deal with some of the points that he raised. He referred to the fact that the number of capital gains tax payers had fallen in the past 10 years. Contrary to what he was suggesting, many people under the last Labour Government who were by no means wealthy had to pay capital gains tax. One of the welcome changes that the Government have made is to increase the threshold substantially to a level of £5,000 a year, which has reduced the number of capital gains tax payers but has not made a significant change to the yield from capital gains tax, which is still very substantial, and certainly will be next year, with the new 40 per cent. rate.

In regard to the change proposed in new clause 23, the hon. Gentleman suggested that it might be possible for a person to have held an asset for only one day before 31 March 1982. That is true, but it is equally true that a person might have held an asset for 17 years before that date. As I pointed out during our debate in Committee, the injustice of the previous situation was underlined by the fact that, during that 17-year period, inflation was 450 per cent. Many people were required to pay tax on gains that were not real. They were totally inflationary. A total of 450 per cent. had to be discounted from any gain before getting to the real element. I recall the debate when my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) raised that point.

My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary put forward a balanced view. He dealt with the merits of the argument, which is not entirely on one side. I understand the point he made about the fact that some people did not defer their gain and realised their asset before 1988. They could argue that they had been placed at a disadvantage. Everybody must recognise that, however they plan their tax affairs—they may take the best advice—they may be disadvantaged by changes in the net Budget.

There is a strong case for making a change and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on the formula he has suggested. As he said, there seems to be an element of rough justice in this. I can see that in the absence of satisfactory records that has to be the case. Although it is only a short time since the Inland Revenue published a press release on the subject—I think it was on Friday—I have had a response from one tax partner in Deloitte Haskins and Sells. He said:

"So far as roll over relief is concerned, the news is excellent and I think that the Government have devised a very equitable and practical way of dealing with a difficult problem."

He said that he felt that in the case of holdover relief it might be possible to go a little further because usually only one asset is involved. However, my right hon. Friend said that even there, the records might not be available. I can see that this is the best solution in both cases and I welcome the new clause.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): We are entitled to know what the cost of the new measure will be to the community and other taxpayers who are paying ordinary rates of taxation. The Financial Secretary gave a figure of £50 million. That is in addition to the sum already prised from him on 18 December in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). It appears that the Government estimate that since 1979 the community has already lost £1·2 billion in capital gains tax and an additional £250 million has been forfeited by the Treasury in relaxations in capital transfer tax and inheritance tax. It is possible that the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers have enjoyed cumulative gains of about £25,000 each in the decade from such changes.

What is more disturbing is the evidence that the Government, in their headlong drive to reward the rich, have not included the cost of the Budget proposals to reduce capital gains tax in this financial year in the financial statement published in March. On 9 May the Financial Secretary said:

"it is estimated that under the Budget proposals the reduction in capital gains tax on gains realised in 1988-89 by the top 5 per cent. of income tax payers will be rather less than £50 million."—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1988; Vol. 133, c. *30*.]

Page 40 of the Red Book shows that no such figure is included. It is incumbent on the Financial Secretary to explain that to us.

We also know from what the Financial Secretary has told us that a further £50 million is now to be sacrificed by the wider community to bring relief to the undeserving rich. It is a matter of concern to everybody that the new clause will give a further perk to the most wealthy. We know that the Chancellor has estimated that British people today can receive £1 million salaries and that by tax management, which involves, according to another answer, a mortgage of £30,000, a business expansion scheme investment of £40,000, an investment of £810,000 in the new enterprise zone unit trusts and a contribution to a retirement annuity scheme of £195,000, they can pay nothing in tax. Against that background it is inexplicable how a further new clause can be introduced which will give further handouts to the rich.

Already this year, following the Budget, £1·5 billion is being lost to the Exchequer in top rate tax allowances for the rich and a further £2 billion is being lost by Budget handouts to the top 1 per cent. of earners. We are entitled to a better justification from the Government than that given today. We are entitled to have the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) answered in full by the Financial Secretary. We deserve a proper explanation and I hope that the Government will consider withdrawing new clause 23.

Mr. Oppenheim: My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said that disallowing relief to people who had amassed pre-1982 gains but rolled those over into another asset was rough justice. I should like to go a stage further and say that it is very rough justice. Many people rolled over their assets through no fault of their own but because they were forced to do so, perhaps under threat of compulsory purchase or because their property had been compulsorily purchased. If it is technically possible to allow 50 per cent. relief against pre-1982 gains on the rolled-over assets, why is it not possible to allow 100 per cent. relief? I do not see what the technical or administrative difference is.

The Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), calls this clause a tax concession for the rich. I invite the hon. Gentleman to come to my constituency. He will be made most welcome. I will introduce him to a gentleman who will be surprised to hear himself called rich or super rich. He is a very small dairy farmer who is farming over

[Mr. Oppenheim]

the border of my constituency in Nottinghamshire. He was under threat of compulsory purchase by British Coal some years ago because it wanted to grab his land for opencast mining. He was forced to sell it to British Coal on disadvantageous terms. He rolled that money over into a new farm.

He is far from being rich. He does not drive a Range Rover, wear a huskie or green wellington boots. He is being severely disadvantaged by the fact that his pre-1982 gains are being allowed relief at 50 per cent. If the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East would care to see me in the Lobby afterwards we can make a date. I shall buy him half a lager and he can explain to that gentleman why he regards him as rich. He will probably receive a dusty response.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I accept the hon. Gentleman's invitation. I should love to visit his constituency and his constituents and meet the dairy farmer to whom he referred. Perhaps at the same time we could have discussions about everything the Government have done for dairy farmers.

Mr. Oppenheim: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has graciously accepted my invitation. He will be made welcome. Perhaps we can liaise afterwards.

It is worth mentioning that, although there has been criticism and talk about the Government cutting tax for top rate taxpayers, it is worth remembering that the corollary of that is not only that they have wiped out a lot of perks that wealthier people used to enjoy, but top rate taxpayers will be paying more capital gains because they will pay capital gains on the same band as their income tax. Many people will be paying 40 per cent. capital gains instead of 30 per cent. Therefore, many people whom Opposition Members do not like—the rich and super-rich —will be paying more in capital gains. It is worth recognising that fact, because I suspect that that is in line with Labour's philosophy.

I understand that the Government's objective in banding capital gains with income tax rates is to prevent distortions. I put it to my right hon. Friend that there are still distortions. If one makes a capital loss on a bond but makes a profit from the income of that bond, one cannot be offset against the other. Therefore, it is at least debatable that there is still a distortion in the system. I ask my right hon. Friend to address himself to that point.

I am conscious that I have already taken up enough of the time of the House and that I have to make extensive arrangements for the official reception in my constituency of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, so I shall pause in my oration.

5 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I apologise in advance for my ignorance. I did not serve on the Committee, so I am coming fresh to some of the arguments.

First, I reiterate the plea for more information from the Treasury about the cost implications of the concession, because that is important. If it is true that the Red Book guidelines do not reflect any charge, expenditure or change in the Government's Budget proposals as a result of this concession, that would certainly be important. My view of the new clause is not based on the principle; it is a question of balance and fine tuning. The amounts of money involved are an important factor in deciding whether the Government's judgment is right.

Some of the comments made by Labour Members cause me concern. From my experience in my constituency, I know that small business men and farmers have been severely prejudiced by previous provisions. The Minister may help the House if he can tell us whether he has received any proposals from the small business community and whether any farming institutions have made representations to him.

The Government's policies on farming—and particularly cereal farming—have required family farmers to make decisions about the disposal of their farms. I am sure that dairy farmers in Amber Valley are in the same position. Perhaps we should organise a bus run and the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) can buy us all half pints of lager. Perhaps we should all go to study the effects of Government policy on farmers.

Can the Minister give us a little more objective information about the people who will receive the concessions? Will they be people who could afford to pay, or will they be people who should benefit from the concessions? Is there a wider implication for small business men and farmers?

Capital taxation is not as important as direct and indirect taxation. Labour Members properly argue for a redistribution of wealth. However, the redistribution of wealth should be tackled by direct and indirect taxation. Capital taxation, if it is organised properly, should be part of the wealth-creating process. I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify some of those points. His answers will influence me in deciding whether to support the new clause.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): We shall wait with interest to see what the Social and Liberal Democrats will do. We shall be waiting with bated breath. I am also interested that the trip being arranged by the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) is gathering support. Perhaps we should all go, suitably fortified by a half pint of lager, to see the plight of the unfortunate farmer.

When the new clause was tabled we debated why it was necessary and desirable to wipe out gains made before 1982. The Government told us that there was an element of rough justice and that it was an arbitrary date. They said that it was difficult to find records before 1982, and apparently records could be found after that. They gave no satisfactory answer. The Opposition were left with the impression that the Government simply wanted to lift the burden from those who would have been liable to pay capital gains tax. Many people have made gains that were not accounted for because of inflation prior to 1982 and will receive great benefits under the proposals.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) in his assessment of the importance of capital taxation. It is very important, and the longer the Government remain in office, the more important it will be. There is no doubt that the amassing of capital and the building of capital will play an important part in the assembling of wealth, and we shall have to consider that.

At first sight, new clause 23 does not generate much excitement. We had rehearsed in Committee all the

arguments about why we thought that the proposals were bad, both because of the amount of tax forgone, which could have been better spent on the Health Service and because they were indicative of the Government's general policy to help the wealthy. I accept that there are many people who pay capital gains whom one would not call very wealthy or even wealthy. However, the main thrust of the Bill is to help those who are better off. That contrasts dramatically with the Government's attitude to those who receive social security and those on low incomes or with no income at all, whom they do not seem to accommodate in the same way.

I have two questions for the Financial Secretary. First, there is always an element of rough justice in fiscal changes, but why did the Government decide to benefit those who, by definition, have had a tax advantage some time ago? As I understand it, people who took advantage of rollover relief some time after 1982 on a gain incurred prior to 1982 will now receive the added bonus of a 50 per cent. exemption. They have already taken advantage of a tax break by getting rollover relief. Why are the Government helping those people any more than those unfortunate enough to have given away their asset before 1988—they may have divested themselves of an asset to a relative or sold it—without the benefit of rollover relief and who have to pay capital gains tax?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury knows of a constituent of mine, who is a doctor, who gave away an asset in 1985. I expect that he will want to know why he will not get the benefit of any favours. I made no bones about the fact that I was not particularly sympathetic to him, and that I do not like retrospective legislation in principle—although I accept that it is occasionally necessary in special circumstances. Why do the Government seek to help people who have already taken advantage of a tax break? If rollover relief was designed to ease the tax burden, that should have been enough in itself. Why do the Government propose to reduce capital gains tax in such cases by half?

There is the added point that the gain prior to 1982 could have been a minuscule part of the whole gain. Someone may have acquired the asset a few weeks or months before the 1982 cut-off date. Why should such people be able to take advantage of the whole reduction?

I shall quote example 4 in the Treasury press release to illustrate my argument:

"1980 Taxpayer A acquires a business asset

1983 A replaces the asset and claims deferral under Section 115 Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

1987 The replacement asset is given to B, and deferral is claimed under Section 79 Finance Act 1980.

1989 B emigrates"—

no doubt to sunnier climes—

"and the gain deferred in 1987 is brought into charge under Section 79 Finance Act 1981.

The gain deferred in 1987 is in part attributable indirectly to the disposal by A in 1983 of an asset which A acquired before 31 March 1982."

The point is that this particular taxpayer has already on two occasions taken advantage of existing legislation to mitigate the amount of tax that he had to pay. It is now proposed that he should have an added advantage. That is all very well and I do not begrudge anybody who is fortunate enough to be in that position that advantage, but it contrasts with the shameful treatment meted out to other taxpayers and others in receipt of money from the state.

Such a concession is not granted on social security matters or to ordinary basic rate taxpayers, who have been hard hit. It is only this special category who receive this advantage, and I suspect that a great deal of lobbying has been done on their behalf by professionals and accountants. It is unfair, but rather typical of the way that the Government have dealt with the Finance Bill. They bend over backwards to help people who, generally speaking, are not in need of the same degree of help as those who have fallen on the wrong side of the Government's fence.

I hope that the Financial Secretary will tell us why people who have already been catered for are being catered for again. Can he say whether in future the Government will be so charitable to those who so far have felt nothing but the wrong side of the Government's hand in terms of their tax treatment?

Mr. Norman Lamont: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said that we had not considered seriously enough another option, which was to do nothing. Perhaps I did not make the case clear enough: that would have been wrong in terms of justice. We have said that we think it wrong that people should be paying capital gains tax on highly inflationary gains made in the 1970s, which is why we introduced rebasing. Once we introduced that, it was logical to extend something similar to people who are deferring capital gains.

Deferral is a long-standing system, not a tax dodge as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) seems to think. People defer tax, but must ultimately pay it. If within that rolled-over or deferred gain there is an element of inflationary gain, that is pre-1982. Given that we have already decided that we would do something about the pre-1982 gain, there is obviously a case for considering this for the rolled-over or deferred gain.

I shall come to the details shortly. Part of this applies to businesses. This is a normal commercial transaction and it has been allowed in the tax system for a long time. It follows logically that if one is to rebase, one should look at the case for doing it with rolled-over gains as well.

Mr. Darling: I did not say that this was a tax dodge and I do not remember using those words. But without doubt it is a concession and an advantage not to have to pay capital gains tax when it would otherwise fall. That advantage is rollover relief, which both parties supported; that having been given, why is a further benefit to be given?

Mr. Lamont: Rollover relief, which is a long-standing feature of the CGT system, applies in carefully defined circumstances. It applies to businesses, but not to equity investment—I think rightly, although I have not managed to convince all my hon. Friends of that. Once there is rollover relief and if one is to give a degree of remedy for inflationary gain in the normal taxation of capital gains, obviously one should also consider the position of deferred gains.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East ignored some recent developments and Budget provisions. He ignored the fact that we have increased CGT for higher rate taxpayers to 40 per cent. and that the threshold for capital gains is to be reduced to £5,000. I know that Opposition Members think that that is far too generous. Earlier they made it clear that they wanted to abolish the exemption completely and to bring 10 million people into CGT for the first time. They do not seem to know that one

[Mr. Lamont]

third of CGT payers are basic rate payers. They are not the super-rich who seem so to obsess the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek).

Some Opposition Members seem to think that the CGT yield is declining, but the opposite is true. The yield has increased four times since 1979. We are moving into a fairer world in which people are prepared to unlock their assets and pay tax. That is why the yield from all capital taxes has increased under this Government, unlike what happened under the Labour Government with their punitive rates on other capital taxes. The take from CGT is £2 billion a year—just enough to pay for the increases in social security, which hon. Gentlemen somewhat irrelevantly but consistently mentioned.

5.15 pm

Hon. Gentlemen asked about the cost. I said that the cost of the concession might be £50 million, of which £20 million would go to companies. There is no mystery about it not being in the Red Book. It was in the press release and in the notes on clauses that I made available and about which I wrote to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I know that the Minister will tell us what the overall cost to the Exchequer will be more definitively and I am enjoying his rumbustious speech, as always. But he is misrepresenting the Labour party's position when he refers to abolishing thresholds entirely. That is not our position.

Mr. Lamont: That is what appeared to be said when we debated this subject on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: This argument has been made mischievously and I am sure in a light-hearted vein from the Government Front Bench before. It was put to the Minister as a possible option which the Government should have considered. It most certainly was not put to him as a final and definitive statement of our policy.

Mr. Lamont: As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman is not saying that the Labour party is definitely committed to bringing an extra 10 million people into CGT, but it is considering that seriously and will get its policy review to study it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) thought that perhaps this was too rough justice. His argument was: if we could have 50 per cent. relief, what was the technical difficulty about having 100 per cent. relief? There is no technical difficulty. It is just that it would be inappropriate. The alternative to 50 per cent. is not 100 per cent. It is to give a separate concession to those with precise records. I explained carefully and at length why that was not possible. I repeat that although we have decided to make this concession, I strongly believe that this is a matter of balance. The case is not overwhelming.

Some people are receiving a retrospective benefit which they did not expect when their gains were established perhaps some time ago. For some this will be more advantageous and for others it will be disadvantageous. If we ran two systems and allowed people to choose between what we are proposing and another system, where perhaps those with precise records could choose, it would undoubtedly be a one-way bet and those for whom the concession was in a sense over-generous would certainly make their decisions that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley raised the subject of rollover relief coming from compulsory purchase. One must be sympathetic to that. I see his point, but we could not run a different system for different types of capital gains. In any case, even with something that arose from compulsory purchase, the same problems of trying to apportion the gain before and after 1982 would still arise, and there might be a complicated interaction, with the proceeds of the compulsory purchase going into different assets. It would not be easy.

My hon. Friend also referred to losses on the sale of bonds not being offsetable against income from bonds. That is true. Leaving aside the general issue of allowing capital losses against income, which would be expensive and which we have always resisted—it would run into billions of pounds—my hon. Friend will be aware that bonds are generally outside the CGT net altogether. One of the effects of this concession will be to allow rollover relief into convertibles. I stress to my hon. Friend that we are not integrating income tax and capital gains tax. We have aligned the rates, but we are not moving towards complete integration of the two taxes.

Mr. Oppenheim: I may be wrong, but I had understood that most types of gilts were outside the capital gains net; but other types of bonds, such as Eurobonds and a variety of other fixed interest instruments, would come within the net. I did not mention gilts; I specifically mentioned bonds for that reason.

Mr. Lamont: The concession goes beyond gilts. If my hon. Friend wants me to be more precise about that, I shall have to let him have further details later.

Although this solution is somewhat rough and ready, we have addressed a real problem. When people have given gifts with deferred and accrued gains, or when they have rolled over assets, it is right that there should be some relief for them against inflationary gains, just as we have introduced that for taxpayers generally for pre-1982 inflationary gains. I cannot see why the Opposition should regard that as so unjust. It follows from what we put forward in the original Budget measures. I believe it will be widely welcomed, especially by the business community.

I have given the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) the figure for businesses, but I cannot give him the figure for small businesses. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the new clause.

Dr. Marek: It was refreshing to hear the Financial Secretary giving a balanced view of the new clause and being honest about what he thought of it. He said that there were arguments in both directions but that he was persuaded by the arguments and representations that had been made to him. It will come as no surprise to him to learn that, having listened to the arguments from Conservative Members and others, we have come to the conclusion that, on balance, the new clause should not be part of the Bill.

I listened to the Financial Secretary seriously and with interest. It is a surprise to hear his hon. Friends on the Back Benches, who always seem to be pleading special cases, probably on behalf of clients sitting in the Gallery. The Register of Members' interests shows that the hon.

Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has two directorships—of What to Buy plc and of World Opinion Ltd. Presumably he will not recommend that his clients buy farm land.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) also spoke. I see that he is a consultant to Price Waterhouse, *Accountancy Age*, the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association, Rediffusion Business Electronics Ltd. and British Venture Capital Association. I make no complaint about that. I just wonder whether the sort of people to whom he is a consultant have an interest in the new clause being passed and in the gains that they would make if it were.

The Register of Members' Interests can be referred to by any hon. Member. It is possible to question whether the hon. Member for Beaconsfield speaks from the heart and really believes what he says or whether, given that in another walk of life he advises people how to avoid paying tax, he sees an opportunity here to please his clients.

Mr. Oppenheim: It is comforting to think that the hon. Gentleman has gone to the trouble of doing some research into my business background. It is a shame that his research was not more thorough. If he had done it properly he would have discovered that What to Buy put out a publication that looks into office equipment and information technology—so it is highly unlikely that it would recommend that its subscribers buy farmland.

Dr. Marek: I am pleased to hear that. My research was done quickly by consulting the Register of Members' Interests that lies on the Table. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will enter his directorships and consultancies in it so that we can have a better idea of them when he rises in future debates on financial matters.

When Conservative Back Benchers talk about avoiding distortions of the tax system I get the message that they regard paying any tax as a distortion. If their supporters could pay no tax there would be no distortion. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) gave the numbers of capital gains tax payers, I believe for 1983-84, when there were 120,000 of them. They are the better-off people in society. Many of my constituents would not know what capital gains were, let alone have to pay tax on them. A small band of privileged people exercise their patronage through their power, wealth and ability to make capital gains. No doubt they see their interests clearly and will write to the Financial Secretary about them.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Are the one third of capital gains tax payers who pay tax at the basic rate an exception to what the hon. Gentleman is saying?

Dr. Marek: I shall make that clear later. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Beaconsfield can contain himself until then, I shall deal with that point later. Of course, capital gains tax can be paid by people who are only moderately wealthy, but it is also paid by the super-rich. There are cases such as that mentioned by the hon. Member for Amber Valley in which a person is genuinely hard done by because of forces outside of his or her control. In that case British Coal wanted to buy the land and the person, although he wanted to, could not continue farming. There are such cases, but the solution does not lie in what the Government propose. The solution is to deal with the problem of enabling people to pass down businesses. The Government should have turned their attention to that.

There are problems in farming and they should be solved by the Government turning their attention to enabling farmers to pass on their farms as working concerns to other people without having to leave the industry or being penalised any more than they should be by capital gains tax.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) that people should pay capital gains tax if they make capital gains, and that is the central point. The problem with the clause is that the Government decided to rebase the gains and to give a tax giveaway to the rich, but missed out some of the rich. Those whom they missed out wrote to the Financial Secretary and said, "Look here, what is going on? Your are giving all these people, because of rebasing—never mind whether it is because of inflation—a tax handout that you are not giving me." I give the Government their due; they recognise their own. The Financial Secretary immediately took it to heart and said, "Yes, there must be more pig swill in the troughs so that everyone can put their snouts into it." That is precisely what they have done.

5.30 pm

Mr. Tim Smith: The hon. Gentleman can do better than this.

Dr. Marek: I will. I am being objective.

When an error was discovered in the figures for pension payments, an error that resulted in pensioners not receiving—*[Interruption.]* Having lost the argument, Tory Members are not able to come back with any genuine point on what I am saying and instead are diverting the attention of the House by making irrelevant comments. I wish they would not.

When the Government made a mistake in the pension payment figures and were underpaying pensioners by about £1 million a year, did they increase the pension for those who had lost money because of that error?

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Boring.

Dr. Marek: It may be boring for the hon. Gentleman, but it was not for the pensioners who lost money because of that error. I accept that that error was not made deliberately. However, instead of giving the money back to the pensioners and putting up the pensions by 0·1 per cent. or 0·2 per cent. above the usual uprating, the Government gave that money to charity.

That treatment of ordinary working men and women was completely different from the treatment given to people who make capital gains and pay capital gains tax. If people are rich and pay capital gains tax, they expect and receive all the benefits and the attention of the Government to ensure that they do not go without anything that someone else already has. The Government are not especially interested in the ordinary person on the street, the pensioner or someone with not a great deal of money, so all they promised was that the money would be given to charity. They are not interested in increasing the pensions more than they have to.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Will the hon. Gentleman now answer my earlier question? Are the one third of capital gains taxpayers who are basic rate income taxpayers an exception to the remarks that he is making?

Dr. Marek: Only the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers pay the top rate of income tax, so not many people will pay 40p in the pound. It is precisely those people about whom I am talking—those who are rich and have far more wealth, patronage and power than the ordinary man in the street and more money than almost all of my constituents even dream about. That is a clear answer to the Financial Secretary's question.

The Opposition are not enamoured of the new clause. We believe that it is yet another concession of £50 million or £20 million, or whatever the Financial Secretary said. I have forgotten now, but I will read it in the *Official Report* tomorrow. That money could have been given to renovating our schools, to funding fully the nurses' pay award, to getting our infrastructure into better shape, to building our roads or railways, to building more hospitals or to almost any other sphere of public life that desperately needs more money. Instead, the Government have chosen to give it to the rich who have already been given more money than ever before. We cannot support the new clause and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 287, Noes 173.

Division No. 40] **[5.35 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*

Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 3

INTEREST RATES

'In section 378 (3) (e) of the Taxes Act 1988 there shall be added at the end "and—(b) in particular for the publication of statistics on a monthly basis setting down prevailing levels of interest rates from a representative sample of market rates for mortgage lending, bank lending and other consumer credit".'.—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause requires the Government to publish monthly comparative figures of the varying rates of credit available to consumers from mortgage lending institutions —building societies, banks and other finance institutions and stores. It is important for consumers to have access to the fullest possible, independently presented information about the rates of credit available to them. That is especially important in the present circumstances because of the enormous variation in the interest rates available for credit. I must pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who has already raised this issue in a Bill that he presented to the House.

The available rates of credit show an enormous variation. An overdraft is available from the bank at between 14 and 17 per cent., plus bank charges. Personal loans may be available from a high street bank at between 19·5 and 20·75 per cent. Interest rates on Access and on Barclay's Visa cards range between 23 and 24 per cent.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

annual percentage rate. The Chase Manhattan Visa card, which has recently been introduced, is somewhat cheaper, at 16·9 per cent. APR.

If one goes along to the gas board showroom in the high street and wishes to purchase an item on hire purchase credit, one will find that the rate varies between 30 and 35 per cent. APR. The higher figure is the one charged to cash customers, which is blatant discrimination against people who do not have bank accounts.

The rates available on different store cards vary even more dramatically. Yesterday, I carried out a random survey of store card and store credit rates of interest in an average British high street. Perhaps I should not call it an average British high street, as it was Kensington high street. I discovered that various rates of credit are available in the major stores there. At Dixons, they range from 29·8 to 39·9 per cent. and at Next from 26·8 to 32·9 per cent. At Marks and Spencer, the rate is 26·8 per cent. At Barkers, on the Frasercard system, the rate is 29·8 per cent. At BHS, the rate is between 29 and 34·7 per cent.

In that welter of available mainstream high street credit, there is surely a crucial need for information to enable consumers to make well-judged choices and decisions. That may be all very well for the high street stores, but the back-street loan sharks are infinitely worse. Last year, Birmingham city council and Birmingham money advice centre carried out a joint survey which found that annual percentage rates for the back-street merchants in their area ranged from 153 per cent. up to a staggering 4,822 per cent. They also found that one local firm, S and U Stores, told its customers that the APR on the credit that it made available was 54 per cent. That in itself would have been bad enough, but, when the collection charges that the borrower had to pay were included, the real cost of borrowing was 835 per cent.

There is not only an enormously wide variety in the rates of credit available, but far more credit is being offered to and thrust at the public than ever before. Outstanding consumer credit has risen by an average of about 15 per cent. a year over the past four years. Last year, to October, it was even worse. It rose by 18·7 per cent. and it is becoming worse still.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether those figures include credit advance for house purchase and, if so, what proportion that represents?

Mr. Chris Smith: They do and, of course, the mortgage finance available is a crucial component part. It accounts for about three quarters of the overall credit figures. That does not make the point any less valid because, to an increasing extent, people are borrowing money on mortgages against the value of their house and spending that money on items other than housing. That is borrowing against security, but it is borrowing none the less.

The amount of outstanding consumer credit is rising in real terms. It is rising on a per person basis and as a percentage of GDP. It is also worth pointing out that Britain makes far more use of credit cards than any other EEC country. In this country, we hold about half the Visa cards in the entire Community and two fifths of the Eurocards were issued in the United Kingdom.

The problem is further highlighted by yesterday's figures on bank lending which were issued by the Bank of England. They showed that lending in the personal sector —again, lending ostensibly for house purchase formed a major part of that—rose by 7 per cent. in the three months to March. That is a rise of £4·4 billion compared with £3·2 billion in the three months to February. The money borrowed as part of those figures for house purchase both feeds on and fuels the massive rises in property prices which have taken place, especially in London and the south-east, during the last couple of years.

There was one slightly brighter point about the figures issued yesterday by the Bank of England. There was a considerable increase in industrial borrowing, and we hope that that is a sign that industry is now tentatively beginning to improve its investment performance, but that fact must not be allowed to mask the dramatic increases in individual, personal, domestic borrowing that yesterday's figures revealed.

Many problems are inevitably coming in train from that increase in borrowing. For example, personal savings are at their lowest for 26 years. When I asked the Prime Minister about that, she came out with a remarkable doctrine. In a letter to me of 16 February 1988 she seemed to claim that because there was greater confidence in the economy people felt that they could save less and spend more. She might care to tell that to the most prosperous and best performing economy in the world, Japan, because a large part of its economic success has been built precisely on high levels of personal saving.

6 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): So that the House may judge whether the interpretation that the hon. Gentleman put on the letter that he received from the Prime Minister is correct, will he read the relevant passage to the House?

Mr. Smith: I shall be delighted to do so. The relevant paragraph—the third—in the Prime Minister's letter says:

"One reason for the fall in the ratio during the 1980s has probably been the reversal of that unsatisfactory position."

The Prime Minister had earlier in her letter been conducting her usual diatribe against the 1970s. She went on:

"Inflation has been brought down to levels last experienced in the 1960s and, with greater confidence in the future, consumers are now in a position to save a smaller share of their real incomes and enjoy higher spending and living standards".

As an economic doctrine about the role of savings within an economy, that is astounding and somewhat peculiar in its economic logic.

We have a picture of personal savings at an extremely low level.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I should like to get on with my point. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in due course if he lets me continue for the moment.

The reality is rather different from that painted by the Prime Minister. For example, the Office of Fair Trading has estimated that more than 3 million adults have experienced difficulty in keeping up with their debt repayments during the past five years. That is the reality of the credit society that we in Britain have been building during the past seven or eight years.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) talked about people raising finance for house purchase. He will also be aware that repossessions of homes for mortgage arrears have risen fivefold in the past eight years. He will also doubtless be aware that the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has recorded a doubling during that period of counselling on consumer debt and related items. Last year the citizens advice bureaux dealt with 1·4 million cases of debt counselling.

Personal indebtedness is a major and growing problem for many families and the more that credit is pushed upon them, sold to them in the glossiest and, in some cases, most misleading of ways, and the more that families are given insufficient information on which to make judgments, the more they will face problems of eventual indebtedness.

The growth of credit is bad enough for individuals; it is disastrous for the economy as a whole. The prosperity that parts of Britain—I emphasise parts—have been experiencing in the past couple of years has been built on a bubble of ever-expanding credit. It cannot go on for ever.

Yet the Chancellor's only response to the problem of credit expansion has been an idle and negligent one. His only answer is to adjust interest rates. Indeed, he reiterated that last Thursday in a speech to the Cities of London and Westminster Conservative Association's annual lunch. Where else should it have been held but at the Savoy hotel.

The Chancellor spoke about the problems of borrowing and credit. He made the somewhat surprising claim that fiscal policy was more or less unrelated to the availability of credit and levels of inflationary consumption. He seemed to be unaware of the fact that those people lucky enough to have benefited from the dramatic reductions in top rate tax in his Budget were unlikely to go out and spend the money that the Budget was giving them. He also ruled out any control of credit by the Government as being "a distortion of the market".

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman makes a case that the savings ratio in Britain has fallen somewhat in recent years, but is it not true that the ratio of public debt has also fallen somewhat, and that contrasts rather dramatically with the situation in the 1970s when we had high public debt and relatively low private debt? May I further take him up on his comparison with Japan? He says that Japan has consistently had a high savings ratio and that is supposedly one of the main reasons for its success. But the fact is that in the 1960s and 1970s Britain's savings ratio was as high as Japan's, and that did not do us much good. One reason why it did not do us much good is that, whereas the Japanese had a low level of public debt and public spending, we had a high level of public debt and public spending. May I also ask whether, as a matter of interest, it is possible nowadays to join the Labour party on a credit card?

Mr. Smith: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's substantive points, which I think related to the balance in the overall economy between public and private debt. The hon. Gentleman ignores the need in any economy to have a healthy supply of credit within the private sector. I shall come to that in a minute, because the crucial factor there is the word "healthy".

But that is also a principle which should be applied to the public sector. To make a virtue, as the Chancellor seems to have been doing in the course of his various pronouncements in the past few months, of having a minus figure for his public sector borrowing requirement is not necessarily a sensible way of planning for future investment in Britain's health, welfare and future wealth-creating capacity. That is an issue to which we shall doubtless return on many occasions in the next few months and years.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury appears puzzled. I was making the basic point that for the Chancellor to claim that there is some necessary virtue in having a public sector borrowing surplus rather than a public sector borrowing deficit is not necessarily a sensible economic approach to running the national economy.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): Is the hon. Gentleman therefore suggesting precisely the converse, that it is more virtuous for the Government to have a borrowing requirement than to be in surplus? Is that the Labour party's policy now?

Mr. Smith: No, it depends inevitably on the supply of revenue to the Government and on what the Government wish to spend their money on. In current circumstances, when the Government have more money than they know sensibly what to do with, and, instead of doing what they should have done and investing properly in our Health Service, house building, education and local services, they have given money to top rate taxpayers, they have the balance wrong within their own overall budgetary levels.

Inevitably, from time to time, a Government will need to borrow. There will be times when a Government want to be in surplus. It all depends on the circumstances at the time. However, I suspect that making a virtue of the great motif of Government economic policy that the PSBR must always be in surplus, which seems to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer's current view, will haunt the Chancellor when economic circumstances change. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury ignored the fact that economic circumstances will change and are changing. One of the problems that will fuel the change is precisely the level of available credit and borrowing.

Mr. Major: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is misleading the House unintentionally. He equated the desirability, as he saw it, of the PSBR to necessary investment, also as he saw it, in public sector services. He thereby implied, and the Labour party states this frequently, that there is under-investment in those services. Perhaps he will remind the House of the level of public sector capital investment in the current year and the extent by which expenditure on priority programmes has increased in the past public expenditure round.

Mr. Smith: Yes. I can also remind the Chief Secretary of the needs that are not being met and which should be met by the Government in their current public expenditure provision.

I remind the Government of the desperate needs of the Health Service and the issues raised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), who referred to the way in which the Government have failed to fund fully the nurses' pay award. The Government are neglecting much in public financial provision. Instead of thinking that they have done everything that they need to do, they should consider the needs that are not being met, and which they should be meeting.

Referring once more to the nub of the proposition under discussion—personal sector borrowing and the way

[Mr. Smith]

in which personal credit is expanding—the Government's only answer is to say that we must adjust interest rates. At the same time, they rule out the possibility of alternatives such as any direct control of credit. They claim that high basic interest rates will solve the problem. They will not. High basic interest rates have very little impact on consumer credit consumption because the margins between base rate and consumer rates are so high.

High basic interest rates will have a direct impact on the mortgage rate. Any further rise in the mortgage rate—which must be imminent now—will have only temporary macroeconomic benefits while harming directly many millions of home owners. Higher interest rates do not appear to take much of the steam out of the credit boom, but they increase the risk of default.

In addition, high basic interest rates make life much more difficult for British business. The Confederation of British Industry estimates that the most recent five changes in interest rates have cost British industry about £625 million.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I have been following the hon. Gentleman's arguments with some care. Before he refers in detail to business interest charges, will he explain in the light of his statement that personal borrowing, particularly on credit cards, is dangerous for the economy and the individual, how he would discourage people from using credit cards? Would the Labour party introduce a tax on credit cards?

6.15 pm

Mr. Smith: "No" is the short answer to that. The hon. Gentleman quite clearly has not listened to me with care. The proposition that I have been advancing is not that personal borrowing per se is bad, but that personal borrowing either at usurious rates of interest or when rising out of control, is not necessarily in the best interests of consumers or the economy as a whole. The key point is to ensure that the growth of consumer credit is kept properly under control

Mr. Hanley: How?

Mr. Smith: I was coming to that. It is not being kept properly under control at the moment. At the moment supply imposes more credit on consumers than they want or need.

The National Consumer Council has provided the answer to the question raised by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). It wants better protection for consumers and it has stated that fact clearly in many papers and statements over the past year. However, none of those documents relates directly to the new clause, so I will not refer to them in detail.

The Director General of Fair Trading also wants better protection for consumers and in his annual report he makes precisely the point made in new clause 3. In his annual report, Sir Gordon Borrie states:

"For credit to be used successfully"—

hon. Members should notice that Sir Gordon, like Opposition Members, wants credit to be used successfully because it has a major, important and beneficial role to play in an economy provided that it is used successfully—

"there are two vital prerequisites—first both parties must know what they are letting themselves in for; and second credit must be both given and taken responsibly. This means that, if there are to be improvements, both lenders and borrowers must be better informed and both must demonstrate the highest standards of moral responsibility."

Better information is precisely what new clause 3 is about. The Opposition entirely agree with Sir Gordon Borrie, and the new clause is a first step towards a better informed consumer market better able to judge, discern and choose between available credit. New clause 3 will also assist the ability to make demand the arbiter of credit rather than supply. At present, supply dictates and credit is effectively on the loose.

If Conservative Members are not prepared to listen to me, to Sir Gordon Borrie or to the National Consumer Council, they might listen to what *The Times* stated this morning. *The Times* comments on the latest figures on bank lending. While welcoming the improvement in the figures in industrial borrowing, it describes the present state of affairs graphically as

"a candy floss society busy spending its way towards the next balance of payments crisis."

That is precisely what is happening, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer sits back and believes that an adjustment of a half per cent. here or there in the base rate is sufficient to make amends. It is not. The least that the Government can do is to accept the logic of our case, accept the dangers inherent in the present situation, and accept our new clause to provide consumers with at least basic information about the rates of credit that are available to them, to enable them to make informed choices rather than uninformed choices, as they are doing at the moment.

Mr. Gow: This debate takes place in the benign presence of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He had to listen, as you had to listen, Mr. Speaker, to the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). You are a keen student, Mr. Speaker, as I am, of missives that were sent by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to Dr. Johannes Witteveen. On the desk in the study at our house in the republic of Lambeth there is a copy of the famous letter dated 15 December 1976.

By one of the strange accidents of events, I happened to re-read that letter this morning. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East assisted in drafting the letter. The then Labour Government embarked upon precisely that policy of borrowing that is, once again, advocated by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne approved the Chancellor of the Exchequer's draft commitment to reduce public borrowing and the share of public expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product.

On that famous day, just before Christmas 1976, there was the beginning of an understanding of the need to restrain borrowing. *[Interruption.]* I should not be rebuked by Opposition Members for talking about borrowing. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury spent little time talking about new clause 3, but he spent considerable time redefining the Labour party's borrowing policies. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was perfectly justified in intervening twice during the hon. Gentleman's speech to try to educate him in the lessons that were learnt 12 years ago by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, who is sitting only two Benches behind the hon.

Gentleman. We have heard the hon. Gentleman disagree with all the lessons that were learnt so painfully by the Labour Government in 1976.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: Of course I shall give way. The more the hon. Gentleman seeks to intervene, the more I shall certainly give way.

Mr. Smith: I am delighted to receive such a ready reception from the hon. Gentleman. When he forecast a public sector borrowing requirement of £4 billion in 1986 and said that that was just about the right sort of borrowing level for the economy that year, was the Chancellor of the Exchequer being sensible, wise or foolish?

Mr. Gow: When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor presented his Budget statement in 1986, he made a forecast about the then borrowing requirement. He said that, in the conditions of 1986, it was correct to adopt a borrowing requirement of about the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave. Then, in 1987, my right hon. Friend budgeted for a small public sector borrowing requirement, but, as it turned out, there was a surplus or negative borrowing requirement in the financial year ended 30 March 1988. In his Budget statement in March this year, my right hon. Friend told the House that he would not budget for a surplus this year, and that, quite rightly, it will be the future policy of Conservative Chancellors –he gave no time limit—that there should not henceforth be a deficit Budget. That policy is long overdue.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne will recall that the last time a Labour Government balanced the Budget, Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, one of the founders of what used to be known as the Social Democratic party, was Chancellor. In each year from 1974 to 1979, we had a massive borrowing requirement. The Chancellor's decision, which was announced in this year's Budget, that henceforth we should have a surplus is one of the important factors that will have downward pressure on the rate of inflation.

I deplore the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. He will be corrected by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. There was another extraordinary contrast and illogicality in the hon. Gentleman's speech. He rebuked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for allowing an explosion of domestic borrowing, and then criticised the same Chancellor for curtailing public borrowing. That was an extraordinary duality of proposition in consecutive sentences. I shall refer to the serious explosion of domestic credit.

I am certainly one of those who believe that, on balance, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was mistaken to reduce interest rates. I welcome the 2·5 per cent. increase in interest rates in the past six weeks. Now that the Chancellor has wisely decided that there is to be an excess of revenue over expenditure this year—I am sure that he will meet and possibly exceed that target—interest rates are the principal remaining weapon in his hands for keeping downward pressure on inflation.

Interest rates are referred to in the new clause. I am glad to see my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on the Treasury Bench. If, by the end of this Parliament, we are to abate the evil of inflation still further—I believe that we should—and secure the goal of stable prices, which, after 12 years of Tory Governments, we should secure—that means zero inflation—we must face up to the fact that we must have relatively high interest rates.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: How does the hon. Gentleman square his opinion with that of Dr. Andrew Sentance, the head of the CBI's economic trends policy group? He stated:

"Industry is currently bearing the brunt of the Government's determination to squeeze inflation by raising interest rates."

Does the hon. Gentleman realise that by "bearing the brunt" the head of the economic trends policy group means more job losses and less competitiveness abroad, and that that is a direct consequence of what the hon. Gentleman is advocating?

Mr. Gow: I do not know how you would react to comments from officials of the CBI, Mr. Speaker. I should be anxious if I found myself in agreement with the economic spokesman of the CBI. It comes as no surprise that the CBI is criticising the Government's interest rate policy. There would be greater reason to sympathise with Government critics in the CBI if, in recent years, when we have had high interest rates, industry had performed less well. The truth is that such folk are always whingeing. You do not have the misfortune to listen to them as often as some hon. Members do, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of the policies we have pursued over the past nine years, our determination to abate the evil of inflation has enabled industry to secure the dramatic renewal of its own fortunes, the dramatic increase in output, and improved productivity. It lies very ill on the lips of CBI members to criticise the very Government policies on interest rates that have brought about their companies' renewal.

6.30 pm

Mr. Hanley: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is the failure of CBI members to keep wage increases under control that is one of the greatest contributory factors to the inflation we have today?

Mr. Gow: I have never believed that high wages cause inflation, but I have believed that high wages cause unemployment. Only Governments can cause inflation, and only Governments can cure it.

By another of those strange accidents of events, I have in my hand a copy of a speech made by the noble Lord, Lord Callaghan when he was Prime Minister. The post that he held was First Lord of the Treasury. *[Laughter.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) laughs when I remind him that Lord Callaghan was First Lord of the Treasury, but the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne remembers it, because he was at the Treaury at the time.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): That is more than the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) ever was.

Mr. Gow: I was at the Treasury, although not for very long. However, when Opposition Members intervene from a sedentary position, their interventions should at least conform with the truth. I have always had a suspicion about those who wear red shirts, and my suspicion seems to be confirmed.

I commend this quotation to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, who is now the Opposition

[Mr. Gow]

spokesman on Treasury matters. I have a copy of this excellent speech also at the side of my bed, along with the famous letter of 15 December 1976.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household): To whom was that letter written?

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend was not in the Chamber when I mentioned earlier that the letter was to Dr. Johannes Witteveen. I shall send a copy to the Vice-Chamberlain.

This speech was made a little earlier, in September. In it, the then Prime Minister commented:

"We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment by . . . boosting Government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and that in so far as it ever did exist, it only worked on each occasion since the war by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy, followed by a higher level of unemployment as the next step."

Yet we hear the Opposition spokesman on Treasury matters say that the Government are wrong to eliminate borrowing this year, and that they are wrong to set out as a long-term strategy a commitment to no further borrowing but to the repayment of debt. The hon. Gentleman ought to be pleased that the Government have decided to lighten the burden on our children, upon whom an extra burden had been heaped by the Labour party, because every time that a Government borrows to finance current expenditure, it is the next generation that must repay that borrowing.

Labour party Members claim to be the great moralists. They accuse my right hon. and hon. Friends who sit on the Treasury Bench of being immoral, but the great immorality is for Governments to borrow. The great morality is this Government's commitment to repay debt.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has a fair selection of bedroom ornaments, and I offer another that he may like to add. I refer to another speech of the now noble Lord, Lord Callaghan. When he was Chancellor of the Exchequer he claimed to have a triple objective, which was to keep inflation down, to keep the balance of payments right, and to improve growth. He omitted reducing unemployment, because that was not a problem at the time. It is a measure of change that one can no longer talk about a triple objective, because reducing unemployment is now also a major objective.

My noble Friend did not achieve his triple objective but it was an honourable one at which to aim. Today, we have a simple objective. It is not difficult to attain, based as it is purely on the level of inflation; all other matters are subordinate to the task of reducing inflation. I am not denying the importance of that objective, but I deny the overwhelming significance we attach to it in a limited manner of operation.

Our balance of payments is now right, not because of any brilliance on behalf of the Government but because of North sea oil. It is not a question of revenue but of the balance of payments. We used to import enormous quantities of oil, which cost us large numbers of dollars. Now we export our oil. That is the major difference, and we ought to be more aware of that than of the more secondary revenue implications.

Growth comes in the wake of balance of payments, because that was the major constraint throughout our entire post-war history. Ever since 1945, stop-go was a question of our balance of payments. It is no measure of the brilliance of the Government's operation of the economy that that constraint is not what it was.

The Government's determination to keep down inflation is admirable, but they have gone a little too far in a number of directions. They have tried to interfere with the exchange rates. The level of the pound, the deutschmark and the dollar, has become of overwhelming importance. All of my hon. Friends, and I suspect many Conservative Members, agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his quarrel with the Prime Minister, believing that he was right and that she was wrong. He was right to take into account the situation that will emerge at the end of this year, when our balance of payments moves into deficit. The Chancellor attempted, quite rightly, to iron out that peak in the deutschmark in particular, even to the extent of not enjoying the beneficial effects upon inflation that the Prime Minister put as the dominant factor.

The right hon. Lady took the easy way out. The easy way out has been chosen by too many Chancellors of the Exchequer facing a level of inflation that was greater than they wanted. They tried to make the pound too strong, and it was industry that suffered. Industry suffers again and again. The Government receives the cheers of the City but the complaints of industry.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne should not diminish too much the views of the CBI. Occasionally, it does talk a little bit of nonsense, but in so far as there is any organisation speaking for industry, it does not do so all the time. It speaks also for other aspects of the economy. In speaking for industry, nobody does it better than the CBI. Chambers of commerce perform that function fairly well, but the CBI is a much more important body. We should not try to diminish its efforts to stand up for manufacturing industry in a way that no other body does.

Mr. Oppenheim: How can the right hon. Gentleman assert that the Government are keeping the pound too strong when the current pound-deutschmark exchange rate is 20 per cent. lower than it was two years ago? It is also about 40 per cent. lower than it was five years ago. Even against the dollar, the pound is about 20 per cent. lower than it was five or six years ago.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) should not view such matters historically. It is simply a matter of looking at our balance of trade. That is the real test of how well we are exporting the products of our manufacturing industries, and that figure has declined markedly by comparision with imports of manufactured articles. That is the test of industry, and it is the test of employment as well. So we see that there is a need to reduce interest levels, which was a point put so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith).

It is the easiest thing in the world to increase interest rates in an attempt to affect inflation, but I do not think that that will have much effect on consumer demand when consumers are paying the rates that my hon. Friend has described. When they are paying between 25 and 35 per cent. APR, the odd 1 per cent. will not make much difference to them. It will, however, have an enormous effect on industry. That is the dilemma: the one can be

helped, but only at the expense of the other. In the one case such action will have little effect, and in the other it will cause disproportionate suffering. Once again industry is the major victim of the Government's policies.

The inflation problem does not relate merely to the retail prices index, at somewhere between 4 and 5 per cent. Property inflation must also be taken into account. Statistics do not tell us much about that aspect, but it is enormously important. We have given advantage after advantage to those who, instead of spending their money on productive assets, spend it on the way in which they live in their houses. We have gone too far: the level of mortgage relief is now quite nonsensical.

The tax return on productive assets does not bear comparison with the advantage from adding an extension to a house, trading up and moving into a new one. Buying a productive asset means paying capital gains tax of up to 40 per cent., but nothing need be paid on a home. In the case of inheritance tax, those who trade up will again have the advantage. The abolition of schedule A was nonsense. Buying a productive asset means paying the full tax on the income from it, but no tax need be paid on the advantage of paying no rent on a property.

That absurdity of absurdities, the poll tax, will act as a further ratchet on the value of expensive houses. No one could oppose home ownership, but we can oppose the incredible distortion that results form it. House price inflation is 3 or 4 times the RPI, or even higher. Those who want inflation to fall must level that charge at the Government.

House prices vary too much between the north and the south. House prices in the north, particularly in the past month or two, have increased very rapidly, and I do not regard that as a good development. We are not simply equalising prices in the north and the south; we are letting the disease travel north. Inflation of 4·5 or 4·75 per cent. may be important, but it is not having the devastating effects of the 15, 20 or 25 per cent. inflation in house prices.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The right hon. Gentleman said that he thought that the difference between house prices in the south and those in the north was too great, but that he did not want it to be made good by a rise in house prices in the north. Does he advocate engineering a fall in prices in the south?

Mr. Sheldon: That is a very facile question for the Ecomomic Secretary to put. Of course I do not. The result of the increase in house prices is that people are behaving as if they had received large increases in their wealth—which indeed they have—and gaining some comfort from those increases by sitting on them. That causes a distortion of the housing market in this part of the country. I am sure that, in his more reflective moments, the Economic Secretary will not try to defend the increase in house prices. No one would defend it. People say that it is a pity, but that they see no way of doing much about it.

6.45 pm

I am not sure that I have the agreement of my Front Bench—one of the pleasures of being a Back Bencher is being able to speak one's mind without considering the consequences too fully—but I believe that we should think about credit control. Of course there is no final answer; instructions to the banks and credit card controls are not permanent. But nothing in this sphere is permanent. It is the Government's ideology that prevents them from even considering the possible solutions.

Financial management is about a number of solutions. That, indeed, is what Budgets are about. They do not aim to set the economy for all time, but seek to deal with problems as they arise. A major problem of our time is the level of house prices and the level of credit, which have gone disgracefully wrong, and the way in which credit for consumers is going ahead much more strongly than credit for industry.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Apart from advocating the imposition of credit controls—which did not work very well when his party was in government—is the right hon. Gentleman now saying that Labour policy is to abolish mortgage interest relief on owner-occupation, and at the same time to introduce capital gains tax on any profit that an owner-occupier might obtain on selling his house?

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman usually listens to me rather more carefully. I distanced myself from the Front Bench from the outset. I have just pointed out that the advantage of speaking from the Back Benches is that one speaks for oneself. Speaking for myself, I should like to see some sort of credit control.

The hon. Gentleman has said that credit controls did not work in the past. I know that they cannot work over a long period, but what they can do is have an immediate and direct impact at the time of their imposition. The impact will weaken and die away thereafter, but such immediate intervention might bring about an improvement in the present position.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The right hon. Gentleman has talked about house prices. Is it not more symptomatic that demand may be outstripping supply? Ought we not to ease planning controls to allow developers to build more houses?

The right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends should support the Housing Bill, which will bring on to the housing market many of the 700,000 surplus properties that are being kept empty because of the Rent Acts.

Mr. Sheldon: As for surplus properties, the Public Accounts Committee found that the Ministry of Defence was far worse about hoarding its houses than any local authority, but we had better not go any further into that.

Of course this is a matter of supply and demand—because it is so easy to obtain credit. That is the entire point of what I have been saying. There is of course no final solution, and anyone who thinks that we can legislate and then go away for a year or two is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. But what we can do is produce a temporary effect.

It is a pity that Conservative Members' ideology does not allow them to examine such methods. We could have a better debate if these matters were examined more fully.

Mr. Oppenheim: Judging from the comments made by both Front and Back-Bench Opposition Members, it appears that credit explosions are all right as long as they are in the public sector, but that they are immoral in the private sector. That is a strange contradiction, but goes some way to explaining why earlier this decade, in 1983-84, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen said that we should emulate the public spending policies of the Government of

[Mr. Oppenheim]

the United States of America, a line which they rapidly dropped when the pigeons came home to roost in America a couple of years ago, when the Americans began to see what we unfortunately found out in the 1970s and what Lord Callaghan found out a little earlier—that one cannot simply spend one's way to economic success or out of recession. Far from it, because that just means inflation and builds a store of problems for the future.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) spoke knowledgeably about Japan. I am sure that he has a lot of first-hand experience of Japan. He mentioned that the Japanese have a high savings ratio. It is also true that, along with their high savings ratio in the private sector, the Japanese have consistently had a low level of public debt and a relatively low level of public spending. The Japanese have had to save a lot of money for their old age because their public and state provision is not very good.

Mr. Chris Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will reflect on the fact that the Japanese are so successful in keeping public spending down because they spend less than 1 per cent. of their GDP on defence.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The Japanese do spend a small amount on defence because that was the agreement that they made with the American occupying forces in 1952. It might interest the hon. Gentleman to know that the Japanese are moving rapidly to becoming the world's third largest spender on defence because their GNP is far higher than ours. Even forgetting defence spending, and whichever way one looks at it—the fairest way is as a proportion of GNP—Japanese public spending is far lower than ours and has been far lower ever since the war. Indeed, it is far lower than that of almost any other developed country.

By contrast, Britain also had a high private savings ratio in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, our savings ratio was almost as high as that of Japan. Therefore, it is not wise to try to argue that a high private savings ratio is necessarily the main road to economic success. A savings ratio is part of the story but what we did in the 1960s and 1970s, which was to have high private savings but also high public borrowing and spending, is the way to disaster and is certainly not one of the main planks of Japan's economic success.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman comment on today's statement by Mr. John Banham, the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, that Britain should now save more and spend less and that the tax cuts in the Budget, especially those given to higher rate taxpayers, were a great mistake in our economic policy because they will lead to much higher consumption and a further lowering of the private savings ratio?

Mr. Oppenheim: I am happy to comment on that. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman does not realise the nature of the CBI. It is a pressure group, and one main function of pressure groups is to whinge and whine. Throughout this Government's period in office, the CBI has issued statements weekly and monthly which have often opposed the Government's economic policy. Indeed, in inverse proportion to the number of statements that it has issued attacking Government policy, the economy has grown more and more successfully—[HON. MEMBERS: "Is the statement true?"] Mr. Banham may well have made that comment, but I would dispute its veracity or relevance.

It is ludicrous to say that a high private savings ratio is the main plank of any country's economic success. It certainly is not. If the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury wants to to take Japan as an example, I must advise him that Japan's economic success relies on far more complex causes than just its high savings ratio.

Another point which has been missed is that three quarters of the private debt at the moment is debt which is fully secured against housing; it is not debt which is being used primarily to buy imported consumer products. In many ways it is a good thing, as it means that we have an expansion of home ownership. However, I go a little way towards meeting the arguments of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury in that it is at least arguable that too large a proportion of our national wealth is in housing. In some of the more successful economies, a lower proportion of wealth goes into housing. The hon. Gentleman might have had a point if he had cared to make it a little more forcefully.

I should like to turn to the substance of the new clause——

Mr. Gow: There is no substance.

Mr. Oppenheim: Well, my hon. Friend says that there is no substance and that is not a comment on which I would choose to take him to task.

My understanding of the lack of substance of the new clause is that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury would like to introduce a league table of interest rates which would be published monthly. That is a bureaucratic nonsense. My first question is, where will that league table be published? My second question is, how would the hon. Gentleman ensure that all interest rates are published in that league table? Unless he can assure me that every interest rate would be published, I believe that the whole point of the league table would be lost.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned that there were backstreet pedlars of debt with interest rates of up to 4,000 per cent. How can he be absolutely sure that all those backstreet pedlars of debt would be included in the league table? Unless he can assure me that the league table would be completely comprehensive, I believe that it will be a total waste of time.

I noticed with some concern——

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Why is it important that every interest rate is included in the league, rather than a sample which would give consumers a greater knowledge of or greater desire to find out about the particular rate that they were being asked to pay?

Mr. Oppenheim: Surely, if people want a relatively small sample or a selection of the current interest rates, they can find that in most newspapers, as they currently publish samples weekly. Even the beloved *Daily Mirror* publishes a sample of interest rates on its weekly money page which it introduced about two years ago. Therefore, a certain amount of selective information is already available to the public.

If the state is to provide a huge league table of national interest rates, it must be comprehensive; otherwise it will not add anything to the information that is already

available to the public. Where would the league table be published so that it is accessible to the public, and how will the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury ensure that at least a substantial number of interest rates are available in the list?

I think that I heard the hon. Gentleman trying to induce support for the new clause from the National Consumer Council. I think that I can speak with a little authority when it comes to the views of the National Consumer Council and I can absolutely and categorically assure the hon. Gentleman that, far from supporting the new clause, the National Consumer Council thinks it a total nonsense.

Finally, if the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury had limited his aims to something a little more sensible and attainable, he might have achieved something, but as usual the Opposition have tended to go way over the top in trying to propose something totally unattainable.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Will the hon. Gentleman inform us at what meeting the National Consumer Council considered the new clause and pronounced it a total nonsense?

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and can advise him that the chairman of the National Consumer Council personally informed me that she thought the new clause a total waste of time. I hope that that is sufficient authority for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: I should like to continue because I am coming to the end of my brief speech—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) should pipe down and listen.

If the Opposition spokesman had concentrated on something that was attainable——

Mr. Morley *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: No, I shall not give way.

If the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury had concentrated on something attainable, he might have gained some sympathy from Conservative Members. He could have concentrated on the fact that when credit card holders get their monthly bill, the only interest rate which legally has to be quoted is the monthly interest rate. No APR, no annualised interest rate and no annual interest rate is quoted on monthly credit card statements. I believe that that is misleading because it gives credit card borrowers a false sense of security. If they see that they are paying 2·5 per cent., 3 per cent. or even 4 per cent. monthly, they do not consider it to be very much. If they saw the true annualised rate, the true APR at anything between 20 per cent. to 50 per cent. plus, they would be far more concerned and far less likely to borrow.

7 pm

If the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury had limited himself to the sensible objective of trying to persuade the Government to ensure that APRs and annualised interest rates were printed on credit card statements, he would have gained more sympathy from Conservative Members, and possibly achieved some success. I shall make up for the hon. Gentleman's deficiency by proposing to my hon. Friend the Minister that he should consider making it legally incumbent on credit card companies to publish on monthly credit card statements the APR that people are expected to pay, instead of simply the monthly interest rate.

Mr. Worthington: We tabled new clause 3 because we believe that people should be helped to be more aware of the true cost of credit in this country. The figures that were quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) demonstrate the enormous range of interest rates that are charged and that people should be made much more aware of those issues. The Opposition believe that the credit explosion and the increasing amount of debt because of that credit pose a considerable problem.

The Scottish Consumer Council, which decides its affairs in a much more democratic way than the National Consumer Council, where apparently mummy speaks and that is the view, believes that there is a problem with regard to the credit explosion. In March this year it published a study of debt and debt advice in Scotland. Of course, such studies are already out of date because their research extended only to 1986. However, it is worth noting that the Scottish Consumer Council received no co-operation in its investigation from the credit card companies in regard to the level of public accountability which it wanted to show. The Scottish Consumer Council demonstrated that in the past five years the consumer credit taken on by the public had increased by about 50 per cent., and that that increase in credit was much more rapid for bank credit cards, and particularly for in-store credit cards.

Of course, for many people it is not a problem, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said. Credit is essential in our society, and Barclaycard published the fact that something like 40 per cent. of people settle their debts within a month. For those people credit is a form of cheap, interest-free loan. However, 60 per cent. do not do so.

What are the dimensions of the debt problems that people face? Let us consider the issue in regard to housing in Scotland. In 1986, 36 per cent. of those in local authority housing in Scotland were in arrears and 27 per cent. of people in Scottish Special Housing Association dwellings were in rent arrears. In regard to mortgage arrears in the United Kingdom, between 1982 and 1986, the number of those more than 12 months in arrears went up from 6,000 to 11,000. Between 1979 and 1986 those who were between six months and 12 months in arrears on owner-occupied housing went up from 2,500 to more than 20,000—an eightfold increase in seven years. The Scottish Consumer Council calculated that around 20 per cent. of all Scottish households—that is, about 400,000 households—were substantially in debt in terms of housing.

As for Gas Board disconnections, between 1983 and 1987 there was something like a 90 per cent. rise in disconnections, and in 1985-86 around 600,000 British Gas consumers were on repayment plans which were their way of settling their debts. The Association of Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux reports that, between 1983-84 and 1986-87, the number of inquiries it received relating to clients' debt problems went up from 13,000 to more than 42,000—an increase of more than 300 per cent.

The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux considers that the problem of debt is increasing massively. It does not consider that the problem has been caused by the fecklessness and unworthiness of people in debt. It believes that it has a number of causes. Certainly in

[Mr. Worthington]

Strathclyde it is due to the increasing poverty experienced in that area, where about a third of the people are at or around supplementary benefit level. Those figures covered 1986-87 and can only have worsened since the housing benefit changes, the 20 per cent. contribution to rates and the increasing problems of fuel debt.

It is worth pointing out that there are considerable public costs to private credit. Those public costs relate to the work that has to be done by the courts and by social services and housing departments. In Strathclyde, about 70 per cent. of the clients of the social services department are there because of debt-related problems. Even the taking of children into care is related to poverty and debt. Large profits are being made at considerable public cost.

The in-store credit cards are particularly blameworthy. In some cases, there seems to be virtually no check on creditworthiness. Sir Gordon Borrie, of the Office of Fair Trading said:

"A few are giving them away like sweeties."

That is not the usual language in official reports.

I hope that new clause 3 is part of the way in which we can give people a greater awareness of the cost of credit, and that through such lists and other mechanisms people will eventually come to recognise that the way in which we borrow money in this country is simply crazy. It makes very large profits for remote finance houses. Surely we must look for other ways of providing cheaper credit.

It is particularly annoying that, as in all things, the poor pay more. They certainly pay more for credit. I should like to spend a little time encouraging people from all political parties throughout the United Kingdom to look more closely at the contribution that credit unions could make to providing better and cheaper credit. Credit unions manage to advance money at a fraction of the cost to the citizen with a very low rate of credit default—far lower than that achieved by finance houses. It is important to see that the credit union is there to serve the needs of its members rather than to exploit their need for credit. We need networks of credit unions to replace our reliance on finance houses and credit cards, charging the APR that was quoted earlier.

Strangely, credit unions have not thrived in Britain, as they have elsewhere. For example, the first credit union in the United States was formed in 1909 and by 1970 there were 23,400 credit unions in the United States. Some of them are now massive. In 1984 there were 82,000 credit unions in 55 countries with combined debt assets of £402 billion. In Britain in 1984 there were only 72 credit unions, which were mainly small, but they are growing in number. The number has increased considerably in recent years and there are now 73 hon. Members with credit unions in their constituencies.

I am pleased to be talking about this because the region from which I come, Strathclyde, has the greatest concentration of credit unions in the country and the district I represent, Clydebank, has the highest concentration of credit unions within Strathclyde. I know from experience what an enormous contribution they have made to people in my constituency on average and below average incomes in terms of reducing the amount of money that has to be paid to finance houses.

The House—including the Labour movement—has not paid enough attention to cost minimalisation. We have been concerned about the impact of poverty but we have not looked adequately at ways in which to reduce the cost of credit. Credit unions are one way in which we could do that.

My motive for supporting the clause, which is about the publication of lists, is to bring home to people the horrendous cost of credit in this country because of the way in which the financial system operates. By joining credit unions people could obtain that credit at a much lower cost. It is gratifying that organisations such as police forces are increasingly forming their own credit unions and giving credibility to the movement. I hope that people will take note of the desirability of bringing home to people the cost of credit and that they will realise that this is only a step to finding a better way of allowing people on average and below average incomes to borrow more cheaply.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I have always been interested in the interest rate structure and it is right that any changes should be published. The problem faced by Governments is that they place too much simple faith upon the movement of interest rates. A £5,000 overdraft is a lot of money. However, if people are locked into that overdraft, a 2 per cent. change in interest rates means only an extra £100 a year. However, if industry is locked into the interest rate structure and is involved with sums of £1 million, £2 million, £3 million or £4 million, it has a huge effect upon how it structures its costs.

Governments have too simplistic a faith in the fact that interest rates can control the spending pattern of a country. I do not think they can. It is almost like going back all those years to Adam Smith's day, when, if people were short of money, they ended up being able to afford to buy only bread even though bread cost a huge sum because they could not afford anything else. If people are locked into overdrafts and owing money, in the end all they can afford to do is to pay interest on that money. Governments should not make interest so expensive but should go back to the days when one did something about controlling the way in which money was spent.

7.15 pm

In an age such as this, why do people think that they should be able to borrow money cheaply in order to buy a house when house prices are rocketing? Why do people think that they should be able to obtain money to buy a house at a cost lower than they can obtain money to set up a business? It is much more important for people to be able to borrow money and obtain tax concessions in order to set up a business than just to invest in a home when its value goes up. I am a great believer in people owning their own homes. As a man who has been involved in investment all my life, I can say that one of the best investments I ever made has been in my home. Why is it that, because of some ideology we need to give tax concessions on home ownership?

It is splendid to own one's own home, but is it not better to encourage people to invest in growth or in a business? Thanks to one of the most enlightened and progressive Chancellors of recent years—one needs luck as well, and if I had to choose between being lucky or clever, I would always choose being lucky—we are set upon a path of growth, and so-called experts tell us that within the next five or 10 years we will be able to do away with income tax

altogether or reduce the national debt. Surely, if we give concessions on interest rates, they should be to people who encourage growth of real resources.

One of the problems about owning homes and putting money into property is that it is basically sterile capital. People ask whether the price of the pound will be affected by controlling interest rates. I do not think that it will. We have to ensure that we encourage the growth of capital in Britain.

We cannot spend money until it has been earned. Some Governments have tried to do that. Some of our friends on the Opposition Front Bench were involved in Governments who thought that they could spend money they had not earned. We cannot do that because it encourages inflation. We should encourage growth. We should encourage people to invest not in property but in a growing business. We need to give people interest rate concessions on putting money into businesses, whether a small shop, a small business or a great business.

We have had to put up interest rates five times—2·5 per cent.—in the past few weeks, but to what avail? It has not stopped people borrowing money in the shops or borrowing money to buy houses. It will discourage people from setting up businesses. I urge the Government——

Mr. Morgan: There is a great deal of thoughtfulness in what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but is he not missing out one factor that tends to make the investment in our home usually the only or best investment that we make? That factor is that it is almost guaranteed to go up in value. In other countries, particularly in the United States, if an area does badly in economic terms, the value of houses will fall by 20 or 30 per cent. In Seattle, for example, that happened during the aviation crisis in the early 1970s; and in Houston, Texas the price of houses dropped by 25 per cent. a couple of years ago. Is he saying that in such circumstances people can make a more rational decision between investment in business and investment in housing?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: No. I am saying that the reason why property values are rising so much—and the trend is sweeping from London to the midlands and even to the north—is that the country is basically so prosperous. Tax concessions make buying a home one of the best things to do. In Switzerland and Germany more people rent than buy property, but in this country buying a home is a fantastic investment.

I give myself as an example. I live in the midlands and when I got married in 1959 I paid £3,100 for a house that would now change hands at £120,000. Why the hell do I need tax concessions as well? It is better to give tax concessions to people who are building up a business than to people who own their homes.

When we talk about interest rates, we tend to forget that we must encourage growth. Interest rates affect growth considerably. When a person starts to build up a business, he needs to borrow money and that is when concessions and help are needed. They are also needed when people buy their first home, and I am a great believer in giving tax concessions to those people. But why should we give concessions year after year to people who do not need them? It is best to give all tax concessions on interest rates to those who are buying their first home, starting their first business or starting their first venture into life.

The problem is that when one reaches a prosperous stage in life one can sometimes become greedy. Sir Robert Crichton-Brown of British American Tobacco is not content with getting £290,000 a year and share options. He wants to be given £750,000 tax-free as well. The idea of business and enterprise is not merely that people should think that the world owes them something because they have been lucky enough to become a director of a good business and because 29,860 other people happen to work for that company. Becoming the chairman should not be regarded as hitting bingo or winning first prize in the premium bonds.

The idea of capitalism, as I understand it, is that we do not simply say to people that it is easy for everybody. Of course we must encourage people to go in for enterprise, but we must not allow one or two people to foul the nest from which the golden eggs must come. The golden eggs must be laid. What happens at the moment is that people like Sir Robert Crichton-Brown of BAT or Sir John Clark at Plessey think that it is their world. It is not. It is everybody's world. Capitalism will grow if people understand that. I hope that the shareholders of BAT will vote against the extremists—whether on the union side or on the capitalist side. The whole idea of capitalism and prosperity is that things should be done from a moral point of view. It is not moral when people simply help themselves; and if capitalism is not moral, it is nothing.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am rather surprised by the direction that the debate is taking. We have heard some interesting views on interest rates and their effect on the economy, and I hope that we shall hear more on that subject tomorrow, on Third Reading.

New clause 3 embodies a simple proposition, which I think is unanswerable. I am surprised that Conservative Members have resisted the proposal that the Government should publish regularly the real rates of interest pertaining in different sections of our economic life. It is especially surprising that the Government should take that view in an age in which we commonly have to identify the the contents of goods that we trade in, in which advertising codes are required for the pensions provisions of the Financial Services Act and in which there is general demand by the public for more ready access to information.

I find the attitude of Conservative Back Benchers somewhat disingenuous. I do not wish to single out the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) for special mention, but he looked rather shamefaced when he suggested that it was impractical for the Government to publish a list of relevant interest rates. He is a member of a party that would have us believe that consumer choice is everything. I should have thought that the Conservative party would want to give the consumer the maximum information on which to make a choice.

The new clause is not about restricting or even regulating credit card operations, although if my mailbag is in any way typical, there is growing public demand for more strict controls on credit cards. The representations come not just from the Churches but from many business organisations and, most desperately, from people whose lives have been wrecked when the pack of credit cards has fallen.

Borrowing is not unique to a particular class. I know that it is not fashionable to talk about class these days but in the city of Newcastle, people in Gosforth can distinguish between their standard of living and that of people on the

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

Newbiggin Hall estate. All sections of the community are equally likely to borrow. The difference is that when the richest in our community borrow, they are considered to be upstanding: for them, borrowing is laudable, even quite prudent. Anyone on his way up in society has to borrow to get there. It is considered to be a sign of dynamism. In the rich sections of society, it is not even called borrowing. It is called investment.

That is a far cry from what happens to people from the Newbiggin Hall estate in my constituency, who have to borrow. When they go to the DHSS office to ask for money from the social fund to help their family, it is considered slightly shady. That borrowing is regarded as a sign of bad household management, even though it enables families to make ends meet and makes the difference between having some kind of existence and not having an existence at all.

The rich have the advantage of full information. My Gosforth constituents have access to their bank manager, their building society manager, perhaps to a stockbroker on a trip to London on a first-class saver, to the counter staff at Harrods and perhaps, at their golf club, to money managers, who exist even in the city of Newcastle. They know the real cost of borrowing, whether on their Access card, their Visa card or on a credit card for a retail store. They know what they are paying.

The super-rich who consult finance houses or credit brokers know exactly what they are doing. They know the difference between a bank overdraft and a bank loan or any other source of finance. They know the rate of interest and the cost, just as Antonio in "The Merchant of Venice" knew the real cost when he had to borrow from Shylock to help his pal Bassanio with funds for a wedding *[Laughter.]* I am glad that that amuses my literary Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Such people know the real cost and they rarely default on any of their borrowings to finance investments. They rarely have to pay a pound of flesh.

7.30 pm

I ask the Economic Secretary to contrast the information available to the rich—I am not saying that it should not be available—with the information which is available not only to those who are the poorest, such as my constituents at Newbiggin Hall, but to the average citizen who is perhaps a more typical borrower on credit these days. Most people borrow to make ends meet rather than to make a speculative investment, and many have to pay exorbitant interest rates.

Contrary to what the Economic Secretary and Conservative Members may think, my average constituent does not have the information. When he goes to his DHSS office, the person behind the counter is not the chap with whom he played golf the previous Saturday, who gave him advice on how to invest his Giro. When he goes to the local shop, the person who serves him is not someone with whom he has had a Pimms in the club, who has told him of the latest bet in the City on which he should borrow money. When he goes to the Newburn Memorial club on a Friday night for a game of snooker and a pint of scotch —*[Interruption.]* No half pints, as at the annual beano in Amber Valley—there are not many money brokers to advise him on how to invest his funds and what risks to take. It is little wonder, with the lack of information on credit available to the average citizen, that people are increasingly becoming pawns to their credit cards.

I had better not risk incurring the wrath of Whips and others on this side of the House, so I shall conclude. I do not want always to follow the example of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) who often encouraged me to speak at length during the Committee stage.

New clause 3 would guarantee that more information was available to consumers. Someone who tries to obtain credit is a consumer in the same way as someone who tries to purchase a commodity. Such information could lead to an increasing awareness of the true cost of borrowing and credit. It could give the less-informed sections of our community a better chance to understand the implications of their borrowing and the risks of investing funds.

Crucially, it could perhaps begin to act against the increasing headache suffered by many individuals and families from the destruction of family life when the pack of credit cards falls. Such people come to Members of Parliament and explain the damage and their anger. If they had known what lay before them, they would not have borrowed in the first place, hard up as they are. It is important that people have such information and consumer choice, and it would be disingenuous of the Government not to accept the new clause.

Mr. Morley: The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) said that the National Consumer Council was not in favour of new clause 3, but I have a quote from it which states:

> "We recommend the issuing of guidance on prevailing interest rates for different types of loans. These should be widely publicised, so as to provide information for consumers."

That is exactly what the new clause seeks to do.

We need new clause 3 because of the massive growth in credit. About 77 million credit cards are in circulation in the United Kingdom and credit card companies are among the worst offenders on interest rates. It would be a great advantage to consumers to be able to compare the different categories of interest rates, whether for credit cards, hire purchase or other forms of loan. Interest on credit cards has been consistently about 14 per cent. above the average bank rate. Regulations should be introduced to deal with that, but that goes beyond what we can talk about in this debate and I certainly shall not take up time on it now.

There is concern that many consumers are not getting the information that they need to make the best decision on getting value for money from a loan. Too many people are waiting to take consumers for a ride. Credit card companies certainly come into that category—not only bank credit cards but in-store credit cards. We are talking not so much about flexible friends as plastic pirates, considering the interest rates which are charged, particularly in stores.

The question of interest rates goes beyond the United Kingdom. In France, interest rates on credit cards range between 12 per cent. and 18 per cent., in Belgium they range between 18 per cent. and 23 per cent., and even in the home of free enterprise, the United States, credit companies can make a profit charging 14 per cent. interest rates. That is a long way from the level of interest rates charged in the United Kingdom.

The most vulnerable need information most. Those who pay the highest interest rates are often pensioners. A pensioner in my constituency had difficulty paying an electricity bill so took out a short-term loan, the interest rate on which was more than 1,000 per cent. APR. As the law stands that is perfectly legal, but it was certainly nowhere near the best available deal. Even the electricity board, which would have helped, could have offered better terms.

The Government have a responsibility to make this information available to consumers and to assist consumers. They are responsible for adding to the debt problem. They have replaced many one-off payments for those in need with loans. They have pushed up energy prices deliberately as part of a political programme, thus adding to people's burdens. They have pushed up council house rents deliberately as part of their programme. All that has added to the burden of debt on the weakest and most vulnerable people in society.

The new clause tries to tackle some of the consequences of the explosion of debt and easy credit. There is a great need for more regulation. There should be controls on the interest rates that are charged. Clearer information should be printed on credit agreement forms so that people know exactly what they are getting into. There should be easier explanations of what APR means. The NCC survey found that 50 per cent. of people do not understand APR. There should also be restrictions on the peddling of in-store credit cards, which look attractive for short-term weekly repayments but whose APR rates are excessive. The new clause goes some way to giving consumers some rights and protections and the Government should back it to the hilt.

Mr. Lilley: We owe you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Speaker a debt of gratitude for allowing us a lose rein in this debate, as a result of which we have been treated to some fascinating contributions.

We heard a vintage performance from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who endeavoured to entice us up to his bedroom with a promise that we could see, not his etchings, but certain framed letters from the IMF. There was a serious point behind what he said, and I am sure that all hon. Members took note of it. There has been an enormous change in the nature of the supposed problem that we are discussing today. The last Government were running a deficit of the equivalent of £40 billion a year; this Government are now running a surplus, and all that Opposition Members can do is to try to arouse our concern about borrowing in the private sector.

We also heard a speech that will merit re-reading from my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). It was interesting not only for the inside information that we were able to garner on the thinking of the chairman of the National Consumer Council but for his interesting proposal to print APRs on credit cards. I shall draw that suggestion to the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whose responsibility that is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) reminded us of the priority that should be given to borrowing by businesses as against borrowing for home ownership. The Government recognise that priority but do not think that the two are mutually exclusive. We want to enable people to borrow for business and for owning their homes. As my hon. Friend will remember, there is unlimited tax relief for an unincorporated business or a partner to borrow for the purposes of his business—that is considerably more beneficial than the terms for homes.

The hon. and literary Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) regaled us with Shakespearean evidence of the need for greater information for the less well-off, but he did not convince many of us that his equally literary constituents would really rush off to buy a supplement to the financial statistics such as that proposed—in effect—by the new clause.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) rightly emphasised the importance of credit unions. I thought he spoiled another part of his case by suggesting that those who ultimately default on loans are somehow enriching those who have lent to them. That is sheer nonsense. There is a mutual interest between those who lend and those who borrow to ensure that the lending and borrowing are not excessive. It is crucial in a free society that both sides to a contract should have an interest in its success, never more so than in lending and borrowing.

7.45 pm

I turn now to the strange case put by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). There were two parts to his thesis. First, he maintained that we are suffering from a consumer credit boom; and, secondly, that we have excessive interest rates. The first part of his theory is untrue. About 85 per cent. of personal credit is on mortgages on peoples's residences. We are not ashamed of the fact that considerable sums are borrowed every year by people to buy their homes. As a result of that, about 2,500,000 extra people have been enabled to become home owners since the Government came to power. Consumer credit—the 15 per cent. of personal lending that is purely for consumption—has been growing at a steady, not an accelerating, rate since the beginning of the decade. It is growing less rapidly than lending on mortgages.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and other hon. Members concentrated on credit card borrowing, as if that were a major aspect of the amount of credit in the economy. But less than 5 per cent. of personal borrowing is accounted for by credit cards, and of that nearly half is credit that does not bear interest because it is repaid within the time specified on the card—*[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend says, a small amount is probably borne by those who are paying their Labour party subscriptions on their credit cards.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that mortgages were merely a concealed form of consumer borrowing because people siphoned off the money in one way or another to buy consumer goods—although they raised it on a mortgage on the house. He presented no evidence that that was a significant part of mortgage lending and gave no sign of what the Opposition would do to prevent it.

The hon. Gentleman then turned to the second part of his thesis—that interest rates were not, as one might suppose if we were suffering from a credit explosion, too low but too high. I shall give him the opportunity to elaborate on that interesting point.

Mr. Chris Smith: I wanted to take up an earlier point that the Economic Secretary raised about house purchases and mortgages. Can he give the House an absolute and

[Mr. Chris Smith]

categorical assurance that the reports in Sunday's newspapers that a paper was circulating in the Treasury which proposed a tax on property as a means of controlling house prices were wrong, and that the paper does not exist?

Mr. Lilley: I can give the hon. Gentleman a categorical assurance that he should not believe what he reads in the newspapers. That report has already been denied by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, so it is rather strange that he should repeat it——

Mr. Smith: The statement made by the right hon. Gentleman was that there was no Government proposal, but is there a paper that puts forward such a proposal and is it being considered?

Mr. Lilley: That is a silly point. I have a piece of paper that considers the problem that we are discussing, but I do not see how that is relevant.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is advancing the bizarre thesis that we simultaneously have an excess of credit and credit that is too expensive. Rather than suggesting that interest rates should rise, as the logic of his case might suggest, he wants to lower interest rates. He quotes back-street lending rates of up to 4,000 per cent. a year, yet appears to deplore the greater competition that we have opened up among the reputable banks and building societies which offer a proper alternative to such shady operators at much more reasonable rates. To the extent that there is a problem of borrowing at excessive rates of interest which people cannot repay, the two answers to it are greater competition and greater information.

Since 1979, the Government have required those advertising credit to show the APR clearly and boldly on the advertisement so that people know the rate of interest that they will be paying. Under this Government, Visa and Access were referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Those are more positive and concrete acts than any proposed in the Opposition's new clause.

Having persuaded himself that the solution to excessive credit was lowering interest rates, the hon. Gentleman compounded that economic blunder by arguing that we should run not a public sector surplus, but a deficit. He derided my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for the pride that he takes in the fact that we are one of the few major countries able to repay debt rather than incur and burden ourselves with more.

The substantial expansion in home ownership, financed by increased mortgage lending, has come about because the savings of the people are no longer pre-empted by the borrowing of Governments, but are available for industry and home owners to borrow and use productively. We are reaping the benefits of that both in industry and in home ownership.

The hon. Gentleman said that the recent figures analysing the banking loans showed a tentative sign of a recovery in borrowing by manufacturing. He calls a 21 per cent. increase a tentative sign. The growth in borrowing by construction in the past year has been 38 per cent. I do not know what degree of tentativeness he would assign to that.

Mr. Major: Super-tentative.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary suggests super-tentative.

The hon. Gentleman gave us no firm signs of what he would do—not just with the present problems, but with the serious problems that could arise if he had his public sector deficit—to control private credit. He did not venture to repeat the ideas recently stated by his right hon. and learned Friend and boss the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who, in that great journal of financial discussion and debate *Woman's Own*, seemed to commit the Labour party to returning to controls on capital and credit. Most people, including readers of *Woman's Own*, realise that control would be ineffective and unusable in a world without exchange controls, such as we happily have and will continue to have.

Hon. Members might have imagined from the debate that we were discussing a genuine and serious problem that needed a major and substantial solution. The solution proposed is simply that the Government should take powers that would enable them to introduce regulations, and in turn enable them to publish a list of the interest rates available in the market place. Such a list is already available in "Financial Statistics". The effect that it would have on consumers would be negligible. Anyone who proposes such a puny remedy cannot believe that we are suffering from a serious disease. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose the new clause.

Mr. Chris Smith: The debate on the new clause has been extremely interesting, if only because it has revealed that the hon. Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) wish to launch a savage attack upon the rectitude and wisdom of the Confederation of British Industry. Of course, that organisation is not always right, but it sometimes has a sensible point to make. Whether we like it or not, it is the voice of British industry, and for the two hon. Gentlemen to dismiss it in that way was foolish.

Those hon. Gentlemen also raised an interesting argument about the level of public borrowing, and the Economic Secretary picked it up. However, the hon. Member for Eastbourne gave the game away when I asked him whether he thought the Chancellor of the Exchequer was right in 1986 when he forecast a public sector borrowing requirement for that financial year of £4 billion. The hon. Gentleman replied that "it was the right amount for the time." Precisely. Whether a public sector borrowing requirement is or is not necessary, or to what extent the borrowing should be, is entirely dependent on what is right for the time.

For Conservative Members to commit themselves by saying that on all occasions the public sector borrowing requirement should be unnecessary and that a balance or a surplus should always be the aim, is incredibly foolish economically. I am sure that that will not happen even under this Government. The crucial point is that what is necessary and right under the circumstances of the time should be adopted in any Budget. It should not be a case of erecting a totem, as the Government appear to have done.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) made an especially interesting point. He mentioned the adverse impact on industry of rises in interest rates. He asked to what avail was the 2·5 per cent. rise in the base rate in recent weeks. He rightly said that it has not stopped people borrowing money or spending it,

but that it has prevented industry from making some of the advances that it might otherwise have made. Using the base rate as the only lever—it is the only lever that the Chancellor has allowed himself to control the expansion of credit—is an imperfect way of dealing with the problem. Other ways to deal with the problem of expanding credit and indebtedness need to be considered.

The Chancellor should be examining temporary credit controls, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) suggested, rather than dismissing them in one sentence as he did in his speech last Thursday, which was widely reported in the press. At the very least, the Government should be adopting measures such as those contained in our new clause.

We are not suggesting that the publication of lists of comparative rates will solve all the problems of the expansion of credit, but at the very least it will give consumers more information about what they are letting themselves in for. That can only be for the benefit of consumers and the overall expansion of credit, because people will be able to make more informed judgments, decisions and choices than they can presently. It is a first step and a small measure, but to dismiss it for the flimsiest of reasons, which are all we have had from the Economic Secretary and Conservative Members, is to throw away what would be a good step forward in the interests of both consumers and the economy. I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time—

The House divided: Ayes 189, Noes 244.

Division No. 411] **[7.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*

Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 5

STATUTORY RESERVE

'(1) In computing the profits of the trade of a company to which this section applies for the purposes of Corporation Tax, there shall be allowed as a deduction any amount transferred to a Statutory Reserve following within subsection (3) below.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to enable common ownership co-operatives to secure exemption from corporation tax for allocations to a statutory reserve. I emphasise at the outset that the reserve that we are discussing would be non-distributable. That is in line with the basic definition of the purpose of common ownership co-operatives as those in which the assets of the co-operation may not be distributed to members when the co-operative is dissolved or at any other time. The new clause would not, therefore, benefit directly particular groups of individuals. It would not be a tax break whereby members of the co-operative would avoid corporation tax. It would be an incentive to investment in the co-operative and would encourage the growth of that form of enterprise by enabling it to build up its capital more easily than it can at present.

In doing that, we would not give co-operatives any preferential treatment or unfair advantage. On the contrary, we would merely go some way to removing the unjustified handicaps under which workers' co-operatives presently labour. The principal handicap is that co-operatives do not, by their nature, enjoy the corporation tax relief on distribution through what is called the imputation system. For that reason, when that system was introduced in 1972, a special rate was applied to co-operatives, as it was to small firms, and they were therefore put on an equal footing with larger private enterprises.

8.15 pm

The problem is that, while all companies continue to benefit today from the relief on distributed profits, the concessionary rate has not, since the Finance Act 1984, applied to co-operatives and they are therefore effectively penalised by having to pay the full corporation tax rate.

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the statutory reserve would include a capital redemption reserve or a share premium account?

Mr. Smith: It would certainly not include a share premium account. The purpose is to build up the capital on which the co-operative itself can draw for future investment and, for example, for training purposes.

The co-operatives are further penalised through the obvious reason of being ineligible for the business expansion scheme, which we have debated a great deal in respect of this Bill. The new clause is intended to put them on an equal footing, not to give them any particular advantage, although there are other grounds on which that advantage could be defended and advocated. The argument is based on plain fairness and equity, of which I hope Conservative Members will see the merit.

The new clause is necessary for other reasons. Co-operatives, like other small businesses, especially those attempting to grow quickly, find capital difficult to attract and retain. That applies particularly to co-operatives because they do not have recourse to equity share capital. Moreover, as the law on corporation tax presently stands, workers' co-operatives have, if anything, a perverse incentive to increase wages, rather than to retain profits, to minimise tax liability. The new clause would therefore give a boost to investment, enterprise and growth in workers' co-operatives. Not to support the clause would be to concede that enterprise and initiative are all very well and much to be encouraged, except when they apply to workers in common ownership of their business, as opposed to conventional capitalist institutions.

The extension of the capital base provided by the new clause would also bring substantial knock-on benefits by enabling workers' co-operatives to take advantage of private sources of finance through the improvement in their gearing position brought about by the new clause. It would also address the problem faced by many of those people drawn particularly to the co-operative mode of organisation, who are especially short of funds. The co-operative form of organisation has a particular attraction for unemployed people who have had little or no resources to invest in the business. The clause would therefore be of special benefit to them, as it would be to co-operatives organised by women and ethnic minorities, who almost certainly comprise a larger proportion of the membership of co-operatives than they do of company shareholders.

The new clause would also make a significant contribution to job generation. To date, we in Britain have been talking about relatively small numbers of workers' co-ops, but they have been expanding at an impressive rate. There were 220 new ones last year and we see much evidence of demand for more support for co-ops.

In my constituency I am pleased to see that the Oxfordshire co-operative development agency, in conjunction with a number of other co-operative development agencies across south-east England, has been able, in conjunction with local authorities and the EEC social fund, to put substantial investment into training people in co-operative organisation and enterprise. That has had a quick and good take-up rate and a great deal more of the same could be done were the co-ops in a more advantageous position for raising capital.

If we really want to see just how big is the potential for growth in workers' co-ops, we must look abroad. For example, Italy has more than 15,000 co-ops. In Europe the total number employed in workers' co-ops has been estimated to be about 600,000. The fact that the new clause would bring us into line with Europe is another powerful argument in its support.

There is no doubt that among the many factors that have favoured more widespread growth of co-operatives in Europe has been the more sympathetic tax treatment that they receive and which has counted for a lot. In Italy, workers' co-ops benefit from precisely the form of exemption from undistributed reserves that we are advocating in the new clause. In France they enjoy partial exemption. We heard a good deal in Committee about 1992 and the importance of harmonisation. This is one area in which Opposition Members would welcome harmonisation with the more progressive practices being adopted in other EEC countries.

There are good grounds of equity, enterprise, the benefits of job generation and parity with our European partners for accepting the new clause, enabling worker co-ops to make contributions to an undistributable reserve, free from corporation tax.

The benefits of the co-operative mode of organisation which flow from the involvement and commitment of worker members, of local control, enhanced job satisfaction and a happier working life, are increasingly recognised across the political spectrum.

The new clause is an opportunity for Conservative Members, some of whom have taken a sympathetic interest in this area, to recognise that there are anomalies and that co-operatives are worth encouraging. The Government should at least give an undertaking to examine this area afresh, even if they are not prepared to accept the precise form of the new clause.

The House will be aware that representations have been made in the past not merely from the workers' movement but from the Co-operative Union on behalf of the retail movement, again because of the substantial disadvantages that recent changes in the corporation tax regime have meant for them. Supportive and sympathetic action is long overdue in this area on grounds of equity and fairness as well as because of the benefits of the co-operative mode of organisation that I have already described.

If we in the Labour party had our way, we would be bringing forward a battery of measures to encourage and assist co-operative developments. Instead, all we are asking for tonight is a relatively small and inexpensive change, but one of substantial benefit to a sector of the economy that has not enjoyed the largesse being handed out in other directions. It has more than earned the boost that the new clause would give it.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I want to say a few words in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). I am proud to be able to say that Leeds has a long-standing record of support for co-ops, not least because the Industrial Common Ownership Movement is based in Leeds.

[Mr. John Battle]

It is interesting that throughout this century there has been little inward investment in Leeds. Most of the commercial and industrial development has been home grown and home based. That might be why Leeds has developed a strong base of locally grown co-ops.

One of those co-ops, Up-routes Removals Co-operative Ltd., is involved in the transportation industry, again a traditional industry in Leeds. It started on the bridge of the market town, the hub of the Yorkshire textile industry, processing textiles and transporting them throughout Britain, providing a convenient location for communications. It is a worker co-operative providing useful employment for some of my constituents. It is a member the Industrial Common Ownership Movement, the national federation of worker co-ops, based in Leeds.

The Up-routes Removals Co-operative has petitioned me to back a submission on taxation changes to assist the development of worker co-ops, which I am sure the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury will have received. It made the strong recommendation that

"profits which are allocated to a reserve fund in a co-op should not bear Corporation Tax if these monies can never be distributed to members. This relief, available to co-ops in France and Italy"—

as my hon. Friend has said—

"would help us to build up our capital base".

Most people who have had any dealings with co-ops, directly or indirectly, will be aware that raising capital creates a problem since co-operative constitutions do not provide for share capital. Although the worker co-op movement has its own financial institutions, their lending capacity is small.

In 1987, one of the largest of those financial institutions, Industrial Common Ownership Finance, raised £500,000 by way of private contributions to invest in worker co-ops. Obviously that is not sufficient to carry things forward. People who have never been involved in the establishment of co-ops often do not realise exactly what they are up against in establishing themselves and developing.

I remember going to a bank with a small co-op. The bank could not conceive that the co-op had a complex financial and management structure based on the co-operative system. The bank told the co-op to come back as a traditional business, when it might be able to deal with it. The bank was not prepared to accept the principles of the co-operative movement. Thus, the traditional means of raising finance are sometimes closed.

I hope that the Government will accept this relatively non-contentious new clause. In other areas of policy the Government push the co-operative movement as a good thing. Scarcely a week goes by without a Minister suggesting that housing co-ops should be established, and they are part of the same family of the co-operative movement. I hope that the Government will accept the new clause, making it financially possible for co-ops to get on the move. They need practical support and I hope that the Government will enable this sector of the economy to flourish.

This is a small-scale measure, but co-ops can provide help to local economies, particularly where there is long-term structural unemployment in areas with declining industries. The co-ops have a role to play in local economies and I hope that the Government will take this practical step towards enabling them to flourish.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): May I say in response to the generality of the issue in the new clause that the Government believe that co-operatives are a thoroughly valid form of private enterprise and deserve every encouragement. We also recognise that co-operatives may be a valuable way of achieving the involvement of employees in the affairs of the company in which they work. We believe that measures designed to assist business generally should also be open to co-operatives.

The purpose of new clause 5, to which the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) spoke, is to allow a co-operative that expects to make a substantial investment in the future to obtain tax relief on funds put aside to meet that future expense. The hon. Member for Oxford, East may query that precise wording, but that is a fair description of new clause 5.

8.30 pm

I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Oxford, East made clear what would happen when the future investment was made. However, I assume from the terms of an amendment tabled in Committee, but not selected, that the intention is that the amount invested would be charged to tax. The main effect of the provision would be to allow the co-operative to use the money which would otherwise have been paid in tax. For example, if the money was put aside in year one and invested in year three, the co-operative would have the use of the money for two years. That might reduce its borrowing and interest payments, or the money might be placed on deposit and earn interest.

It is not immediately clear why co-operatives should be favoured in that way. From time to time all businesses may need to accumulate money for future investment and all face the same tax regime. They pay tax on their profits. When they make their investment, they may well qualify for capital allowances. That produces a fair result.

If the law were amended in the way suggested in new clause 5, a co-operative's tax liability would depend on whether it intended to carry out future investment. Such intention may be firm and precise or tentative and vague. It would be extremely difficult for the Inland Revenue to know whether an intention was sufficiently clear that tax relief should be given. The alternative would be to give tax relief without the co-operative having to establish a clear intention to make the investment. That would allow a co-operative, if it was so minded, to use the statutory reserve fund for tax avoidance. I am sure that the hon. Member for Oxford, East would agree that that would be wrong.

More generally, special reliefs of this kind run counter to our business tax policy.

Mr. Battle: The Paymaster General says that reliefs of this kind run counter to Government policy. Would it not be preferable to give a boost to the co-operative movement in the same way that a boost has been given to housing developments for landlords through the business expansion scheme,? It seems that there is a conflict in policy when the business expansion scheme can go ahead under the Budget, but the Paymaster General claims that he cannot give relief to co-operatives.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Oxford, East mentioned the business expansion scheme, and I intended to respond to that.

Our business tax policy is to remove, or substantially modify, incentive reliefs of this kind, which distort business behaviour and complicate the tax system. The hon. Member for Oxford, East raised a question about the tax imputation system. That system, which in effect means that shareholders receiving dividends do not have to pay income tax at the basic rate, is designed to reduce the double taxation of distributed profits that occurred under the classical system of corporation tax in force until 1972. For retained profits, co-operatives are taxed in the same way as companies, and we believe that that is fair.

In the submissions made to the Government this year, the Industrial Common Ownership Movement suggested that income tax relief should be given to investors who invest money in the loan stock of workers' co-operatives so that such investors are put on a similar footing to those investing in companies under the BES. However, the BES was introduced with the specific aim of helping unquoted trading companies raise new equity, so that, among other things, they need not be overdependent on loan finance. The proposal to allow income tax relief on money loaned to co-ops would run directly contrary to that objective.

I want now to refer to the progress made by the co-operative movement. Section 25 of the Finance Act 1981 provides for tax relief on interest on loans to buy shares in a co-operative. The Co-operative Development Agency, which the Government sponsor, has produced statistics to illustrate the significant growth of worker co-operatives over recent years, to which the hon. Member for Oxford, East referred. It estimates that there were 200 such co-operatives in 1980, and the figure for this year is 2,000. That argues that there has been very satisfactory growth during the 1980s. I salute that progress. However, I cannot commend new clause 5.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I thank the Paymaster General for his recognition that workers' co-operatives are a valid form of enterprise. I also welcome his cognisance of the valuable work and contribution made by those co-operatives. However, I found the right hon. Gentleman's reply wholly unconvincing. It did not support the Government's commitment to co-operatives in principle, which we have welcomed, by any direct action on tax anomalies.

The Government are trapped, and appear to want to be trapped, in a circular argument. They seem to say that because workers' co-ops do not have a conventional capitalist share equity, they cannot benefit from the BES and that the tax imputation system on corporation tax does not apply to them. That means that, because they are co-operatives, they do not have access to the advantages and the assistance which the Government are giving through the BES.

I have said that there is a whole battery of other measures that we would like to implement to encourage co-ops. The thrust of my argument was that such action is necessary merely to place co-operatives on a par and a fair, level playing field with other organisations.

While we will not divide the House on this issue, the House can rest assured that Labour Members will return to this matter in future. We believe that there is strong and growing public support for workers' co-operatives as a means of harnessing people's energy, commitment and enterprise in a way that is fair for all workers as they do not merely leave power in the hands of those who control share capital and the sources of finance. It is liberating being involved in a co-operative. They make a real contribution to the economy and the well-being of the individual. We therefore give a firm undertaking that we will return to this issue.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 10

TAXATION SERVICES

'(1) Any person who conducts a business which includes the provision of taxation services shall be required to be registered with the Inland Revenue in accordance with Regulations to be drawn up by the Board.

(2) "Taxation services" includes advice and work done in connection with computational matters as well as advice and work in connection with tax mitigation and avoidance and includes the circulation of literature or the placing of advertisements which make any reference to tax savings or tax advantages to be gained from any product or service.

(3) The Regulations shall include the requirement to file with the Inland Revenue and the Library of the House of Commons any literature, brochure, advertisement or other communication of a general nature issued in the course of the conduct of such business.'.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First Time.

Dr. Marek: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

As a result of the Budget and the Finance Bill, the remaining stages of which we are debating, the top 1 per cent. of the population gained more in income tax than the bottom 70 per cent. That is astounding. Perhaps people in the country at large do not realise that that has happened. If they did, their perception of the Budget's effects, which are not very great, contrary to the Government's expectation in March, would be even lower than it is now.

On average, since 1979, the top 1 per cent. have gained £100,000 in tax cuts, and, as a result of the Budget and the Finance Bill, they will gain another £10,000 each. Yet the average pay and average tax paid by ordinary men and women in the street have risen, because tax, as a proportion of GDP, was lower in 1979 than it is now. It was about 34 per cent. in 1979, and it is now 38 per cent. The average person in the street has not benefited from Tory tax-cutting policies. The Tory party cannot be regarded as a tax-cutting party. It is a taxing party for 90 per cent. of the population, and it is neutral for the remaining 5 per cent. It is a tax-cutting party for the super-rich—the top tax payers and the top income earners.

Our new clause represents an attempt to limit the extra tax avoidance that the super-rich enjoy, on top of all the benefits that the Government have given them in the form of tax cuts and other incentives to avoid paying tax. It is an attempt to limit avoidance by giving the country more information and by making tax advisers register as tax advisers and deposit in the House of Commons Library and with the Inland Revenue all the schemes and advice that is given to extremely wealthy people—the super-rich—so that they can avoid paying tax. Opposition Members are quite sure that if there were knowledge of what goes on in the tax avoidance industry, the country would not put up with such practices, and the Government would be forced to bring in far more tax avoidance measures.

I do not suggest that the Government and the Financial Secretary are not interested in tax avoidance measures. They are. I criticise the Government and the Financial

[Dr. Marek]

Secretary because their perception of what is and is not allowable is wrong. The line has been drawn too far to one side. We should like to draw it a long way further back towards the middle ground.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Budget has dealt a serious blow to the tax avoidance industry and that many people who were involved in that sector of the economy now find themselves almost out of work?

Dr. Marek: If the hon. Gentleman were close enough to me, he would see tears rolling down my cheeks. Perhaps he could give us a few more details about exactly what the Government have done and about what type of tax adviser, rich person or top income tax payer is now out of work. I do not believe that that is the effect of the Budget. If the hon. Gentleman knows something different—this is the Report stage, and we have plenty of time—I shall be delighted to give way to him again so that he may enlighten the House on precisely what he means.

I make it absolutely clear that the Budget has not benefited the super-rich only because of the income tax concessions. It has benefited them because of the capital gains tax concessions also. Only a few of the rich will benefit from the rebasing of the capital gains tax. It is fair to say that the capital gains tax has been increased to 40 per cent. for the small band of very wealthy income-receiving people.

I welcome that, and I am not afraid to say so. By and large, the Government have given real gifts in the form of capital gains tax, because of the rebasing provisions. It is obscene that the richest will benefit from the lowering of the inheritance tax rate from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent. The rate has gone up for those who paid inheritance tax at the rate of 30 per cent., but they are not super-rich, they are perhaps only moderately rich. The Government do not look after them; they look after the super-rich. I wonder whether the country knows exactly what is going on and what advice the tax advice industry is giving to such people.

Mr. Winnick: Is there anything strange in what has occurred? But the Tory party is in politics to look after the interests of the very rich. It always has done so and always will. Once it has a majority in the House of Commons, why should it not look after its friends?

Dr. Marek: One can certainly look after one's friends. We all should look after our friends. We are all on the same planet, and we are all human beings. But the Tory party looks after its friends at the expense of other people who should be its friends. That criticism can be levelled against the Tory party.

8.45 pm

I shall show that, in spite of all the tax cuts and changes in the inheritance tax bands and in capital gains tax, there are still tax avoidance schemes. They are still as plentiful as ever. Although they say that they try to do something about them, the Government still allow them to continue. Tax avoidance schemes provide even more benefits for the rich and the super-rich, on top of all the benefits that they received in the Budget.

Tax evasion—not avoidance—seems to be out of control. There seems to have been a seven fold increase since 1979, yet the Government are not prepared to appoint enough tax collectors and tax inspectors. If they were to do so, the money that they would expend on the training and appointment of such officers would be repaid by the lessening of tax evasion and the extra revenue that the Treasury would receive. The Government do not do that. That is inexplicable, except on the basis that they look after their own friends to the exclusion of everyone else.

The effect of our new clause would be to place tax advice on record in the Library of the House of Commons. It would make the job of the Inland Revenue a little easier. Of necessity, various tax advice institutions, companies and individuals would send all their literature and advice to the Inland Revenue. The public would have a greater awareness. As a result, the Government would be forced to act and bring forward more anti-tax avoidance schemes and measures than they have so far.

In the past nine years, many tax advisers and consultants have done well out of the Government. People have been appointed as consultants left, right and centre. I do not criticise that. There is probably something in it. The Government should know what the poacher is doing. I do not use the gamekeeper-poacher analogy in any disrespectful way. Institutions and people have benefited from the underwriting that has taken place as a result of the Government's privatisation measures. They have reason to thank the Government, but they should not thank the Government for not finding out what advice they give their clients about how to avoid paying taxes. It is the duty of every individual to pay his or her taxes—not more than they must pay, but they should pay a fair amount. If there are loopholes, boltholes and tax havens, the Government should know about them and do

I shall give the House some examples. The first is the business expansion scheme—a clear loophole. Clear abuse is made of that scheme. It represents about £85 million of lost revenue per year. It is used not to create wealth for industry but to plough money into hotels for the homeless. Is that what the scheme was invented for in the first place? If not, the Government should do something about it. The scheme is being used to fund private hospitals and, at the same time, run down the National Health Service. As a result, the National Health Service has become two-tiered.

The scheme is being used also to fund nursing homes and even private schools. A taxpayer with an income of £40,000 should at the top rate pay £16,000, but he can wipe out his liability by funnelling that money into an approved business expansion scheme. If the Government could show that those schemes contribute to industry, to manufacturing production, to wealth creation, or to increasing employment, I would not be saying what I am. However, we believe that those schemes are squalid, shabby tax boltholes that ought to be stopped by the Government at the first opportunity.

The second loophole exploited by the super-rich is enterprise zones. Pop stars, the idle rich and the very wealthy have all been able to set unlimited funds against their tax liabilities by leasing factory units and then renting them out. They are not factory units that they have inspected and which they feel will help to provide wealth in depressed areas or in regions of high unemployment. They have not even seen those factories, but by leasing and then renting out such units, they avoid their tax liabilities.

The resulting forgone tax revenue does not go to depressed areas or to enterprise zones either, because it is

siphoned away by the super-rich for their own purposes. Probably, they do not even live in this country. Areas desperately needing investment do not receive it. It now costs about £30,000 to create one job, and the discontinued regional development grants created jobs for a lot less money than that. It is estimated that £60 million per annum is lost in that way.

Our new clause would compel all those who advise pop stars and the idle rich to commit their advice to paper, and then that information would be placed in the Library so that we could all read it. We could then communicate in turn to the public what is happening in the financial life of this country, and I believe that there would be public revulsion at some of the practices that the Government allow.

Executive share option schemes were introduced by the Government in the Finance Bill 1984. About £100 million per annum is lost through such schemes. Some schemes are available to all employees, but the majority of them are designed for executives. They benefit the 50,000 top-paid executives who are able to buy options if the market goes up, as it did. The market can also go down, but in the long term, it usually goes up. Those executives are able to take up their options after three years and then enjoy their capital gains.

Those gains are not achieved through hard work or because of any increased profits, but are the result of the perception of the City and of international capital as to what are the prospects of enjoying a good rate of return from this country in the near future. I do not refer to the long term, because there the time scale is too long. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will rule me out of order if I dwell too long on that subject, although I may say that the long-term future for this country is not very sound.

Bed-and-breakfasting is another area of activity that the super-rich can use that is not open to the man in the street. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury nods his head—I suppose that the ordinary man in the street can benefit from it, but in practice it is something from which the rich really benefit. If the Government would go some way to meeting the new clause, it would be shown whether it is the ordinary man in the street who exploits bed-and-breakfasting in selling his British Airways shares, or whether it is the rich and the institutions who actually make use of that technique. If the Financial Secretary can tell me who does, I shall be delighted to know.

My final example is that given by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chief Secretary. His question to the Chancellor was answered by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. My hon. Friend asked:

"if he will estimate the tax liability in respect of the tax year 1988 of a married man aged 51 with no dependent children who is in receipt for that year of a salary from his employer of £1 million"—

there are a few such people around—

"assuming he has a mortgage of £30,000, a BES investment of £40,000, an investment of £810,000 in a new enterprise zone unit trust of which 94 per cent. is attributable to building costs and where 50 per cent. of the purchase price is borrowed in circumstances where guaranteed rent receivable equals the interest outgoing, and who makes a contribution to a retirement annuity scheme amounting to £195,000."

That is some form of tax avoidance scheme.

Hon. Members may guess at the answer to the question and how much tax that wealthy person will pay. The Financial Secretary gave a holding answer on 12 April because clearly he had to consult his tax advisers. On 18 April he replied:

"Liability to income tax in 1988-89 would be nil."—[*Official Report*, 18 May 1988; Vol. 133, c. *503-504*.]

That is what our new clause is all about. Tax avoidance measures are being used not by ordinary men and women in the street but by the super-rich, who are so wealthy that the average person cannot dream what type of lives they have and what considerations shape their thoughts during the working day.

The country could do with knowing more about the tax avoidance industry. It is not one that creates wealth for the country but that creates wealth for the idle and the super-rich. Let us have no more headlines of the kind that appeared in the *Evening Standard* on 12 July—

"The great British tax haven"—

as if that were the sum total and the whole aim of the present Conservative Administration—not a country creating wealth through productive industry, but a tax haven. As to the vain hope that the idle rich will come to this country and pay their taxes here, time will tell who is right about that. Let us have no more headlines of the kind that appeared in *The Sun* on 16 March:

"Lotsa lovely lolly. Lawson cuts taxes for all."

There is now a sour taste to that tax-cutting, given the 2·5 per cent. hike in interest rates and the fact that for the average person, any tax cut has now been taken away by the increased mortgages that are about to be imposed. Let us have no more headlines such as

"Burton boss"—

I shall not read the next words—

"is £5,000 a week better off".

That is immoral and obscene, and cannot be justified by any Government.

I have here a book that I should like to recommend to the Financial Secretary. It is called "The Rich and the Super-Rich", by Ferdinand Lundberg. I thought that the Financial Secretary would appreciate it. It has an excellent chapter on "The Great Tax Swindle", with sections headed "Tax-free Fortune Building", "How to Get Rich by Not Paying Taxes" and "The Baited Trap"—which explains how to

"set up the public for the big tax swindle"——

Mr. Winnick: If my hon. Friend goes on, all Tory Members will want a copy.

9 pm

Dr. Marek: The book is about 20 years old. Things have changed since then.

Another heading is "Valuable Wives". I need not remind the House that, with the disaggregation of income and capital taxation, wives will become valuable to the super-rich. The position has changed for the worse rather than for the better. Other sections are headed "Tax Support for Rich Children", "Other Ways of Income Splitting" and "Additional Tax Dodges", and there are six or seven more sub-headings in the chapter.

The book dwells more on the American than on the British experience, but the introduction is relevant to Britain. Perhaps we could dwell on this story another time. The Government take pride in saying that our present fiscal regime is more like America's than that of any other European country. The second paragraph on page 9 of the book reads as follows:

"Thus the picture is of a society where the rich, despite a well-publicized and apparently stringent tax regime, continue

[Dr. Marek]

to pre-empt a very large share of society's resources in the United Kingdom, while the poor and the moderately well-off, though relieved of much of the pre-war burden of heavy unemployment"—

times have moved on: we cannot say that any longer—

"and with their incomes boosted by the earnings of working wives, have in fact failed to capture any significantly larger share of life's good things for themselves. Certainly there are many more good things; but that is not quite the point. And for the really poor, particularly the old and lonely, the whole equality notion has a pretty sour ring."

The new clause is a small crumb—a small step towards bringing morality back to the governance of our affairs—but I commend it to the House.

Mr. Hanley: Some of us who have been listening to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) may feel that this is the first time that the new clause has been discussed properly. The hon. Gentleman's diatribe was more an argument against reducing rates of taxation than in explanation of the new clause.

I must declare my interest as the parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. I have been a chartered accountant for nearly 20 years, and I strongly disagree with the hon. Gentleman. What he is really saying is that it is wrong to be accurate, and wrong to seek advice on the law. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who is no longer in the Chamber, shouted from a sedentary position at many points in his hon. Friend's speech. Would he say that it is wrong to seek guidance on immigration law? How about those who give advice on social security benefits? Is it wrong for citizens advice bureaux to give advice? I think it entirely right for the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, of which the hon. Member for Walsall, North is chairman, to give proper advice on the law as it stands.

Dr. Marek: If the hon. Gentleman reads tomorrow what I said in my speech, he will see that I did not criticise the seeking of advice. But it is the duty of Government to stop tax avoidance when they feel that there are too many loopholes, or that the line has been drawn too far.

Mr. Hanley: If the hon. Gentleman had stayed on that tack throughout his speech, I would have welcomed it. He mentioned briefly that the advantages of forestry had been removed in the last Budget, and I am sure that the Government will remove any other so-called loopholes that are patently immoral. But he has not answered the question whether it is right to give advice on this branch of law. He cast all sorts of aspersions on those who give tax advice, as if to say that giving advice to a person who merely happens to be wealthy is wrong, but it is right to advise those who are not wealthy. That is a strange, twisted argument, which I am not prepared to support.

Every shopkeeper—how many shopkeepers can be genuinely classed as wealthy?—needs and should seek advice on the accuracy of their accounts, and therefore their taxation. All tax advisers—no, all good tax advisers—greatly help the Inland Revenue with the collection of data. If it were not for those who help individuals to calculate an accurate tax assessment, the Inland Revenue would have to spend millions, if not billions, of pounds calculating the correct amount of taxation. I am certain that the Inland Revenue would hate to see the demise of this industry which the hon. Gentleman seems to dislike so much.

I turn to another point about the new clause and to what the hon. Gentleman called his hideous threat to kill off the taxation industry. Let us analyse that threat. The hon. Gentleman suggests that every organisation giving tax advice must send one copy of any generally issued statement of advice to the Inland Revenue and to the Library of the House of Commons.

In my top left-hand pocket I always keep a little card, the same size as a credit card and encapsulated in plastic. It shows the rates of taxation and is issued by Peat Marwick McLintock. If that company is kind enough to send it to me, I think that I should admit its origin. It also states the national insurance contributions for the year, the VAT rates and exemption rates, the rates for corporation tax, for capital gains tax and for inheritance tax and the rates of taxation for company cars. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will admit that those rates increased dramatically in the last Budget.

There is not one word of advice on that card apart from the truth. However, that is exactly the type of "wicked" document which according to the hon. Gentleman pays pounds into the hands of the super-rich and which would have to be filed in the Library of the House of Commons because it is an item which is "issued generally". And yet not one word of specific advice does the hon. Gentleman want to be placed in the Library or sent to the Inland Revenue.

Dr. Marek *rose*—

Mr. Hanley: I shall give way for the last time because I must be brief.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way but he must get his facts right. What about a person with a company car which happens to be a Rolls-Royce? Under the Budget changes, instead of paying £5·26 a week for the privilege, he will pay £6·01 per week. That is hardly a huge change.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is trying to wriggle out of his embarrassment because I am exposing the truth about the new clause. However, he failed to mention the substantive point that I am making. What he would have filed in the Library of the House of Commons and with the Inland Revenue are items of a general nature that are circulated to the clients of tax advisers, not specific advice. If, as he says those general items are issued in the normal course of business, probably 5,000, 10,000 or perhaps even 20,000 such documents are being circulated. It would not cost a firm of chartered accountants a jot or tittle extra to send an extra two to the Inland Revenue and the Library. That is not a reason for saying,

"Do not vote against the new clause."

Instead, it is an argument for saying that it would not have the effect that the hon. Gentleman believes that it will have of cutting that "immoral industry" like a scythe.

My last point refers to something that the hon. Gentleman did not say about the new clause, perhaps because he has not yet read it. It states that tax advisers must be registered. Whom is the hon. Gentleman serving? If one registers a person calling himself a tax adviser, that person might have no qualifications whatsoever but might then gain credibility from being on the register, as it might be seen as a mark of competence. Plenty of people call themselves tax advisers but are totally unqualified and

should not be on any register. The general public should look at the professional qualifications of those who give tax advice.

The register would give those who are unqualified a status that they do not deserve. Those who are listed under section 389 of the Companies Act 1985 or by the Institute of Taxation are properly qualified in tax advice although others may be properly competent. To insist on registration would dupe thousands of people who would read the names on the register as if they were in "Yellow Pages" and turn to those people because the hon. Gentleman will have given them some credibility. The new clause is absolute nonsense. It will not have the effects that the hon. Member for Wrexham claims and it will have disastrous effects on the ordinary man in the street who should look to proper qualifications and not a mere registration.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): New clause 10 is important in so far as it is about professionalism and transparency. I consider that it would have some effect on accountants who are often imprisoned behind duties of confidentiality to their employers about how they might operate.

I want to draw attention to the imprisonment of accountants. By imprisonment, I do not mean imprisonment in prisons, but imprisonment within that duty of confidentiality. Subsection (3) of the new clause states:

"The Regulations shall include the requirement to file with the Inland Revenue and the Library of the House of Commons any literature, brochure, advertisement or other communication of a general nature issued in the course of the conduct of such business."

In so far as it deals with communications, in certain conditions it must include communications from accountants and other organisations within those organisations to their employers.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a particular communication. I intend neither to state to whom the communication was addressed nor to identify from whom it was sent, but I can say that the document is marked "Private and Confidential". I read it to the House as an example of the problems that exist and which were dealt with by the particular correspondent.

Mr. Hanley: This was not issued generally.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Actually, it was. It was generally issued in so far as it was made available to me and to others at a later stage. It states:

"Dear Mr. X, I understand that you will not be available at our meeting this afternoon. Since it was a fortnight since our last abortive meeting, I feel I must write to you on certain matters whilst there are a number of items outstanding, that is to say, VAT on racehorses, prospectus preparation and computerisation of accounts, the subject that concerns me the most has tax implications.

Some of these practices have been discussed briefly at meetings between ourselves and Mr. Y, and refer to the following: the practice of paying round sum expense allowances that are fixed and have no relation to expenses incurred, and the practice of paying expenses to part-timers in lieu of pay to avoid the wages of the same exceeding national insurance contribution thresholds".

This document is witnessed by a representative of the legal profession. A further letter states:

"I thought I had substantially covered points raised in my memo."

The date is given, but I shall not reveal it.

"However, to reiterate, I have sent to you a draft memo dealing with the matter of expenses. I have provided details of those persons whose salaries are deemed to be paid by separate group companies. Further, I have indicated those whose workload is spread over different group companies, my advice was that wages and salaries should be aggregated for national insurance purposes.

My advice on expenses in lieu of wages, the granting of non-repayable loans and the granting of tax free bonuses was that they be abolished. The only item on which I had to comment was the matter of introducing stand-by allowances in respect of weekend working. I have to advise you that these would be subject to tax.

At our last meeting on the subject some two weeks ago, I asked that in case you did not agree with my advice and that of my colleagues you refer the matter to a suitable firm of accountants i.e. Deloittes for their judgment."

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. I have no intention of giving way. The letter continues:

"The practice of yourself withdrawing money and having it debited to travel expenses, whilst I appreciate it is against proper business expense, the Inland Revenue may infer differently.

The practice of having emoluments of certain personnel spread over different companies to avoid national insurance contributions, in spite of the fact that they have only one implied contract of employment, and the practice of paying tax free bonuses, and the practice of granting loans and the cancellation therefore without action as to the tax implication. One of the worrying features is the general talk in the office on this matter. Further I believe other people in accounts, and indeed, my predecessors, may have advised you on these matters. You said you would be seeing them within the next"—

the period—is identified in the letter.

"Have you had the chance to see them? If not, perhaps I could see them with you. Perhaps it might be helpful if I explain why I have pursued this matter for nearly six weeks. Firstly, you proposed to go public. Whilst you and I might disagree about the time scale, I think it common ground that the necessary investigative accountants will turn over every stone in the organisation. They will, after all, not be responsible to the company but to the public who subscribe for shares. In my opinion, if they encounter a history of tax evasion, they will at least wish to raise provisions against outstanding liabilities. Secondly, the Inland Revenue have stepped up their emphasis on PAYE audit. The likelihood of such an audit of company Y has been increased by the recent television exposure on the Z affair."

9.15 pm

I am not prepared to identify that tonight.

"It is my opinion that in that eventuality the Inland Revenue would have a field day in the face of such blatant and naive tax evasion. The point here is that faced with such a history, it would be far preferable to be legitimate rather than still carrying on in the same vein. This is the point"—

the person to whom the letter is sent is then identified—

"I worry about most. We will not, as I have said before, serve your interest best by adapting the existing system or trying to invent other dubious schemes. We must abolish the practices. To do otherwise might prove extremely costly. Thirdly, and lastly, you must appreciate my position. I am a chartered accountant and as such have certain responsibilities. Bluntly, I cannot and will not be party to any illegalities. Whilst in your employment it is my duty to you and to my profession to seek and pursue a return to legitimacy. Time has elapsed since our first conversation and I feel I must respectfully ask you at your earliest convenience for your agreement and proposals to remedy the situation."

Any person who attaches a name to the sender or recipient of that letter may find himself the subject of a legal action. I advise people to be most careful in doing so. I draw this letter to the House's attention because I feel that correspondence of this nature should be brought before Parliament. It is in the public interest that we assess the implications of correspondence of that nature in so far

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

as we have here what is believed to be a reputable company, allegedly, in the view of an accountant, involved in practices that infringe standards that the Inland Revenue and society as a whole expect.

The new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) would deal with matters of that nature. That correspondence might have found itself in the hands of the Inland Revenue at a stage earlier than it subsequently did.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I would like to say a few words in support of the new clause and the issues raised by my hon. Friends. The new clause contains a useful measure and it is one that the Government could easily incorporate into the Bill. It would ensure that those giving advice in taxation matters did so in a responsible way and were not engaged merely in encouraging different forms of tax evasion and tax avoidance.

The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) said it was not wrong to give advice. That is true, but the new clause, if accepted, would show us whether particular forms of tax break were being over-encouraged or over-used and would also allow the Government to work out whether the literature sent out was of an acceptable standard.

The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes mentioned the forestry tax break. If the new clause had been in effect in previous years, the misuse of that forestry tax break would have been spotted much earlier. We would have been able to see how widespread was the advice given to people to go into forestry, thereby ruining large tracts of the countryside, and corrective action would have been taken much earlier.

Mr. Hanley: The Opposition must admit that many chartered accountants send copies of the information that they have issued generally to their clients to the Inland Revenue in support of their advice and of the applications and claims that their clients are making to the Revenue. Accountants are not at all secretive about the advice that they give generally. I disagree with the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) and her hon. Friends about the new clause because not a single word in the letter that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has just read out would be placed in the Library of the House under the terms of the new clause, as the information in it was not issued generally. It was a specific letter and would not be required by the new clause to be lodged in the Library or with the Revenue.

Ms. Quin: I still believe that the new clause would be an extremely useful step. We do not say that it would cure everything, but the hon. Gentleman should consider it along with the other amendments tabled by the Opposition in Committee which, unfortunately, were not accepted by the Government. The Opposition tabled a range of amendments to deal with the problem of tax avoidance. We proposed an obligation for auditors to report tax fraud and that Britain should combine with other countries in the international campaign against tax fraud. Unfortunately, the Government did not accept those amendments. The new clause should be considered as one of a series of measures and not in isolation, although it has to be discussed in isolation on Report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) pointed out that the problem of tax avoidance has increased during the Government's term of office. That has been shown by the overall amount of money that has been estimated to have been lost to the Exchequer and also in the number of cases that have been brought forward. It is true that the Government have recognised that tax avoidance and tax evasion are problems, but they seem to think that they were problems brought about by high and, as they called them, punitive tax rates. That seems to suggest that top taxpayers are especially dishonest in their rush to engage in tax avoidance schemes, yet although taxes have come down the problem of tax avoidance has not decreased.

We believe strongly that better safeguards and measures are necessary to tackle the problems. If information were given to the Government, to Parliament and to the general public, as the clause proposes, we should be in a better position to decide what further measures were necessary and perhaps a code of practice or new rules might be introduced to deal with the problem more effectively. It is true that that might result in an increase in Inland Revenue staff, but we would welcome that because we believe that staffing levels are hopelessly inadequate to deal with large-scale tax avoidance and tax evasion.

Our proposal might help the Government's image. Their nine years in office and, in particular, the Budget have led them to be seen as friends of the very rich and of tax avoiders. Money saved as a spin-off from such measures would leave more money for the worthwhile social purposes on which the Government have been so reluctant to spend money.

The Government have been generous, indeed wildly over-generous, to the richest, but they certainly have a duty to see that those taxes which are still imposed are properly and duly paid.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong: I support new clause 10, not because it would solve all the problems, but because it would signal to the country that the Government took tax avoidance as seriously as over-claiming benefit at the other end of the scale.

The Government frequently complain that we allege that they do not seem to care about people on benefit. I would make those arguments elsewhere. We can say that with such fervour and it is agreed with such fervour because of the great difference in their language and attitude towards people on benefit and those at the top who try to avoid paying tax.

It has often been said to me that in this debate Back Bench Members seem to refer to their parents. My father often used to say of these matters that so long as something is legal and one can get away with it, it is all right. I do not believe that. Some actions are legal but only because they are contrived to meet legal requirements. In every other sense they involve avoiding one's responsibility to meet commitments to the community by paying taxes which are due.

If an individual goes to his tax adviser and says, "I am not interested in avoiding tax; I wish to pay what I should pay and to ensure that my accounts are straight and that it is clear what I am doing," the adviser will reply, "You must be crazy. There are all sorts of ways in which I can push bits of money here and there so that you do not have to pay large sums in tax." My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) showed that it was still possible for

a millionaire to avoid paying any tax by allocating money for particular purposes. Yes, it is strictly legal, but is it right? I do not believe that anyone would want to defend that as right.

The new clause addresses the Government's responsibility to demonstrate their even-handedness and their concern to discourage tax avoidance as much as claiming benefit to which one is not entitled. The Government have a moral problem which is also a political problem. We are not encouraging people to go outside the law. We are saying that it is not right that the law should allow people to avoid their responsibility of contributing to the public purse when they can afford to.

I accept that the new clause may not have the exact effect that we seek. That is because there are tax avoidance experts in this country who will wangle their way around almost any device that the House tries to fashion. The tragedy is that they can advertise in weekly papers with no comeback from the Government. We do not hear the Government saying that it is disgraceful that such people advise individuals and companies on how to get around the letter of the law. No such condemnation is heard.

Acceptance of the new clause, or a commitment by the Government to reword it so that it meets the general point, would be a signal to those companies and individuals that the Government were not prepared to support such skirting around and abuse of the thrust of the law. The Government and, more importantly, the House, should say that. If we are interested in demonstrating that we believe in one nation with equal opportunities for all, without some people seeming to celebrate getting out of their public responsibilities, the House should send a clear message that it does not tolerate and will work against the sort of tax avoidance schemes of which we have heard such good examples this evening.

I hope the Government will think about this seriously. It is a moral and a political issue that is concerned with what is right—not what can be got away with.

9.30 pm

Mr. Morgan: I want to make three brief points, one of which follows on from what my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) has said.

The new clause is not an attack on the chartered accountants' profession—anything but. It is a way of trying to ensure that income taxation, which the Government have thought of as a diminishing aspect of taxation—they much prefer value added and other expenditure taxes—should not be seen as a voluntary form of tax. It should be seen by everyone as a means of paying one's dues to society—paying for civilisation, for schools, playing fields and so on. Income tax cannot be voluntary; it must be part of the system in which everyone pays according to his need a proportion of his income, because that is how we finance public expenditure on defence, schools and other things.

In order for the tax not to be seen as a voluntary form of taxation that people can avoid paying, we must not create a society in which people start entertaining that sort of ambition. We must stop the notion that people are mugs to pay income tax. In the past nine years there has been an increasing emphasis on reducing income tax and top rates of tax, as though in some way they drove pop stars abroad and so were destructive of civilisation. The Government have started to create a climate in which taxation, particularly of income, will increasingly be seen as part of the past, with no role to play in the future. And tax advisers play a vital role in that.

When we discussed this subject in Committee, we made great play of the fact that tax advisers and chartered accountants should be happy to remember not only that they are being paid by their clients in a proper manner, but that they have duties to their profession. They have their charter because they are expected to behave in accordance with it, in the same way as doctors and dentists, who hang their framed diplomas in the corners of their waiting rooms, provide a professional skill that has been tested by an appropriate body.

Not all taxation advisers, as the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) said, are qualified, but they have certain obligations, to society as well as to their clients, to ensure that there is fair play between the former and the latter, who do not want to pay more tax than they are due for but who should be advised on methods of paying less than their due. Therefore, we opted for a registration scheme.

In Committee we suggested that, when a case went to court, the Inland Revenue and the courts should be able to look at the working papers. We do not ask for that when a case does not go to court, because we do not want any breach of confidentiality. There were howls of outrage from Conservative Members who worked for professional bodies. They said that that would be completely impossible. Professions such as accountancy have chartered bodies because they are expected to provide a minimum professional standard and because they are part of society, which has given them charters and the status that goes with them. A royal charter shows that a profession is not a cowboy outfit.

We ask for equality of treatment in the way that the Government approach the problems of unemployment and other benefit fraud and of tax fraud. During the Whitsun recess, a major television spectacular about the Department of Health and Social Security showed the sweep that it had organised to catch people making fraudulent benefit claims. We are not in favour of fraudulent benefit claims by people who are working, but do we ever see similar treatment of tax fraud? There is no parity between the way that the Inland Revenue goes about its work of minimising tax evasion and the way that the DHSS officers catch people on building sites. Until there is parity, this will be a divided society. One solution would be the registration of taxation advisers, so that they can both work with the Inland Revenue, as watchdogs on professional clients, and insist that their clients pay their dues to society. Taxation advisers are not there simply to help clients avoid paying their dues to society.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words on the new clause. I thought that I would be saying a few more words, but time does not allow.

The point I want to make emerged more than once in Committee and in the House. The Opposition have challenged capitalism before, and may do so again, but that is not what we are about this evening. We are asking for a bit of honest capitalism. We have already had a debate about full information being made available to ordinary people looking for credit. We are asking here for full information to be made available to potential investors, so that they know where their money is going and the risks that they will be taking. Full information

[Mr. Henderson]

must also be made available to society so that it knows where the Government are providing incentives for investments. We hope that that will be in the interest of all of us. It is really about honesty.

That is borne out by enterprise zones. Those who take a keen interest in the City—I know that some Conservative Members are probably away from the House preparing for their activities in the City tomorrow rather than being with us this evening—will know about the developments in loan finance. Industrialists and corporate organisations no longer rely on direct finance from clearing banks. It is far more usual for them to go to some third or fourth stage removed financial intermediary, which is ultimately laundering money, much of which probably emanated from clearing banks. It is right that people who are giving funds to organisations or who are borrowing from them should know what is happening. That is why the organisations should be registered.

In relation to enterprise zones, I wonder how many people know about the Laser 1988 Trust which services clients of Johnson Fry. No doubt it is a reputable organisation, but most people would not know whether it was reputable or not because it is probably not registered. There have been many reports on enterprise zones. I am sure that the Government are disturbed at the cost of providing a job in an enterprise zone compared with the cost of other measures under section 7 expenditure.

If we want to see sufficient public expenditure, we know that tax subsidies for property investments in enterprise zones are a bad way of using public money and a high cost means of providing jobs. If companies like Laser 1988 Trust which are involved in attracting funds for this purpose had been registered, it might have emerged sooner than seven years after the establishment of enterprise zones that they were not the best way of developing areas that need to be developed or of creating jobs.

Not only investors but everyone would have known that these companies were offering 100 per cent. first-year tax allowances, large investments in London docklands in retail, office and restaurant developments, with a 25-year guarantee of income, regardless of the subletting position, and exciting potential for capital growth. A financial article says:

"Colegrave Johnson Fry Ltd consider that this is the most important opportunity that has been created in tax shelter for many years."

Had that company been registered and had the information about it been made public, we would all have known that it is about tax avoidance schemes and tax shelter and has nothing much to do with the creation of jobs. With the proliferation of such companies, many of which are subsidiaries of investment trusts, we have a new development in the financial world. If we believe in honest and open capitalism, with the maximum information available to the participants, there is a need for new clause 10, which insists on the registration of companies which want to get involved in this business.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There is nothing like the subject of tax avoidance to make the Opposition look more cheerful. We have had subdued debates, with Opposition Members in a subdued mood, but suddenly the smiles have reappeared as we have devoted nearly a full hour to the subject of tax avoidance. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has been able to return to the subject of the super-rich. He has as big a romance with them as Scott Fitzgerald did, but he takes a less benign view of them. However, it enabled him to read from a book, suitably yellow, published 20 years ago, telling people how to avoid tax under the Labour Government who were then in office.

The new clause, if it is to be taken seriously, would serve little purpose. Opposition Members may have wanted simply to air the issue of tax avoidance, which I agree is a serious matter. I want to remind the House of some of the things which we have done to counter tax avoidance. I do not believe that the new clause would achieve anything. The idea that the registration of tax advisers would help the Revenue is wrong. Unfortunately, the Revenue spends much of its time answering telephone calls from tax advisers and knows exactly who they are. We have had to curtail some of the interchange between tax advisers and the Revenue precisely because it is not proper for the Revenue to be involved in discussions such as have taken place in the past, which have amounted virtually to clearance. There is no difficulty for the Revenue in knowing who tax advisers are.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) is right to say that sometimes working papers can shed light on particular problems. He will recall that we have taken some new powers under the Keith committee proposals. In general, the problem is not the hidden nature of the devices used for tax avoidance. After all, unless people intend to behave illegally, they have to make a tax return and show precisely the device that they have used to minimise their tax liability.

9.45 pm

One must distinguish between avoidance, evasion and something in between, which some people call "avoision". Evasion is very much a matter for investigation and prosecution. Avoidance is, of course, legal. It involves exploiting reliefs passed by the House and it is a matter for the House to debate whether it wishes, for example, reliefs on forestry to continue. That will not be helped by registering tax advisers. Then there is the grey area of "avoision". That is a matter of balancing whether reliefs should remain available as a matter of Government policy and deciding whether some schemes are artificial. That sometimes means that the Inland Revenue has to take cases to court. We have had some notable victories. A recent case probably saved about £1 billion of revenue. That is a much more fruitful way of approaching the problem.

I cannot believe that Opposition Members think that the new clause serves any purpose. The Revenue has no difficulty in obtaining knowledge of those people who give tax advice and of their activities. Revenue officials have to deal with those people every day in correspondence over individuals' and companies' tax affairs. The proposals would also be a significant resource cost for the Revenue and would not add to its knowledge of the work involved. There is no difficulty for the Revenue in discovering such information.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) read out a letter, which I shall study, although it would not be appropriate to comment on it here. If the hon. Gentleman believes that the law is being broken, he will no doubt reveal the names of the people involved in the matters discussed in the letter, and we shall certainly consider those. However, I am certain that the

new clause would not catch the sort of activities—if that is a suitable word—described in that letter. The clause does not require people to deposit in this House or forward to the Inland Revenue working documents or letters to clients. It is a matter of general promotional literature, and that would not be covered by the clause.

I am a little surprised at the attitude taken by Opposition Members. Surely they do not believe that it is necessary to make tax advisers register with the Government to discover that the business expansion scheme, enterprise zones or forestry are being used to reduce tax liability. After all, that has been the Government's policy. The Government have deliberately passed those reliefs because they believe that they serve a purpose.

The hon. Member for Wrexham said that he does not approve of the business expansion scheme. I am sorry to hear that. A couple of years ago, the expansion of the scheme was welcomed by the Leader of the Opposition. It has contributed very much to finance for smaller businesses and has raised additional finance that would not otherwise have been raised.

Furthermore, in this Finance Bill we have targeted the business expansion scheme more specifically on smaller companies. But it is an example of a specific relief being used for a social purpose which we think is in the national interest. We do not need a register of tax advisers to tell us that some people are doing what we have given them a tax incentive to do.

Mr. Battle: Does the Minister agree that the difference in this Budget is that the business expansion scheme has been introduced into the housing market at precisely the time when the Housing Bill has been discussed in Committee without any reference to that fact at all? The Housing Bill seems to make life a lot easier for landlords to exploit tenants as result of the business expansion scheme at public expense and with a tax subsidy.

Mr. Lamont: We shall no doubt be debating the pros and cons of the business expansion scheme tomorrow. However, we do not need a register of financial advisers to discover that the business expansion scheme exists, because we have set it up in the House of Commons.

I note what Opposition Members have said about enterprise zones. They do not like them. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has made his dislike clear. Without giving away any secrets of some of his colleagues, I can say that that is in sharp contrast to the views of some Opposition Members—they are not all present—who write and ask for enterprise zones to be established in their constituencies because they think that they serve a purpose. They know that employment has more than doubled in areas where enterprise zones have been established.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The reason why some Opposition Members pressed for enterprise zones is simple. It is that we wanted the rate relief. The tax concession was never relevant.

Mr. Lamont: I did not know that the hon. Gentleman was one of those who pressed for an enterprise zone—I was not accusing him—but now we know.

If Opposition Members do not like these reliefs, it must be their policy to abolish them. I assume that they will abolish the business expansion scheme and enterprise zones, which have done some good for some derelict and rundown areas. I also assume from what the hon. Member for Wrexham said about the disaggregation of husband's and wife's incomes, which he seems to regard as avoidance of tax, that they are opposed to that and that the Labour party will end what we propose on disaggregation.

I agree with the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) that tax avoidance should be taken seriously. If she and other hon. Members had been fair, they would have recognised that the Government have done many things. We have implemented step by step the findings of the Keith committee and given the Inland Revenue greater powers to inquire into the circumstances of individual taxpayers. Moreover, the yield from Inland Revenue investigations has gone up sevenfold while the Government have been in office. The hon. Lady referred to us not putting enough resources into investigations, but she should compare what we have done with what the previous Labour Government did. Over 3,200 people are now carrying out investigations in the Inland Revenue, compared with 1,600 under the previous Labour Government. That is a considerable increase in resources and it has also been responsible for the increased yield.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that, despite the increased staff that have been put to work on this matter, and despite the expectations that were announced to the House when successive cuts in top rate tax were made that there would no longer be any incentive for tax evasion, tax evasion has been very much on the increase during the past nine years?

Mr. Lamont: That is pure assertion and the hon. Gentleman has provided no evidence for it. The fact that we have put more civil servants to work and may raise more revenue through their investigations is evidence of nothing except that the investigation has been successful and that this is productive work.

Opposition Members have also ignored the Government's action in successive Budgets to block loopholes. In this Finance Bill we have aligned the rates of capital gains tax and income tax. We have ended the forestry loophole, which they criticised today but did nothing about when they were in office. In previous Budgets we introduced legislation against bond washing and offshore funds. In recent weeks, as new evidence has come to light on matters such as restrictive covenants, and people being paid in gilts, we have announced immediate action against those abuses.

I believe that we have shown through our actions to block loopholes and through the resources that we have devoted to investigations in the Revenue that we take the business of countering tax avoidance very seriously. However, the amendment would do nothing to strengthen the Revenue in this area.

Dr. Marek: We have had a very good debate and I thank all my hon. Friends on the Back Benches for taking part and making a valuable contribution in bringing home to the House and the country the indignation that we feel about the Finance Bill resulting from the Budget and the way in which the money has been divided.

I also thank the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). He declared his interest. I can reassure him that we have never said that reputable advisers are doing anything dishonest. If the hon. Gentleman reads the *Official Report* tomorrow morning,

[Dr. Marek]

he will be reassured on that count. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) gave an example of a qualified adviser who had integrity and said so in the letter to which my hon. Friend referred.

I cannot go along with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in placing all my trust in fighting cases in the courts hoping to recover money which has not been paid in tax, and hoping to win a few cases here and there. The Government should have watertight legislation to make avoidance impossible. It is not right that the Government should go to the courts for that purpose.

These matters are being considered afresh and no doubt the country's top minds are at work generating new tax avoidance schemes. Therefore, I am not claiming that the Government should not go to the courts on occasions, but they must consider alternatives and see what they can do to make the system as simple as possible. They must decide what is genuinely avoidable and what ought not be avoidable. Our argument with the Government is that we believe that they draw the line too far to one side of the argument.

We do not quarrel with the business expansion scheme or enterprise zones. However, we quarrel with their targeting. We do not believe that enterprise zones do the job that they were intended to do. The Department of the Environment has decided not to designate any more enterprise zones. Why is that? It can only be because they do not do the job. Many firms outside the zones have moved into the zones and the net effect is that they are used as a tax bolthole. We object to that.

The business expansion schemes are not being extended except in the property area. Why is that? I suggest that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is somewhat too complacent in his views about tax evasion. Tax evasion has increased sevenfold over the past seven or eight years and tax avoidance schemes, tax bolthole and tax loopholes are running riot throughout the country. The Government have even said that there should not be more enterprise zones, but the Financial Secretary defended the system tonight. We cannot agree with that.

The new clause is small and will not change everything overnight. Nevertheless, communicating and imparting information can only help. For that reason, I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 252.

Division No. 412] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 15

TAX EXEMPTION FOR SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS

'(1) Where—

(a) an Association which has as its object the encouragement, development and governance of any sport or other form of recreational activity (or which has as its object the representation of such Associations) is approved for the purposes of this section by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales, and

(b) the memorandum of association or other similar instrument regulating the functions of the Association precludes the direct or indirect payment or transfer to any of its members of any of its income or property by way of dividend, gift, divisions, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit,

there shall, on a claim in that behalf to the Board, be allowed in the case of the Association—

(i) exemption from tax in respect of income, and

(iii) exemption from tax in respect of chargeable gains.

(2) In Sections 338 and 339 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, "qualifying donation" shall include a payment under a disposition or covenant made by a company in favour of an Association approved for the purposes of this Section under sub-section (1) above.

(3) The conditions specified in paragraph (b) as sub-section (i) above shall not be deemed not to be complied with in the case of any Association by reason only that the memorandum or other similar instrument regulating its functions does not prevent the payment to its members of reasonable remuneration for goods or facilities supplied, or for services rendered, of reasonable interest for money lent, or of reasonable rent for any premises.

(4) In this section "recreational activity" means any activities in the fields of physical recreation conducive to the health or welfare to those participating in them.'.—*[Sir Eldon Griffiths.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Let me start with a few figures. First, the British people each year spend £4·5 billion on sport and sport-related activities, which is rather more than they spend on gas, electricity or bread. Secondly, the Government are fortunate to be able to take out of that sporting expenditure a revenue of £2·2 billion—£770 million in VAT and excise charges, £540 million in betting duty, £950 million in income tax and £100 million in corporation tax. Thirdly, of the total tax take, we return to sport approximately one fifth, £425 million, in rate support to local authorities for their sporting activities and £60 million—a pretty miserable £60 million—for the activities of the Sports Council.

I have two other figures which I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary is panting to hear. The first is that in this country sport employs directly, as salaried people, 367,000 of our fellow citizens, and another 690,000 working one way or another as voluntary helpers, as coaches, referees and administrators. They do that work for nothing: for the love of the game and to help young people.

Those facts demonstrate that the Treasury—God bless it—gets far more out of sport than is given back to sport. I make no complaint about that any more than I do about the fact that road and petrol taxes are not fully paid back in terms of road expenditure. There is a responsibility on all of us to contribute to the general revenue.

10.15 pm

Tonight, I am trying to change the proportions just a little. Consequently, my new clause is designed to even up the balance. Its purpose is to leave to voluntary sports organisations more of the money that they collect—many of them in tin cups, in 10p and 20p pieces—to allow them to save more of the subscriptions from their members and to use that money for what, in effect, are close to charitable causes.

The language of the new clause has been framed carefully to exclude from the tax relief that I am seeking any organisation that is in sport to make a profit. I am in favour of profit, but I do not seek to give tax benefits to those who make a profit. I seek to exclude from that benefit all forms of professional sport, including, incidentally, the Football League, for which in present circumstances I would not lift a little finger.

To qualify for relief under the new clause, a voluntary sport body would need to meet two conditions. First, its object must be

"the encouragement, development and governance of sport or . . . recreational activity".

Lest my hon. Friend imagines that in any way I am seeking to help those who regard virtually any form of indoor amusement as something to be tax-relieved, I emphasise that the definition of recreational activity in my new clause means that it must be physical and conducive to the health and welfare of those who take part in it.

The second test that would have to be met—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am sure that it would be advantageous to the hon. Gentleman who is moving his new clause if those who are carrying on conversations would do so quietly.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I could not even hear myself, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I could not hear, either.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I assure you that you were missing a very good speech.

The second test that would have to be met before the tax relief would be due is that such sporting bodies would need to have articles of association that preclude

"the direct or indirect payment or transfer to any of its members of any of its income or property by way of dividend, gift, divisions, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit".

That makes it clear to those hon. Members who can hear, or to those who want to hear, that only voluntary bodies could possibly benefit.

I turn briefly to the machinery by which eligibility for this tax relief would be determined. At first sporting bodies suggested to me that it should be determined by the Minister. I have been a Minister responsible for sport and I know that it has one of the smallest and perhaps least fortunate trade unions in the world. Therefore, I immediately concluded that on no account should the Minister for sport have anything to do with determining tax relief. Instead, I went for the well-tried route of the Charity Commissioners. I believe that they are perfectly capable of determining whether a sporting body is in every sense entitled to such tax relief because it meets the criteria set out in the new clause.

In conclusion, who are the people that would benefit? I have in my hand a list of hundreds of voluntary bodies throughout the country who give their time and effort for the benefit of sport and to help young people. The anglers, the badminton players, the indoor bowls players, the canoeists, the equestrians and all the rest add up to a very large number of our citizens who, in my judgment, are entitled not to be taxed on the subscriptions that they collect or the donations that are made to help them.

How would they use the tax relief, which I estimate would run to not more than £2 million or £3 million per year at the very best, although I hope that it would increase as donations from the corporate sector increase? They would use it to provide better facilities and better coaches, so that people would be able to enjoy sport and have more to do instead of hanging around on street corners. Their health would improve at the same time. The object is good, the machinery is sound and I believe that my right hon. Friend should look upon the new clause sympathetically.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I rise, briefly, warmly to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St.

Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). He put the case extremely clearly and highlighted how important it is to help sport, because it generates within itself the new facilities and new opportunities that we are all so keen to encourage.

The effort to help sport has been going on for many years. In the 1960s, under a Labour Government, I started trying to produce legislation that would provide mandatory derating of sports grounds for amateur clubs. Ultimately, perhaps 20 years later, that has now come into being. It shows that, with persistence and enthusiasm, sport will win through.

I hope that my right hon. Friend realises that within the House there is tremendous support for sport, for amateur sports clubs and for all the volunteer work within it. I hope that he will look favourably upon the new clause.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): New clause 15 stands in the name of two former Ministers for sport. It has just been supported by yet another, and I understand that it will be supported from the Opposition Front Bench in due course.

Undoubtedly the new clause attracts all-party support. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, had the privilege, if I may so put it, of presiding over a wide-ranging debate on sport last night. You will recall that the right hon. Gentleman the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who is to reply to the debate, made a fleeting appearance in the debate and, when the issue of tax concessions for sport was raised, felt it necessary for reasons which were never explained to us, to depart and go elsewhere. But that does not detract from the fact that the contribution which is made to sport in our country by voluntary sporting bodies is so substantial that, without it, sport in a form that we know and enjoy simply could not exist.

It seems to me quite unnecessary that voluntary sporting bodies, including, for example, the British Olympic Association, should be compelled to pay corporation tax. If such bodies were exempt, all the sporting bodies in the United Kingdom would put £3·5 million back into sport in Britain—a small amount for the Treasury but an amount that would have a disproportionately large effect on the activities of those bodies which are presently compelled to pay it.

The new clause has all-party support and I hope that the House will be able to support it because in Olympic year it would, above all, provide some justification for the remarks made last night by the Minister responsible for sport. I notice that he is not with us. He said that the Government value sport highly, put a proper premium upon it and are determined to do everything in their power to advance sport and the cause of sportsmen. If the new clause becomes law, it would be more than earnest of those intentions, it would be a reality. It would give a clear and unequivocal signal that sportsmen and women in the United Kingdom could look to the Government for support and assistance.

For those reasons, the House should be happy, indeed eager, to accept the new clause.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I do not wish to delay the House for more than a few moments because hon. Members wish to talk about short speeches. Perhaps I can set an example.

I wish to put on record the fact that I support my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) because of the case that has been put strongly for a number of years by the British Olympic Association. I agree entirely with what was said by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). He said that the British Olympic Association should receive all the support it can from the Government and from our country as a whole when our young athletes go to do their best in the various Olympic sports.

As we have been building up to the Olympics the athletes have been preparing themselves. Alongside them, with just as much effort, the members of the British Olympic Association have been raising much-needed funds to allow our athletes to go to the Olympic games. If my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will give us an assurance that the Government will look seriously at what is in the new clause, it will add our flame to the efforts of our athletes in Seoul.

Mr. Henderson: Those of us who have sat through the debates on the Finance (No. 2) Bill for the past two months have become accustomed to contributions from Conservative Members which start vehemently, but become more diluted as the debate moves on; by the time the debate reaches its conclusion, there is not very much left with which to proceed. I am disappointed to detect signs of that in this debate.

I support the new clause, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) will also give support. However, I do not give my support without reservation and I shall enter a caveat. There is a need for better help for sport in our country. Some professional sport is doing reasonably well; some is not. We should all agree on that. Another point on which we should also agree is that some of our amateur sporting organisations, particularly in sport that attracts support from the poorer sections of our community, have had a difficult time in recent years. I am not making a party political point. We have failed properly to redevelop many of our inner-city areas and our peripheral housing areas. We all know the areas to which I am referring. They can be found in cities up and down Britain.

People who live in those communities and are keen on sport have had a difficult time in recent years because local authorities have had neither the capital nor revenue resources to develop and sustain the development of any assistance to sport, whether it be the involvement of a community worker in a sporting activity at local revenue level or a major capital investment in a new stadium. Because of the difficulties faced by local authorities—as a result of the policies imposed by central Government—those areas and the sports that develop in them have problems.

10.30 pm

Furthermore, because of higher unemployment in those areas, people have less money in their pockets to devote to their sport or to its promotion. My own athletics club, Elswick Harriers, is in the west side of Newcastle—an area of high unemployment and inner-city deprivation in need of assistance from local government, which cannot help it at the moment. Youngsters who depend on the promotion and encouragement of sport are not getting proper opportunities. If part of the £3 million that would be given back to sport if the Government accepted the new clause found its way into areas such as mine, some good would accrue.

[Mr. Henderson]

I must say that I do not think that I could do very much if I had £3 million to spend on sport. Much larger sums are needed to revitalise our sporting world. In many senses, it would be better to give sporting organisations direct funding rather than tax relief but realistically I know that that is not going to happen, and if we cannot have direct funding, I am prepared to settle for tax relief as a second best.

Let me enter my caveat, although I think that the new clause probably accommodates my wishes in this regard. It is not sufficient to say that an organisation will benefit from what is effectively charitable status under the new clause provided that it is a non-profit-making body. That is not a sufficient test. The House of Commons football team could set itself up as an unincorporated organisation whose objects were to give encouragement to football and its promotion and governance in the Palace of Westminster. If the interest from any of its investments appeared in its accounts it might then be entitled to tax relief. The House of Commons football team would be a creditable non-profit-making organisation, but essentially it would be a self-help organisation.

To qualify for the tax relief, an organisation ought to be more than a self-help, non-profit-making organisation. It ought genuinely to act to promote and govern sport in the widest sense and especially to help those who do not have the opportunity to take part in sport at the moment. That would be doing a service—whether to sport in its narrow definition or to recreation generally.

I hope that the Government will recognise the extent of support for the new clause. I urge those who tabled the new clause to proceed with it; I hope that they will listen to what we are saying in that regard. If they do that, the Government will perhaps agree to give about £3 million back to sporting organisations.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): It is nice to speak from the Opposition Front Bench and to record complete unanimity among all those who have spoken. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) I hope that we shall not proceed to a Division. In reality, what we need is for Ministers to promise us an effective review of the principles that we have raised. We know that we could not carry the new clause, but it is important that we should sustain the unanimity that we have achieved.

There is every reason for trying to encourage sport and recreation. Wherever we look—in our schools and our cities, in town and country—we see growing social problems. In that context the endeavour of thousands of people in voluntary sport is beyond price and should be encouraged. That is a great social justification for new clause 15. I appreciate the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) tabling it and I support it.

Although I understand what my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North was saying about the need to give grants where appropriate, that is not always the best way. I ask him to reflect on the situation facing the British Olympic Association in 1980. Without going into all the reasons for the difficulties, had we been given grants during the Moscow Olympics, the association would have been in great difficulties because the Government decided to withdraw support. It is better to give permanent assistance, as the new clause suggests, because in a sense that removes the party political problems of the moment.

We should remember Edinburgh's difficulties with the great cost of staging the Commonwealth games, which Sheffield now faces in staging the world student games. It is important to give practical help and every encouragement to such cities which are willing to do that on behalf of the country. Birmingham and Manchester are others.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has drawn the new clause tightly, for reasons that he explained. I hope that that will encourage the Minister to appreciate that all of us who are determined to encourage voluntary and amateur sport do so responsibly. With this all-party agreement on the record, that should produce a constructive response from the Government.

I remind the House that last time anything like this clause came before the House it was thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who has persistently and consistently raised these matters. He urged the Government to give help in this direction and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, then the Financial Secretary —I wish his successor on the Front Bench the same success —replied:

> "I accept that there is a problem. Indeed, this was accepted right at the beginning of the introduction of corporation tax. The Select Committee on Corporation Tax recognised that there was a problem and that some way of alleviating it should be sought. But there is a serious difficulty of definition."

That was during debates on the Finance (No. 2) Bill in 1980. The Government have had eight years to look at the definition and it is time that they came up with something, however limited, which all of us would support, to encourage amateur sport.

The then Financial Secretary continued:

> "It is not for the Treasury to define a charity. Still less is it for the Treasury to decide whether a debate should be held on the Goodman report."—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1980; Vol. 985, c. 1286-87.]

The House will remember that that report paid attention to charities. I have always believed that the Government were one and indivisible. It is for the Government, if not the Treasury, to produce an acceptable definition. I am sure that that is the wish of the House, and, on behalf of the Opposition, I offer our support to the new clause.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Having wandered by mistake into last night's debate on sport, and therefore having heard several speeches tonight that were made last night, I recognise the degree of interest in and feeling about this subject.

I have noted the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). There are difficulties with the new clause, but I am prepared to review the issues raised in it and to meet hon. Members to discuss it.

All the problems associated with the new clause relate to drawing lines and definitions. Such things are always tedious to people who want their good causes to be advanced, but they are important to those of us who have to put our names to the Bill and the policies in it.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) illustrated the difficulty. He interpreted the new clause as applying to sports clubs. I do not think my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds intended that, but I fear that the clause would apply to clubs. That would have far-reaching consequences. It would be difficult to distinguish a club, as an

unincorporated association, from other sorts of unincorporated associations that perform worthwhile activities, such as housing associations that are not run specifically for charitable purposes, certain types of clubs, local enterprise agencies and parent-teacher associations. It would be difficult to exempt one of those without exempting the others. So I cannot go as far as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North wanted.

I want to say a word about how sporting bodies are taxed. Generally, clubs and associations are liable to corporation tax on income from investments—money in the bank—or from commercial activities such as business sponsorship schemes. That is right. There is a tax deduction for the company, so the money should be taxed in the hand of the recipient organisation. But I am informed that funds raised from members through subscriptions or donations are not generally taxable. That may interest hon. Members.

In general, it has been shown again and again—there have been a number of court cases—that the promotion of sport is not a charitable purpose. Special exemption for charities is not easily available. My hon. Friend's new clause addresses that point. It requires that the qualifying association should be approved by the Charity Commissioners. No doubt that was intended as a way of limiting the problems, but the task would be beyond the powers and experience of the Charity Commission, which is responsible for deciding whether a particular body was established for charitable purposes. The commissioners' decisions are based on charity law and on the principles that have evolved over numerous court cases. Although my hon. Friend has specified the criteria he thinks should be used to determine whether a sporting body is a charity, the provisions of the new clause would not, by themselves, be sufficient for the Charity Commissioners. They would need further guidance. That is a major problem: charity law, which is based on case law, is extremely complicated.

I have just outlined a number of difficulties, but I recognise that there is keen interest in this subject. I shall review it, and I shall be happy to talk to hon. Members about it at their convenience.

10.45 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am obliged to my right hon. Friend. I agree that there are problems in this matter that have baffled previous Governments. However, the time has now come—this has been demonstrated by the virtual unanimity in the House—for us to do better by our voluntary sporting organisations. It is very much in our interest to do so. I accept immediately my right hon. Friend's invitation to have a discussion about this matter, possibly with right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who have had the quaint distinction of having been Ministers for sport. I hope that he will allow us to associate with such a discussion those representatives of the voluntary organisations who feel deeply about this matter.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, other of my hon. Friends and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) for their support.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 21

CLAUSE FOR BAD DEBT RELIEF

Brought up, and read the First time.

'In section 22 of the Value Added Taxes Act 1983 (which allows refunds of tax in cases of bad debts) there shall be added after subsection (1) a new subsection (1A) as follows:

"(1A) In subsection 1 above and regulations under that subsection, references to a "person" shall include any person who has funded the payment of value added tax (the "Payer") on behalf of any person liable (the "Trader") to pay tax on a supply of goods or services; the Payer shall, subject only to subsection (5) below and to regulations under subsection (1), be entitled on making a claim for any bad debt relief to the Commissioners to a refund of tax chargeable by reference to the outstanding amount as if he has been the Trader and to the exclusion of the Trader".'.—*[Sir William Clark.]*

Sir William Clark: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Someone importing goods into this country has a forwarding agent. In turn, the forwarding agent must pay the VAT on the value of the goods being imported. That is perfectly all right, provided that the goods come in, VAT is paid, and the importer eventually repays the forwarding agent the amount of VAT paid. However, if a forwarding agent pays the VAT and the importer goes into liquidation, the forwarding agent cannot reclaim the VAT.

As my hon. Friend will no doubt tell the House, where a forwarding agent has paid the VAT and the importer or his company goes into liquidation within 30 days, there is a concession whereby the Customs will repay the VAT paid to the forwarding agent.

For the Government to believe that an importer who goes into liquidation will get a bankruptcy or liquidation order against him within 30 days is pie in the sky. It is bound to take a forwarding agent three, four or five months before he can get an order of liquidation or receivership. Consequently, the Inland Revenue's concession of 30 days means nothing.

Where a forwarding agent has paid the VAT on behalf of an importer and the importer goes into liquidation, the Inland Revenue should repay to the forwarding agent the amount of VAT that he has paid on behalf of the importer. Perhaps my clause is not all that well worded, but the spirit of it is that in no circumstances should a forwarding agent be put in the position of paying VAT on behalf of the importer and then, if the importer goes into liquidation of losing that sum paid in VAT. It has nothing to do with the forwarding agent.

According to the VAT regulations it could be that the VAT paid by the forwarding agent could be paid under the registration of the forwarding agent. As I understand it, Customs and Excise do not accept this. There is an anomaly in our VAT regulations, and I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that the forwarding agent is protected for the amount of money that he has paid on behalf of the importer who goes into liquidation.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has explained with admirable lucidity the circumstances in which forwarding agents operate, and how the law bears on them, so I will not repeat that explanation to the House and delay its proceedings. He rightly mentioned that, at the beginning of the month, we introduced an extra-statutory concession that goes some way to meet the problem that he has highlighted. He takes issue with two aspects of that concession—the condition that Customs have imposed for returning VAT to the agent rather than to the importer, and the provision that the delay should be at most one month after the importer goes into liquidation or some similar state of insolvency.

The one-month condition is to ensure that the agent makes best effort to recover the debt, for which he is commercially responsible. It is not our intention that the agent should necessarily force the importer into liquidation. To avoid the position where the agent foresees liquidation and does not press his case, leaving Customs to pick up the bill, the agent generally bills the importer for import VAT for payment immediately or within a short time, such as seven days. He picks up his own and other charges over a longer time. Given the short time within which VAT is normally reimbursed, it is not unreasonable to set a one-month deadline, but I accept that, as my hon. Friend said, liquidation takes longer than a month to achieve. I undertake to look at the working of the time limit in the light of the experience that we have gained with the extra-statutory concession.

I have today announced a general review of bad debt provisions within the VAT system as a whole, not just as it affects importers. Within the context of that general review, we shall look closely at the aspects that my hon. Friend has raised. He has made a powerful case, and that will reinforce the intensity with which we examine the experience of this extra-statutory concession, and we may come round to his view in due course. I am grateful for the way that he has highlighted the issues at stake. We could not accept the new clause as it stands, but we would work within the context of extra-statutory concessions in the first instance.

Sir William Clark: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's assurance. However, I am worried about what happens if, while the Customs and Excise review is going on, a forwarding agent pays VAT for an importer who goes into liquidation. Could my hon. Friend give an assurance that, having accepted the spirit of the new clause—I shall not push it to a Division—from now on, if a forwarding agent has paid VAT on behalf of an importer, and that importer goes into liquidation while the review is going on, Customs and Excise will make repayment of the VAT retrospective from today?

Mr. Lilley: I shall certainly consider the point and write to my hon. Friend about it. I take the point he is making. We have spelt out the specific terms of the extra-statutory concession. Obviously I would not want to change them on the Floor of the House without considering further the point that he has made.

Sir William Clark: In view of that assurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 24

REGISTER OF DESIGNATED LAND

'. After subsection (5) of section 31 of the inheritance Tax Act 1984 there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(6) The Treasury shall prepare, and keep up to date, a register of land designated under subsection 1(b) above.

(7) The register referred to in subsection (6) above shall, in relation to each area of land so designated, contain—

(a) a map on a scale of not less than 1:25,000 showing the boundaries of the land; and

(b) a copy of the undertakings given under subsection (2) above for the maintenance of the land and the preservation of its character, and for securing reasonable access to the public.

(8) The register referred to in subsection (6) above shall be made available for public inspection free of charge at all reasonable hours, and so much of the register shall likewise be made available—

(a) as relates to land in Northern Ireland, at a place in Northern Ireland;

(b) as relates to land in Scotland, at a place in Scotland; and

(c) as relates to land in Wales, at a place in Wales.".—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Marek: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I think that the best thing for me to do is to read to the House a resolution which was adopted unanimously at the annual general meeting of the national council of the Ramblers' Association on 10 April 1988. The resolution is about inheritance tax and access and it will make the points for the new clause. It says:

"This National Council of the Ramblers' Association remembers that for many years the public were denied unrestricted access to some of the most beautiful parts of the country such parts of the Devonshire Estate in Wharfedale in North Yorkshire including Simons Seat and Barden Moor and Barden Fell. In recollects with pleasure its success in gaining access to those and other areas by virtue of its campaigns. This National Council has noted with concern that although relief against Inheritance Tax has been granted to the owners of the Estate the Association has not been told of any additional access to the estate although Section 31 Inheritance Tax Act 1984 specifically states that the relief is to be granted upon the owner securing reasonable access to the public.

This Council therefore urges both Her Majesty's Government and the Devonshire Estate to make public details of the reasonable access that has been secured. In the event that no reasonable access has been secured (other than that which has been previously secured by Access Agreements or by permissive paths—for the former of which the public already pays and the latter of which can be withdrawn at any time) this Council urges that access be granted immediately.

Furthermore having noted that the Devonshire Estate is not the only landowner that has secured relief from Inheritance Tax it calls upon Her Majesty's Government to publish sufficient details of cases where relief has been granted to enable the public to know what reasonable access has thereby been secured."

There can be no conceivable reason for withholding from the public details of the extra access that has been secured for them in return for concessions under inheritance tax. Surely it must be right for the public to know—by a notice which is displayed or is available at tourist information offices—that there is access to such and such a place at such and such a time. I do not think that confidentiality can arise. Just because the tax details are negotiated between the Inland Revenue and the person who pays the tax, that does not mean that the public should not be told about the extra access. The spirit and meaning of the legislation is that the concession is made for the public. Therefore, the public are entitled to know so that they can make use of the concession. If the public cannot make use of the concession, why should it be made for inheritance tax?

The new clause seeks to make the information available. A noticeboard with times of access would be useful. The Government should provide details of the extra access. I hope that they will not try to justify not doing so because of confidentiality. I do not think they could sustain that argument. I shall be interested to hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Brooke: As the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) made clear, the clause seeks to establish a public register of outstanding land that has been the subject of heritage tax reliefs. The register would include details of the undertakings that the owner has given as a condition of receiving the reliefs.

One of the conditions of the reliefs is that there should be reasonable public access to the land. It is right that the public should know that they have that access, but the proposal would go further. It would tell the public why access has been granted—that is, for tax reasons—and that would be wrong.

I wish to deal now with the defence of the principle of Revenue confidentiality, which is important to all taxpayers, although the hon. Member for Wrexham was a little dismissive of it.

11 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Minister explain how people are supposed to know about access at present?

Mr. Brooke: If the hon. Gentleman wishes, I shall speak about publicity arrangements, but I wish first to enter the defence for confidentiality.

It is essential that we should guard against any creeping erosion of our right to keep our private affairs private. The publication of a register indentifying land subject to inheritance tax reliefs would be an unnecessary erosion of the privacy of the taxpayers concerned. The reason for the availability of the land is immaterial. What matters is that the land is there and that the nation has acquired rights to enjoy it and to ensure its proper maintenance. The proposed register would not help to increase those rights, and would involve an unwarranted and pointless breach of confidentiality.

That does not mean that we object to publicity about public access to heritage property. Indeed, requirements about publicity are built into the undertakings mentioned in the clause, but it is right that the publicity should take a form that does not reveal that the access is being given for tax reasons, unless the landlowner wishes to announce that.

Publicity about public access to heritage property which has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax is incorporated in the terms of the management agreement. The agreement is negotiated to give effect to the undertakings about preservation and public access that are required as a precondition of exemption. Requirements will differ from case to case, but, outstanding chattels apart, for which different arrangements apply, those will normally comprise various proposals.

First, the owner should inform the British Tourist Authority, and the relevant bodies in other parts of the kingdom, of the opening arrangements and subsequent changes. Secondly, the owner should advertise the opening arrangements in one or more suitable publications with

[Mr. Brooke]

national circulation. Thirdly, the owner should display a notice outside the property giving details of the opening arrangements. Fourthly, the owner should agree that the advisory body or bodies, or their agents, which confirmed the property's eligible quality and with whom the terms of the detailed management agreement will have been negotiated, can divulge the access arrangements to anyone who inquires about them. Finally, the owner should agree to such other publicity as the advisory body, or bodies, consider to be appropriate. That could include displaying a notice in some public place in the locality, such as the local post office, library, tourist office or town hall or in a local preservation society's newsletter.

The management agreement would also normally provide scope for additional measures to be agreed, if appropriate, between the owner and the advisory body or bodies at a later stage.

Dr. Marek: Herein lies the conundrum. I accept that tax affairs should be confidential between the Inland Revenue and the person concerned, but, as there is a concession for the public to have greater access, they should have no need to inquire about it. They should be told about it and the information should be publicly available. I should be interested to hear what the Minister says about that. If there is to be greater access, simply as a result of a concession in respect of heritage tax, I do not see how we can avoid saying that there will be greater public access because of inheritance tax. One can leave it at that; one does not need to give any more details.

Mr. Brooke: Let me respond to the hon. Gentleman's preliminary question about whether further publicity arrangements are contemplated.

The machinery for publicising public access is kept under review by the Inland Revenue, in conjuction with other interested Departments and the advisory agencies, with a view to the improvement of publicity without compromising tax confidentiality. The Inland Revenue and the Countryside Commission are considering an arrangement for the commission to respond to queries about public access in particular localities by including details of designated land with land to which public access is available for reasons other than tax exemptions so that a mixture of relevant land would be identified.

The hon. Members for Wrexham and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked whether there was additional access in the event of there already being public access to the land. In many cases there may be reasonable access before inheritance tax exemption is claimed. I think that that was part of the resolution that the hon. Member for Wrexham read out. It is not a prerequisite that more access is always required in return for tax exemption, but the exemption can ensure with more certainty that existing access will be maintained and not reduced at the owner's whim without tax consequences. Therefore, by definition there is a greater assurance that access will be maintained.

The principle of confidentiality governs the Government's reaction to the new clause and I would encourage my hon. Friends to reject it.

Dr. Marek: What is the Government's position where, as a result of the concessions being made, there is an increase in access? Surely the only logical position is to say that the public need to know about that increase in access and, if necessary, people can put together two and two to make four if inheritance tax has just been paid. That is not an intrusion into matters that should be confidential. Has the Paymaster General any view on that point?

Mr. Brooke: In a quite different area of Government activity, I have a responsibility for the forthcoming Government data network, where there is extreme sensitivity about confidential details. All I can say is that once the principle of tax confidentiality of individual taxpayers begins to be eroded, one is on a slippery slope.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I am rather disappointed by the Minister's response. He does not seem to have grasped the problems that so often arise in areas of claimed greater access. Greater access is often not being conferred, but rather there is a reduction in access. In many instances there may have been a right of way or some other custom and practice use of the land; it is at the point that the tax deal is done, and that ceases to be a right of the tax arrangement.

Therefore, what was basically a statutory right, either a public right of way or an unregistered right of way that could have been claimed, is lost to the public. Unless the Government can demonstrate that the public will have a clear statement of what extra access they have, there is little way of judging whether the Inland Revenue or the public have been diddled by the landlord. Something that they had in the past will then be theirs only as a result of a tax concession.

In many areas, the Inland Revenue can simply look at the books and work out whether someone is paying the right amount of money. But it is a complicated and difficult business for someone from the Inland Revenue to check what has been the traditional access to an area, perhaps over the past 30 or 40 years. The only safeguard is to make public what extra access it is claimed is being given. If that is done, the people who usually use that land can turn round and say that that is no concession at all and that a tax concession is being made for no public benefit.

Unless that openness about the extra access takes place, it will be virtually impossible for the Revenue to enforce the matter fairly. In view of the problems that have occurred over access in recent years in many parts of the country where custom and practice access over many years have not been registered as public rights of way and have become permissive access which can be removed at any time, people should be very wary about what is happening. I am very disappointed that the Government are not prepared to go much further.

If the Government are considering ways in which the extra access can be publicised, I hope that they will ensure that the Ordnance Survey is informed of any new footpaths so that they may be shown on maps as rights of way or permissive rights. It should be automatic in the publicity provisions that the Ordnance Survey is notified so that the information appears on maps. The county council should also be notified so that the information may be incorporated on footpath maps and the councils can compare the details with footpath information that they have obtained when preparing definitive maps.

Mr. Brooke: My recollection is that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is, like me, a veteran of the Committee stage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In that spirit, I will respond to his remarks.

There is a trade-off between the fact that the tax is to be given up and the public's acquisition of rights to a reasonable level of enjoyment of private land. The arrangements are negotiated by the Countryside Commission as advisers to the Revenue. They do not depend in any way on the amount of tax involved. They are either reasonable or they are not. It is for the Countryside Commission alone to ensure on behalf of the nation that the arrangements are reasonable.

The arrangements for monitoring undertakings have been reviewed recently and more systematic procedures have been devised to monitor the owner's performance in fulfilling the responsibilities set out in his undertaking. The undertaking now include a requirement to make an annual report. Where necessary, the Countryside Commission will arrange for a local government body to monitor the landowner's performance of his or her side of the agreement in terms of the maintenance of the land and of public access. There is a genuinely constructive effort on all sides to achieve the access to which hon. Members have rightly attached importance.

Dr. Marek: I thank the Paymaster General for responding to the interventions that have improved the communication between both sides of the House. We have had a better debate as a result. I am also grateful that steps are being taken to improve the position. However, I believe that the Paymaster General has got it wrong.

The Paymaster General's first duty is to the public. A tax concession is given to a particular estate on the condition that the public will have extra access or rights that they did not have before. Those rights must be made available to the public and they must be informed so that they know that those rights exist. If someone wants to keep his tax affairs completely confidential that person or an estate does not have to apply for the tax concession. If he does apply for the concession it should be made clear that one of the effects will be not that the amount of money under consideration will be made known, as the Paymaster General has said, but that there will be extra rights which will be made known publicly.

The Government have got it wrong. The Opposition will not seek to divide the House, but we believe that the Government must do more. Perhaps the Government will have more discussions with the Countryside Commission and other bodies to discover whether a better system can be evolved in future.

Question put and negatived.

New clause 31

PAYMENT OF EXCISE DUTY ON SPIRITS AND WINES

'The Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be amended by inserting, after section 74, the following section—

"*Payments of excise duty on spirits and wines.*

74A.—(1) Any duty chargeable on spirits or wines pursuant to section 5, or section 54 above shall be paid, in any year commencing with the year which begins 1st April 1986, fifty-six days after the commencement of the relevant period.

(2) In subsection (1) above 'relevant period' means the period beginning with the date on which the spirits or wines are imported into the United Kingdom or removed from an excise warehouse (as the case may be) and ending on the date on which those spirits or wines are sold to a person otherwise than in the course of an excise licence trade carried on by him.

(3) The powers of the Commissioners to make regulations under this Act or under any other enactment shall be read and construed subject to, and in accordance with, this section".'.—*[Mr. Bowen Wells.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

11.15 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I declare an interest as notified to the House in the Register of Members' Interests.

This new clause is not unfamiliar to my colleagues on the Treasury Bench and their officials. Duty deferment has caused serious concern to the industry for many years. In opposition, the Conservative party promised to make right the inequitable situation when it returned to office, and it did so in 1979. True to their word, the Conservative Government introduced the Bill that became the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. It gave Customs and Excise commissioners powers to make provision for deferred payment of excise duty subject to such conditions or requirements as may be imposed by the regulations or, where the regulations so provide, by the commissioners.

With such powers, one might consider that the new clause is unnecessary. However, it is about five years since the powers were exercised by the Government and the commissioners, when they gave a concession of 28 days of duty deferment. That went some way to offset unfairness and inequity.

The House will know that, in effect, an excise duty is a sales tax. Under the current regulations, those who keep bonds and must pay excise duty—that is, the sales tax that is payable by the eventual customer—actually pay the tax or excise duty direct to the Revenue 28 days after removal of goods from a bond. Before the regulations were introduced, it was payable prior to their removal from bond. Therefore, the Government have accepted the principles about which I am speaking.

On average, excise duties are recouped by bond holders about 12 weeks from the time the goods are removed from bond. The 28-day period does not in any way represent the cost that is incurred by bond holders as a result of the way in which the excise duty is collected at present. Bond holders are not only tax collectors for the Government but Government financiers, because they have to pay the necessary financial charges on the amount of money that is borrowed to pay the excise duty. That is a considerable cost to the industry.

The principle is accepted. In equity, the Government accept that they must meet the case. We suggest that we should halve the difference. That is to say, we should increase the period of deferment from four weeks to eight weeks. That still does not meet the 12-week period that must be financed, but I should have thought that it was a sensible compromise between the two figures. Of course, the cost of that suggestion is zero. It means, though, that, because of the deferment period, in the year in question, using its annual accounting methods, the Treasury must forgo part of the revenue. However, it is collected soon after in the following year. Revenue is forgone in one year.

There is an additional, familiar reason. It is becoming much more important for the Government to reconsider their decision on the matter. I refer to 1992, the advent of the single European market and, therefore, the harmonisation or, at least, the approximation of excise duties and their treatment throughout Europe.

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

In Belgium, spirits have a four-month duty deferment period. In Luxembourg the period is two to six months, in Denmark it is 45 days, in France two months, in West Germany three months and, of course, in our own country only one month. Therefore, to move to two months, as the clause suggests, would simply put us on the same level as that of France, and in considerably worse condition compared with West Germany and other wine and spirit producers. I urge my hon. Friends to look at the matter again to see how they can meet this serious objection from those dealing with bonds and wines and spirits in this country.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Along with my hon. Friends who served with me on the Committee, I am utterly sick of amendments and new clauses of this kind. We had a bellyful in Committee. [HON. MEMBERS: "A skinful."] We would have preferred a skinful, but it was a bellyful that we were given.

The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has very properly declared his interest, and I am pleased that he did so. I assume that that interest is his position as parliamentary consultant to International Distillers and Vintners Export Ltd. He also declared a consultancy with Geest Industries Ltd., and with the Hawley Group—which I believe is Michael Ashcroft's group of companies. The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong. When he used the word "we" in moving the new clause, he presumably meant he and International Distillers and Vintners Export Ltd. He may have meant himself and his hon. Friends, but no other names feature on the amendment paper.

If this were an isolated instance, it would be wrong for me to make too much of it. But it is not an isolated instance; it is the latest of a series of such submissions that have been made both here and in Committee. I hope that I will be allowed to set out a little of the background, and explain why we are so annoyed. Before I do so, however, let me say that I shall be asking the Committee of Privileges, on behalf of the Opposition, to draw up new and tighter rules for the declaration of business interests for Finance Bill Committee members and others who wish to make amendments to the Bill. This is not a direct complaint to the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford. It is perhaps his misfortune that this is the point at which I have chosen to make a much broader complaint on behalf of the Opposition.

This is what we have had to put up with. On clause 13, amendments Nos. 30, 60, 61, 50, 51, 53, 41 and 42 were tabled by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). The purpose of each was to extend the period in which small businesses must register for VAT: it was a way of easing VAT regulations. On clause 15, the hon. Gentleman tabled amendment No. 11. The purpose of the clause was to put civil penalties on VAT claims. The purpose of the amendment was to give Customs and Excise officers the right to mitigate the penalty—a concession to those who were supposed to make payment of such a penalty.

On clause 48, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) aimed to extend the exemption of non-assessability for tax to the entertainment expenses of directors and higher-paid employees—a straightforward concession to what I think my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) would call the super-rich. On clause 51, the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) sought through amendment No. 246 to change the timing of the relief on business expansion scheme moneys subscribed to approved investment funds, the aim being to ease the restrictions on BES funds.

On schedule 6, the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) tabled amendment No. 248, whose purpose was to extend the transitional relief on woodlands associated with farming—a concession sought, I understand, by the Country Landowners Association, which had lobbied forcefully for it. On clause 104, the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), through amendment No. 344, sought to extend rollover relief to all business assets used in trade. To give the Financial Secretary his due, he said that the amendment could lead to considerable avoidance, and he was certainly right about that. The amendment sought to allow any business asset to extended deferred capital gains tax liability. It would have given rise to considerable tax avoidance opportunities.

When the Committee came to consider schedule 8, amendment No. 353 was moved by the hon. Member for Basingstoke. The schedule was an anti-avoidance measure, which had some support from my right hon. and hon. Friends. The amendment was an attempt to frustrate the closure of a tax loophole. Its purpose was to create a more complex and more effective new tax loophole.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall accept interventions when I have completed this part of my speech.

When the Committee reached clause 109, amendment No. 227 was moved by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West. The amendment sought to ease the regulations on investment trusts, which are vehicles used by the wealthy.

I move on to new clause 13, which was tabled by hon. Members who were not members of the Committee, the hon. Members for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) and for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark). The purpose of the new clause was to remove the ceiling on tax relief for benefits in kind. The argument against the proposition was that it would be the thin end of the wedge for tax relief on private medical insurance, and that is exactly what was intended.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall do so at the end of my considerable list.

I move on to new clause 15——

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No.

New clause 15 was moved by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West and supported by the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). The clause would have extended the time for which a company may set off tax profits against tax losses from the preceding year. That is currently the procedure for the two preceding years. In another words, another tax concession was being sought.

New clause 35 was withdrawn at the insistence of the Opposition——

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall not give way to Conservative Members while I read out the list. I shall give way to them once I have finished reading it. Surely that is fair.

New clause 35 was withdrawn under duress. It had been tabled by the hon. Members for Wanstead and Woodford, (Mr. Arbuthnot), for Daventry and for Basingstoke. It was a recipe for tax avoidance. It would have exempted gifts or bequests of woodlands from inheritance tax.

Subsection (7) to new clause 28 was moved by the hon. Members for Wyre Forest, for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe). The purpose of the clause was to give tax relief to companies on moneys used to buy back their own shares to put in a trust to assist employees. The subsection was designed to offer a major tax loophole.

New clause 37 was withdrawn by the hon. Member for Croydon, South. Its purpose was to make easier tax avoidance for a share option scheme by allowing those who have such schemes to sell every year instead of every three years.

New clause 43, which was withdrawn, was moved by the hon. Members for Wanstead and Woodford and for Daventry. Its purpose was to assist those involved in any close company regime. It would have given substantial financial benefit to small family businesses. New clauses 38 and 39, moved by the hon. Member for Basingstoke, would have provided extra inheritance tax relief for holdings of unquoted shares in companies. That is the list.

11.30 pm

It was our concern that companies, and not constituencies, were being represented at this stage of the Finance Bill, and that property, not people, was motivating the hon. Members who moved the new clauses. I make no specific complaint about any individual hon. Member, but that is an extraordinarily long list of vested interests that could not possibly belong to the majority of any of the hon. Members' constituents. They were special interests. The dividing line between a legitimate interest and a less legitimate interest is very fine and we shall be seeking a review of such matters through the Committee of Privileges. In particular we shall be seeking firm guidelines and adherence to them to prevent abuses.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman referred to two of the amendments that I tabled. The first related to investment trusts. The hon. Gentleman suggested, quite erroneously, that I was seeking a tax change in their favour. The amendments were seeking an expansion of the areas in which they might be permitted to invest. Therefore, his assertion is totally wrong and I hope that he will withdraw it.

His second point related to losses. I was seeking to give the same treatment to losses as was available to competitor manufacturers in other western European countries. The hon. Gentleman might have had some sympathy with that. In so far as it related to our international competitiveness it certainly received a great deal of sympathy from many of my constituents.

In discussing the tax changes for which I was asking, the hon. Gentleman significantly failed to mention the changes which I was seeking for the elderly. I seem to remember that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends voted with me.

Mr. Brown: I studiously avoided mentioning the clause, which was much trailed and got the hon. Gentleman six minutes on the Jimmy Young show, so it cannot have been of no significance. It also got him 35 minutes on the Finance Bill. The topic has aroused considerable interest around the country, and the hon. Gentleman had pursued it for a sustained period. Although some were willing to describe it as nothing but a ramp for Allied Dunbar, that was not the view of the parliamentary Opposition. However, some of the other matters the hon. Gentleman has raised would not fit so easily into that category.

I do not want to be drawn into arguing the merits of each of the clauses. Clearly that would be wrong. However, the parliamentary Opposition have had enough of Parliament and the Finance Bill being used as a vehicle for lobbyists rather than a vehicle for raising legitimate constituency interests.

Sir William Clark *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I am not nearly as sympathetic to him as I am to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West.

Sir William Clark: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am sure that he is not sympathetic to me, but he should get his facts right before he distorts them. He said that I tabled an amendment on share option schemes and then withdrew it. The amendment is still on the Order Paper. It was not selected. I have not withdrawn it, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw the accusation that I have withdrawn the amendment that I tabled relating to share option schemes.

Mr. Brown: I apologise if I said that the amendment was withdrawn and it was not withdrawn. That is not the charge I was making. I was making the charge that it was tabled in the first place. I understand that I may have described new clauses as having been moved when they were proposed but not moved. From our point of view the difference is very fine. We oppose the use of the Finance Bill for raising interests that are not proper interests for Members of Parliament, but involve undue affection for commercial and business interests and not the interests of the constituents whom we were sent here to represent.

Sir William Clark: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. New clauses and amendments are tabled on the Order Paper and it is up to the Chair to make the selection of them. If the hon. Gentleman says that the fact that Conservative Members have tabled clauses which are not selected is a sort of lobby, is that not a reflection on the Chair's selection?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not regard that as a reflection on the Chair's selection. It is a reflection not of the opinion of the Chair, but of the opinion of the hon. Members who table the amendments or new clauses.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to make it clear that I intend no reflection on the Chair, for which I have the greatest admiration.

Mr. Lilley: I do not intend to mix in that argument except to say that I have always assumed that hon. Members, speaking on behalf of whatever cause they choose, are speaking with honour and putting forward views because they believe them and wish to see them upheld. No doubt the hon. Member for Newcastle upon

[Mr. Lilley]

Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) had his reasons for putting forward his list. Those reasons may reflect his interest in the success of his party. That is up to him, but I am sure that he spoke with honour, as all my hon. Friends have done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) could have justified his moving of the new clause by his generous desire to share his enthusiasm for the beverages with which it deals. I can vouch for that because I have partaken of his hospitality on occasion. He said that the clause is a familiar one, and so it is. It is so familiar that is still retains the date of 1986 from the last time it appeared. That means that were it to be accepted as it stands it would be retroactive, which I do not think is intended.

I recognise that there is a long-standing concern about the matter among those in the wine and spirits business. I recognise too that the whisky industry plays a valuable part in the life of the country, particularly of Scotland, for the employment it provides and for the conviviality it provides here and abroad. It is rather sad that in standing up for the interests of the industry—that is how my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford sees the new clause—which brings employment to many of the constituencies of Opposition Members, they did not thank him rather than criticise him.

I cannot accept my hon. Friend's case because he tries to say simultaneously that the deferment procedures we have at present are costly to the industry and that if we were to grant a longer deferment it would not be costly to the Government. The industry's gain in those circumstances would be the taxpayers' loss. The loss of cash flow in the first instance would be about £245 million in a year, and if we were forced to extend the measure to beer and cider, as might be the case, it would involve a loss of £400 million of cash flow. The interest on that money would be an ongoing loss to the Treasury and should be taken into account.

The importance and contribution of the spirits industry in particular was recognised in the last three Budgets of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor when duties were not raised. In two of the three Budgets, duties were not raised for the wine section of the industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford mentioned the approach of 1992 and the possibility of harmonisation of duties and commensurate arrangements proposed by the European Commission. As I have said, those proposals are no more than proposals. We are not alone in having great difficulty with them and I think it extremely unlikely that that package of measures or anything like it will come into force by 1992. There will therefore be no requirement for us to harmonise the related aspects of duty collection as my hon. Friend suggests.

In making comparisons with other countries, it is important to recognise that it is not just duty structures that differ; procedures and commercial practice differ so that in other countries, too, industries may be bearing the cost of tax collection for the same period, or for a longer or shorter period than ours. I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise that we understand the industry's worries about this matter, which my hon. Friend the Chancellor naturally considered fully before his Budget. If my hon. Friend and those in this important industry for whom he speaks, wish to discuss the matter before the next Budget, we shall look forward to the customary representations.

Mr. Wells: It saddens me to hear the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) suggest that my motivation in tabling the new clause was in any way related to self-interest. It would be quite easy for me to avoid the implications of the list that the hon. Gentleman read to the House: one could cite a large number of hon. Members whose constituents are severely affected by the provisions. Many Opposition Members, especially those who represent Scotland, would agree that we need the equalisation of taxation across Europe to move so that the whisky industry—Scotland's primary industry and the biggest exporter from Scotland—is not at a disadvantage compared with producers and exporters of other spirits in Europe.

This is a very serious issue for the whole industry, of which Britain is a leader—and not only domestically. It owns large parts of the liquor and alcohol industries in the United States and parts of Europe. The new clause deals with a serious issue of equity and equalisation, which has serious constituency implications, for many hon. Members. A large number of those who work in the industry in Harlow, which is in the neigbouring constituency, none the less live in my constituency, so if I wanted to I could claim a constituency interest in the matter. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East gave a legitimacy to such an interest, and suggested that that was the only way in which we could raise matters of concern.

The hon. Gentleman can report it to the Privileges Committee if he wishes, but I am certain that my hon. Friends and I will be exonerated from the implications and the smears that he tried to put on us for taking a legitimate interest in a very serious matter affecting the employment of thousands, if not millions of people in this country, which has a very serious effect on our balance of trade and our exports.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should regard it as a smear when I read out his entry in the Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. Wells: I did not say that that was a smear. I referred to the implication of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. The outrage with which he read the list suggested that there was something dishonourable in taking up these matters even if one has a declared interest and has brought it to the attention of the House. If his dictum were accepted, none of us would be able to raise legitimate issues. Opposition Members would be in no position to raise in the House matters to do with trade unions or their interests. The House would be a great deal poorer if hon. Members could not bring their deep knowledge of particular interests to its attention.

I am sure that the House does not wish to be delayed further on this matter. I did not intend to prolong the debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for answering my propositions sympathetically. The argument that we do not have to harmonise excise duties because of 1992 does not abort the argument that the spirits and wine industry should be able to trade on the same basis as that of its competitors overseas, particularly those within the EEC. Therefore, my argument has some serious validity

and I am grateful to him for saying that he will consider with deep seriousness the inequity involved. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3

HYDROCARBON OIL

11.45 pm

Mr. Colvin: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 31, at end insert—

'and at the end there shall be inserted "but there shall be no duty of excise on aviation gasoline fuel, as defined in section 11(2)(a) below",'.

The amendment would wholly abolish the excise duty on aviation gasoline, or avgas.

After all that has been said about hon. Members declaring their interests I must say that although on my curriculum vitae I am listed as a qualified pilot, as a Member of Parliament I have neither the time nor the money to maintain the validity of my licence; more's the pity. In reply to what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said about tax avoidance, the rate at which the Government are cutting rates of tax will soon mean that the tax avoidance business will be out of business. Perhaps next year his list will be a great deal shorter.

Avgas fuel is used in piston-engined aircraft and bears duty of 46·5p per gallon plus VAT, whereas aviation kerosene, which is used in the more expensive turbo-prop and jet engines and which is called avtur, carries no duty. The amendment would remove this gross injustice. We hoped that the Government would remove the injustice in 1982. On that occasion, having won the argument, we gained only a 50 per cent. reduction in the duty. This amendment gives the Government the opportunity to complete the welcome reform which they began then.

I have heard it said within the Treasury that avgas is mostly used for private and pleasure flying and avtur for business and commercial flying, so the so-called wealthy private pilots who can afford to fly for pleasure may just as well pay duty on that fuel. That is based on a false premise. If the Treasury still uses that argument, one must question the validity of any other reasons that it puts forward for resisting the amendment.

Any analysis will show that the vast majority of passengers flying commercial airlines do so for recreation and pleasure, not business, while most of the fuel used by general aviation, that is the smaller aircraft, is for business purposes. The breakdown of general aviation and flying shows that 63 per cent. is air taxi operators, corporate and third-level passenger operations, 25 per cent. is flying training for professional and private ratings, 10 per cent. is agricultural flying and aerial work, and just over 2 per cent. is pure sport and recreation.

The general aviation training role is particularly important. Between 1975 and 1986, little sponsored training for civil aviation took place in the United Kingdom because the airlines did not need the additional pilots. Now, with civil aviation booming, the airline industry is grabbing every available pilot and there is a serious shortage of air taxi pilots and flying instructors, which must be made up. Without the pool of private pilots to draw upon, I reckon that commercial civil aviation would probably collapse.

This demand is worldwide. Because of the extra burden of avgas duty and the resulting higher costs which our flying schools have to bear, the training of overseas pilots in Britain has almost stopped. That means a loss of invisible earnings of about £25,000 per head, a total running into tens of millions of pounds of lost foreign revenue for Britain.

The Government suggested that if the duty on avgas was abolished the fuel would be used in motor cars. Not only would avgas with no duty still be up to 16p more expensive than ordinary motor fuel, but it would do the engines of motor cars no good. Because of its special chemical characteristics, it is not suitable for cars. In any case, the distribution of avgas is strictly controlled by a few organisations and it is delivered only to our 60 or so airfields. Also, because the amount of avgas used in proportion to motor fuel and avtur is tiny, its consumption can easily be monitored, it can be dyed like farm diesel and spot checks can be carried out on its use.

It is good that the Government are interested in saving administrative costs. The Customs and Excise are certainly no exception. A pilot flying an avgas-fuelled aircraft can claim back his duty paid before departing on an international flight. A lot of bureaucracy and red tape are involved in completing and verifying all the documents, counter-checking claims and issuing cheques for payments. Abolishing the duty will abolish all this cumbersome bureaucracy.

What would this cost? In a full tax year, the loss to the Revenue of completely abolishing avgas would amount to £2,500,000. To put that in perspective, it is the cost of half a mile of motorway.

To sum up, 95 per cent. of British general aviation aircraft are piston-engined and use avgas, which is heavily taxed. The other 5 per cent. are jet-engined or turbo-prop-powered and use avtur, which is tax-free. The jet and turbo-prop operators could be said to be the wealthier end of the general aviation market, yet their fuel is duty-free and their less wealthy competitors use fuel bearing 46p per gallon duty. That is illogical discrimination, and it is dotty. This highly entrepreneurial industry, mainly composed of small businesess and self-employed people—exactly the sort of people we are pledged to support—does not need the millstone of avgas duty around its neck.

I have a letter from Mr. Danny Forman who, as chief executive of the General Aviation Manufacturers and Traders Association, has done a great deal to help commercial and general aviation in the United Kingdom. He has placed an advertisement in the aviation trade publications. The heading says, "Spot the Difference". Beneath it are pictures of two aircraft that look identical. Both have a crew of two and carry eight passengers. Both are low-winged monoplanes. Both have twin engines, propellers and tricycle undercarriages. Both are used extensively for business transport to save the valuable time of executives working for the United Kingdom economy.

But the aircraft on the left has a propellor turbine engine using avtur fuel, thus paying no duty or VAT. The aircraft on the right, used for exactly the same purpose and looking identical, is a propellor piston-engined aircraft using avgas fuel and paying 46·5 per cent. per gallon duty —and probably 15 per cent. VAT on top of that. Most of

[Mr. Colvin]

my hon. Friends feel that that is completely incomprehensible. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has demonstrated that he can and does axe taxes—why not this one?

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) has advocated the case so well that little remains to be said. I rise only to lend support to his argument. I have received representations from the Orkney flying club, in my constituency, which made a compelling case for the abolition of this duty. It not only finds the difference between avgas and avtur anomalous, but it has pointed out that Loganair's islander planes which operate in my constituency are all piston-engined aircraft and the duty paid on the fuel will undoubtedly lead to increased transport costs for those who fly back and forth from the main island to the north isles of Orkney and Shetland. That constituency interest is important, because of the increase in transport costs.

The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside said that a fear had been expressed that, if the duty were removed, avgas might be used in cars. I have received a letter from the Orkney flying club that says that the problem is perhaps the other way round. Its secretary said:

"In private aviation many owners have turned to the use of car petrol in their aircraft. This saves considerably on costs, but since the control of quality on aviation fuel is very much stricter than that of car fuel, there must be a much higher risk of contamination and therefore a greater risk of accidents. All this for a very small return for the government."

I hope that the Minister will listen to the strong arguments made not only in this debate, but in other representations before the Budget. The return to the Government is relatively small and the removal of this anomaly or some concession would be welcomed even at this late stage.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) has fought a vigorous and capable campaign on this issue. The House is familiar with the arguments that he has presented so eloquently, supported by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

The dilemma is that avtur bears no duty and my hon. Friend does not want to alter that; gasoline used by motor cars is heavily taxed; and the avgas which is used by the piston-engined planes to which he referred is usable in motor cars and could be diverted to them if it was economic to do that. To prevent abuse and the consequent loss of revenue, there is a good case for having a duty on avgas. Effectively, it either has to be aligned with motor cars and considered as gasoline—gasoline for motor cars is taxed, so why should it not be when used in piston engines?—or, as my hon. Friend said, they are both used in aeroplanes—as avtur is used in aeroplanes, and that is zero-rated, avgas should be too.

When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was Chancellor he entered into a judgment of Solomon. He decided simply to split the difference and halve the rate of duty on avgas. He emphasised that he saw that duty reduction not as a halfway shift towards complete abolition, but as a final compromise solution that took account of all the arguments of those in general aviation, who balanced those against the revenue burdens placed on other forms of transport, including essential ground transport.

I am afraid that there is no justification for further relief of avgas. It is, of course, a high-lead petrol and many cars could run on it, or on a mixture of avgas and petrol. Suggestions have been made that this could be prevented by dyeing and other measures, but I do not think that any of them would be satisfactory in practice and could be out of order in relation to aviation standards.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Avgas is already dyed, so there is no question of adding dye.

12 midnight

Mr. Lilley: The alternative would be to make it double-dyed. It would be difficult both to mark it in a way that is identifiable when it is in a vehicle tank and to stop cars and check whether their tanks contained an untaxed form of gasoline. We do not want to go down that avenue.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor reviews all taxes when he makes his Budget judgment every year. I cannot suggest that this is other than a final compromise solution, although as I have said, I am always open to receive visits from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside should he wish to renew these arguments nearer the time.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Colouring in petrol was introduced for the services during the war, but it never had any practical effect.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has reinforced my argument. He provides practical evidence against the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). With that support, I rest my case.

Mr. Colvin: I have listened to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, and I do not think that he has understood the argument, because we have had a rerun of what has been said by him and other Treasury Ministers who have been sent letters by those who have been lobbying on behalf of general aviation over the past 12 months. However, as he has made it clear that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and other Treasury Ministers are happy to review all taxes between now and the next Budget, and that he is prepared to see representatives of the general aviation industry before he makes up his mind, I am happy to leave it in the lap of the gods and trust that where I failed to persuade him to change the duty, they may succeed. On the basis of that understanding, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 10

POWER TO SEARCH PERSONS

Dr. Marek: I beg to move amendment No. 80, in page 6, line 31, after 'but' insert—

'The officer shall not require the suspect to submit to a strip or intimate search without receiving an authorisation from a superior officer of the rank of senior executive or higher and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 18, in page 6, line 34, at end insert—

'(2B) The officer informing the suspect of the effect of subsection (3) below when requiring him to submit to searches of his person, whether rub-down, strip or intimate shall take him before a justice of the peace or before a superior officer of a rank of senior executive or higher, or in the case of the suspect being required to submit to a rub-down search, to such a superior officer if he is not satisfied that the suspect is fully aware of the effect of subsection (3) below.'.

No. 82, in page 6, line 34, at end, insert—

'(2A) The officer informing the suspect of the effect of subsection (3) below shall do so verbally and offer to do so in writing if the suspect so desires.'.

No. 79, in page 6, line 37, at end, insert

'(of a senior executive rank or higher)'.

No. 83, in page 7, line 10, at end insert—

'(5A) The Commissioners shall formulate a code of practice under which any powers in this section shall be exercised.'.

Dr. Marek: My right hon. and hon. Friends have tabled five amendments dealing with the Customs and Excise management of searching and detection of people who enter the country but do not abide by the laws on drugs and other proscribed materials. Amendment No. 83 is a comprehensive amendment. It deals with a code of practice, and covers many issues. Amendment No. 80 deals with the seniority of the officer who shall require a type of search to be undertaken. Amendments Nos. 81 and 82 are related in that they deal with a suspect being fully aware of his or her rights, and say that information on these rights should be made available not just verbally but in writing. At the least, the suspect should be told that the information is available if he or she desires to see it.

I hope that the debate will not be too long, as the night is getting on, but this is an important matter. The debate should not be party political as both sides of the House want an efficient procedure that is understood and respected by the public.

Customs officers have powers of search and detention. In many ways those powers exceed the powers of the police. When a policeman arrests a person, the arrest is covered by a code of practice. At present there is no code of practice for customs officers. Even though the suspect is not arrested, customs officers have powers of detention. I hope that I will get a careful reply from the Economic Secretary. It should be stated somewhere that customs officers will only use their powers reasonably and that any detention should be reasonable pertaining to the circumstances. If a code of practice is established, it should define what it would be reasonably necessary for a customs officer to do in pursuance of his duty.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can my hon. Friend explain why it is necessary to establish a new code of practice for customs officers rather than simply to apply the code of practice which exists under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984? Having established after a great deal of parliamentary debate a code of practice for one group of people to carry out searches, why should we want a different code of practice for Customs and Excise officers? I fear that the Government's view is that there should not be any code of practice. If we want the public to know their rights, it would be much better to have one code of practice for all searches.

Dr. Marek: Home Office code C would probably do very well for customs officers. On the other hand, the powers are slightly different. Customs officers have a power of detention which is not a power of arrest. The Economic Secretary may say that there will have to be changes in the code of practice to accommodate the slightly different position. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) may want to make a short contribution later to amplify the point.

When a suspect is detained, his or her rights should be imparted to the suspect verbally or by written notice. If a suspect is required to undergo an intimate or strip search, the suspect should have the right to go to a justice of the peace or a senior officer. In the case of a rubdown search, the suspect would have the right to go to a senior officer if he or she so wished.

Many suspects speak English well, and nearly all of them are accommodating; there are no problems because they realise that customs officers have a difficult job to do. I am concerned about the one case in 10,000 where a problem might arise. Human beings are human beings and we are all imperfect in one way or another. Misunderstandings can arise. In those circumstances, there should be clarification of the procedures so that the public can have confidence in customs officers. I urge the Economic Secretary to ensure that written notice is available to a suspect.

The written notice could be not just in English. Many people entering this country do not speak English, so it would have to be in a sufficient number of languages. We can never get that absolutely right. Some people are illiterate. We cannot take account of cases where people cannot read and do not speak English but speak a language that no official at the port of entry speaks. I do not ask for 100 per cent. cover in every eventuality, but we can go a long way towards that. Although we go some way towards that at present, it would be a great advantage if a written notice of rights, in various languages, were available.

I should like the notice to be in large type so that, if an old person had to read it, he or she would have no trouble in doing so. I hope that such bodies as the National Council for Civil Liberties and any organisations for the avoidance of gobbledegook would be consulted, so that the document would be easy to read and understand for people who were stopped at the port of entry.

If the suspect decides to ask to go before a justice of the peace, he should know that he can be in the presence of the justice of the peace when he hears the reasons for the officer's suspicions which led him to require that a search be made of the subject. Again, it is a question of making sure that the suspect is fully aware of his or her rights. I understand that it may not be possible to thrust a great deal of written material about rights into everyone's hand, regardless of whether they want it. However, a code of practice should be instigated whereby an officer, if he is unsure whether a suspect is fully aware of his or her rights, can go to a justice of the peace or offer written details of the procedure to be adopted. In that way, he can be satisfied that the suspect understands exactly what is expected of him. There is an Opposition amendment to that effect.

If there is an intimate or strip search, a record of that should be made and a copy given to the subject showing which parts of the body were searched. The code of practice should state clearly that, in the case of a strip or intimate search, no suspect should be left completely naked at any one time and that any such search should be

[Dr. Marek]

carried out on only one half or one third of the body at a time. I hope that the Economic Secretary will be able to confirm that that is the practice now, but it should definitely be included in the code of practice.

The record of the search should also state why the suspect was searched and give the reasons for the suspicions. It should show the name and rank of the authorising officer and of the person conducting the search. It should also give the circumstances that gave rise to suspicion. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will confirm that that was recommended by the Keith committee but has not been implemented despite its being part of police procedure.

12.15 am

A code of practice should be able to deal with a situation, and let the public know what happens, where, for example, an officer believes that a suspect might injure himself or herself unless a search is made immediately. In some circumstances, that could be a real fear and lead to an officer having to make a difficult decision.

If a suspect is arrested, he or she has the right to telephone a solicitor. That should be made clear in a code of practice. Samples of urine or blood should be taken only if consent is given in writing. That is the case now and it should be spelt out in a code of practice so that everybody knows where they stand.

I understand that officers of senior executive rank or higher have to authorise initimate searches. That should also be the case for strip searches. They demand that a subject is partially naked and it is only right that SEOs or above authorise such searches. Unless I am persuaded by my hon. Friends, I would not go so far as to say that that should apply to rubdown searches.

It should also be clear that if a code of practice is instigated its findings would be admissible in evidence in any subsequent civil or criminal proceedings. Indeed, the code of practice used by the police says that.

Suspects in Customs and Excise matters do not have statutory rights, unlike those arrested by the police. Therefore, all the matters that I have raised require serious consideration, and I shall be interested to hear what the Economic Secretary has to say.

Mr. Darling: We had a useful discussion on this matter in Committee on 12 May. Opposition Members raised matters that appeared to find sympathy with some Conservative Members, although I do not see any of them here at present.

Whenever we discuss the Customs and Excise it is important to emphasise at the outset that most people recognise that its officers have a difficult job, being responsible for the detection of a large number of people who seek to import goods illegally or to avoid the payment of duty.

However, it is important that there is co-operation from the public and confidence that everyone will be treated properly and in the same way. It is important to remember that everyone who is stopped must be presumed to be innocent until they are found to have contravened some regulation.

As I said in Committee, most people have had the experience of being flagged down by a customs officer on their return from a trip abroad to be asked whether they fully understand what going through the green channel means and to be reminded of the regulations on bringing drinks, cigarettes, and so on, into Britain. I am sure that any hon. Member who has been so stopped has felt slight indignation and resentment at being seized upon because, as far as they were concerned, they were innocent and there was no need to be stopped. People are often stopped in the presence of their fellow passengers and that can be an embarrassing experience.

It would be useful for Customs and Excise staff to have a code of conduct of which members of the public should be aware so that they need not feel aggrieved and embarrassing situations need not arise. While I am sure that the vast majority of customs officers are very courteous and will explain quite patiently, sometimes in the face of abuse, what is required of passengers, unfortunately some cases have arisen from time to time which have given cause for disquiet. Some of those have led to very embarrassing and discomforting scenes at airports and ports around the country. Those cases have led to unfortunate publicity.

The code of conduct should deal with the circumstances under which someone should be stopped. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) referred to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which applies only to England and Wales. I referred in Committee to the code of conduct laid down in that Act. That code refers to the powers of stop and search and deals in particular with reasonable suspicion, contrasting that with mere suspicion. It makes the point that reasonable suspicion must be founded on fact. It may well be that there are justifiable grounds to allow a customs officer to stop someone on a hunch. I am sure that there must be many occasions when an officer has a hunch and subsequently finds some goods. I do not know whether that is right or not and I am willing to be persuaded. However, I would like to think that a Customs officer has a reason to stop someone.

It would be useful if the officer had to record in writing his reason for stopping someone. When the Minister replied to this point in Committee, he said that he did not think that that would be practical, as about 44,000 people were stopped a year. However, it would be practical for a customs officer in a particular port to provide someone who is stopped with written reasons why that has happened. Sometimes the reason for stopping someone is discovered subsequently. In other words, the action is justified by the findings rather than the officer being asked to justify his stopping in the first place. There are good grounds for considering the issuing of written reasons.

It would be useful to remind officers that they must have a reason for stopping someone and that when they stop someone the conversation that follows should be conducted as courteously as possible. If possible, the questions put to the passenger should be asked in such a way that fellow passengers cannot overhear what is being said. Once a customs officer begins to go through someone's possessions, that process should be conducted in such a way that other passengers are not privy to the operation. That search can be very embarrassing and unnecessarily humiliating for someone who, as I said, must be presumed to be innocent until contrary evidence comes to light.

If officers are searching for prohibited magazines, or tape recordings, they need only carry out a search that would reveal the existence of those magazines or tape

recordings. Two of my constituents complained to me that they were stopped and searched because they were suspected of bringing prohibited material into this country. They wondered why on earth they were subjected to an intimate body search and internal examination. Common sense would have dictated that that was not necessary if the officers were looking for magazines or tape recordings. It angers people when they are subjected to such searches because that may be construed as something more than a search. I stress that that does not happen regularly, but it happens and it can be an unnecessary cause of aggravation.

Intimate body searches, rubdown searches or simply body searches should be conducted in the presence of as senior an officer as possible, who is fully aware of all the procedures that should be followed.

We should emphasise that at no time should a member of the opposite sex be in a room where someone is to be searched. There is no reason why someone should not have a friend or relative present while such a search is being carried out. It can be frightening to be taken into a room in the presence of two officers whom a person has not seen before. I cannot see what prejudice can be suffered by having a friend present. Some people subjected to such searches have been shocked, frightened and scarred by the experience.

As a matter of course, the public should be informed of their rights at an early opportunity. Often, people are stopped and searched when they do not expect it, and they are not fully conversant with the rights and remedies that are available to them. I do not see what harm would be caused if such a code of conduct were to be published and made widely available.

Many of these points were made in Committee. The Minister's reply was disappointing. He seemed to think that there was no need for a code of conduct. As has been said, the police have one. I cannot see why Customs and Excise officers cannot have one. A code of practice would help Customs and Excise officers, and it would certainly help members of the public. Over the summer months, when, in the nature of things, more of our constituents travel than at other times, hon. Members will receive letters from people who have had unfortunate experiences. Given a little thought and consideration, most unfortunate experiences can be avoided. A code of conduct would be useful. The Minister said two months ago that he would think about the matter. I hope that he will give us the benefit of his thoughts. It would be a welcome step.

I do not believe that it will do any harm to have a code of practice—far from it. It would make the public aware of the difficult circumstances in which Customs and Excise officers work and the valuable work that they do. They need our support to do that work.

Mr. Lilley: I pay tribute to the way in which this issue has been debated in Committee and in the House. All hon. Members have recognised that Customs and Excise officers have a difficult but necessary job which, on occasions, must require extremely unpleasant tasks to be undertaken. We all agree that it is important to ensure that such tasks are undertaken properly and with appropriate safeguards. The clause that we introduced in Committee was designed to give legal backing to guarantees for the citizen. In large measure, they implement the key proposals on the issue.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) made several points. I shall mention two in particular. He said that the present law might allow customs officials to search people on the basis of mere suspicion. In fact, they must have reasonable suspicion, which is closely defined in law and by practice. It means that they require evidence—more than a hunch.

Mr. Darling: I fully appreciate that they must have reasonable grounds. I am willing to be persuaded that perhaps, in some cases, something less than reasonable grounds might be acceptable, but certainly not without a code of conduct. Under the law as it is presently framed, a hunch is not sufficient.

Mr. Lilley: I misinterpreted the hon. Gentleman's point. He suggested, if anything, an extension of customs powers, reinforced by a code of conduct. We do not propose to move in that direction. It would be hard to square it with the general tendency to tighten up civil liberties in that respect.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) asked whether there should be a code of practice specifically for customs. Customs officers are obliged to follow the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 code of practice on arrest, search and questioning and have regard to the spirit of the code in matters to which it does not specifically apply because of the different nature of the two professions. Even after listening carefully to the points that hon. Members have made, I am not persuaded that it would be helpful to have a second separate and overlapping code for customs. It would be confusing in practice and would rarely be looked at by members of the public. Of course, it would add to the confusion that those involved in customs and police duties would face.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The Minister says that Customs and Excise ought to follow the spirit of the code that is available under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Should that not be translated so that both the general public and the customs officers can see whether they are acting in the spirit of the code? If it is possible for them to do so, surely the code should be written down so that people can check it. It is the arbitrary nature of stopping and searching that has upset my constituents. If people can be told, "This is done in conformity with the code of practice; you have not been singled out for any reason other than the suspicion that you are smuggling something into the country," they will accept that as fair.

12.30 am

Mr. Lilley: There is no need for a code of practice in that respect, as it is established in law that customs officers must have reasonable grounds for suspicion before they can search anyone. If there is an objection to the way in which it is done, the matter is justiciable. It would not be made more justiciable by a separate code of practice spelling out that basic truth.

The citizen, in fact, has rather more rights when dealing with customs officers than when dealing with the police, despite the codes to which hon. Members attach so much importance. Above all, they have appeal rights, which they have not when apprehended in similar circumstances by the police. Those rights make a separate code of practice otiose in such circumstances.

Speaking to amendment No. 81, the hon. Member for Wrexham drew on our debate in Committee. He urged us

[Mr. Lilley]

to introduce written notification of appeal rights, aimed particularly at those who found it hard to understand or make themselves understood because they were not English-speaking. I took on board the arguments deployed in Committee, recognising that it is perhaps a weakness that in ports and airports written notification of appeal rights is not available in a multiplicity of languages—boldly presented, as the hon. Gentleman suggested—in case customs officers cannot make themselves understood orally.

That, however, is desirable in the first instance. As the hon. Gentleman recognised, in the overwhelming majority of cases officers obtain the consent and co-operation of the public. Although it is unpleasant for them, the public understand the need for such searches. We do not wish to bureaucratise and impede the process by providing for pieces of paper to be thrust at them each time such circumstances arise. I have, however, discussed the matter with the customs, and it has been decided that a booklet should be made available. It would have to be a booklet, as it would contain material in roughly 17 languages—spelling out appeal rights for those who need to know about them.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that, even with the aid of such notification, it would not be possible to be sure that the suspect fully understood his rights. He should in any case be brought before a justice of the peace, who, it was hoped, would have superior powers of communication and would acquaint him with his rights. I find that a rather difficult process to get to grips with. If the suspect cannot be made to understand that he has the right to go before a JP for his objections to the search to be heard, simply bringing him before the JP will not make him understand the position much better. But I trust that we shall never be faced with such circumstances—particularly as, following the hon. Gentleman's representations, the additional reinforcement of a written explanation of rights will be available.

The hon. Gentleman also argued that the appellant should have the right to be heard before a JP, and to hear his case argued. That is what happens in the bulk of cases. The evidence is heard in the presence of the suspect before a JP.

There would be cases where that would be inappropriate. For example, customs officers might have reasons for wanting to search which they could not reveal legitimately to the suspect because they were based on intelligence information. In such circumstances it is reasonable, at the JP's discretion, that the customs evidence should be heard separately.

I hope that I have covered all the issues that have been raised in what, inevitably, is a short debate and reply. I hope also that the concessions that I have been able to announce will go some way to reassuring hon. Members that we accept the spirit of their proposals and will do our best to work within them.

Dr. Marek: Will strip searches, as well as intimate searches, be authorised by officers of senior executive rank, or higher?

Mr. Lilley: Strip searches, as against intimate searches, are generally authorised by a superior officer to an executive officer. They would usually be authorised by a higher executive officer. Senior executive officers are not necessarily present or available at every port. If we were to require that only a senior executive officer could authorise such searches, unnecessary delays would sometimes be imposed upon the suspect, who would have to await such an officer being informed and brought from a different port. We restrict that requirement to intimate searches, which are the most infrequent and the most serious sort.

Dr. Marek: The Minister must know that that reply begs more questions than it answers. I recognise, however, that some progress has been made. I hope that the Government will study what I have said and consider whether further provisions should be inserted in next year's Finance Bill. Given the spirit of the discussion, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 21, in page 29, line 42, at end insert—

'(6) References in subsection (2) above to an individual include references to a Scottish partnership in which at least one partner is an individual.'.

No. 22, in page 32, line 16, at end insert—

'(6) References in subsection (2) above to an individual include references to a Scottish partnership in which at least one partner is an individual.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move amendment No. 100, in page 31, line 21, at end insert—

'"parties to a marriage" shall include individuals who have not been married to each other but who have lived together as husband and wife and the term "married couple living together" shall include individuals who are not married but who live together as husband and wife.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 101 in page 33, line 41, at end insert—

'"parties to a marriage" shall include individuals who have not been married to each other but who have lived together as husband and wife and the term "married couple living together" shall include individuals who are not married but who live together as husband and wife.'.

No. 102, in page 37, line 14, at end insert—

'"parties to a marriage" shall include individuals who have not been married to each other but who have lived together as husband and wife and the term "married couple living together" shall include individuals who are not married but who live together as husband and wife.'.

Mr. Smith: The amendments seek to remove the discrimination that exists in respect of maintenance payments that are made on behalf of children of unmarried parents who have subsequently separated. The Bill provides that for new court orders and enforceable agreements, divorced or separated fathers can claim tax relief up to a maximum of £1,490 a year—that is the difference between the single person's allowance and the married couple's allowance—on maintenance that is payable to the mother for herself or to the mother for a child. Unmarried fathers cannot claim tax relief on any maintenance that is paid.

For existing court orders and enforceable agreements from 6 April 1988, divorced or separated mothers can receive up to £1,490-worth of maintenance income tax free. Unmarried mothers will still be liable to tax on all the maintenance that they receive. This basic discrimination against the moneys that are received by unmarried

mothers and paid by unmarried fathers, which do not qualify for tax relief, is something that the amendment seeks to remove.

The provisions in the Bill on the treatment of maintenance payments, in so far as they expressly discriminate against children of unmarried parents, starkly contradict the spirit of the Family Law Reform Act 1987. That Act seeks to remove all forms of legal discrimination against the children of unmarried parents. On 12 May 1987, the Solicitor-General said:

"it is the Government's view that, whatever one may think about the rights and wrongs of engendering children whose birth will be illegitimate, it is wrong to take it out on the children, in the sense that they are subjected throughout their lives to handicaps imposed by law."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1987; Vol. 116, c. 220.]

The Opposition entirely concur with that sentiment, but the Government seem to be departing from it in the tax arrangements which they are making in the Bill for the payments made on behalf of the children of unmarried couples.

In Committee, the Financial Secretary said on 7 June that he would

"study carefully what has been said during our debate to see whether further action is needed"

and that he would

"examine the measure to see if it is likely to throw up individual hard cases which should be dealt with by amendments on Report."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee*, 7 June 1988; c. 320-321.]

I know that the National Council for One Parent Families has been in touch with the Financial Secretary and has pointed out to him its view that there will be serious consequences for couples separating in such circumstances, and that the impact on the children will be adverse.

I hope that the Government will be prepared to consider the amendments that we have tabled. We have beeen careful about the drafting. We have lifted much of the Government's own wording from their legislation implementing the poll tax, so I hope that we shall have no challenges from the Government about inaccurate drafting.

It should be remembered that the scale of the problem is considerable. According to the latest figures, more than one in five births occur outside of marriage. Thus, a significant proportion of children potentially will be affected by these discriminatory provisions in the Bill. On the basis of recent trends, an ever-rising proportion of the population is likely to be affected in future. More important than the numbers affected is the principle of equal treatment for all children, which must be defended. Such a blatant contradiction of that, as is enshrined in the Bill as it stands, runs against the principles established under the Family Law Reform Act and should not be allowed to pass unchallenged. We hope that the amendments will commend themselves to the House.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, I undertook carefully to study this matter. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the starting point is that, under the new regime introduced by the Bill, there will be no relief for maintenance payments for children, whether their parents are married, divorced, separated, unmarried or widowed. The special problems of single parents are recognised to some extent by the one-parent benefit and by the additional personal allowance.

The hon. Gentleman drew a comparison between married and unmarried couples who have separated—indeed, that was his central point. I believe that there are distinctions. Marriage creates a special legal relationship which is recognised in the tax system. The married allowance is given whether or not the couple have children. The maintenance relief for payments by one divorced or separated spouse to the other recognise that such obligations may continue after the marriage has broken up. It gives relief for maintenance payments to the other spouse up to the equivalent of the married allowance. Again, the relief is available whether or not the couple have children. The clause does allow payments to the ex-wife for maintenance of the children to count for relief as well as payments to the wife for her own maintenance, but that is just recognising the fact that many of the wife's household expenses cannot easily be apportioned between herself and the children.

The situation is different for an unmarried couple. There is no formal legal relationship—I am not making any moral judgment, but simply stating the fact—and the couple will not receive the married allowance. If the courts order maintenance to be paid, it will be for the child rather than the mother. Extending maintenance relief could put the unmarried parent in a more favourable position than the divorced or separated because, with the divorced and separated, it is covering the obligation to maintain the ex-wife, whether or not there are children; it is not primarily for the children.

12.45 am

The amendments illustrate some of the problems of definition. They say that "parties to a marriage" shall include individuals who have not been married to each other. The amendments require the couple to have lived together as husband and wife at some time. They do not say when or for how long. There may be much more uncertainty about whether an unmarried relationship has ended than there is with a marriage, where there is a divorce or formal separation. There may also be unmarried parents who have never lived together, but I assume that the amendment is not intended to extend——

Mr. Hanley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the amendment as drafted could include two men or two women living together as husband and wife?

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure about that. I do not think that it does.

Inquiring as to whether an unmarried couple are living together is clearly more difficult than establishing whether a marriage has broken up permanently. The question raised was whether the absence of relief for unmarried couples would lead to hardship. It is ultimately for the courts to decide what maintenance is appropriate in a particular case. They will have to take the new tax regime into account, but it does not follow that they will necessarily award less maintenance than they would have done in the past. They will need to consider the facts of the case and the needs of the child.

If the courts award less maintenance, the result will often be that the mother will be compensated by an increase in social security benefits. One of the points I made in Committee was that 80 per cent. of single parents are on means-tested benefit. That includes people on family credit or housing benefit as well as those on income support. For those lone parents receiving maintenance

[Mr. Lamont]

who are above the benefit level, the fact that maintenance will be exempt from tax will be helpful. If they are not paying tax, it will enable them to earn more than before without crossing the tax threshold because they will have their full personal allowance.

I know that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury will be disappointed. However, if we make the concession for which he is asking, the framework of what we have constructed will come unstitched. The benefits system can pick up most of the cases. One has to decide what is appropriate for the tax system and what is appropriate for the benefits system to pick up. Some of the cases will be better dealt with through the benefits system. I know that the hon. Gentleman has put this forward as a serious point and I regard it as a serious point. I have looked into it and I know of his concern. We will keep the position under review. I hope and believe that his fears will prove groundless. It would be wrong to accept his amendment on the evidence we have so far.

Mr. Chris Smith: I am disappointed, but I am grateful to the Financial Secretary for the sympathetic consideration that I know he has given to the matter.

There is already evidence that maintenance payments are likely to be reduced in value as a result of the measures in the Budget. The Law Society's family law committee met recently and the decisions made at that meeting are recorded in the latest issues of the *Law Society Gazette*. Those decisions seem to suggest that maintenance payments will be lower in future. I fear that the problems we see as a consequence of what is enshrined in this part of the Bill will come to fruition.

We fear that the Government's apparent reliance on the benefits system to pick up the problem will not be sufficient in view of what the Government are doing to that benefits system.

We are grateful that the Treasury will keep the matter under review. We hope that there will be an opportunity to return to the matter, perhaps in next year's Bill, if it can be demonstrated, as I fear it will, that hardship does result from the Budget changes. In the light of the Government's commitment to maintain a reviewing eye on what happens, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 50

PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 50, line 12, after 'company', insert

'by which eligible shares are issued or any subsidiary of such a company'.

No. 3, in page 50, line 15, after 'company', insert 'or subsidiary'.

No. 4, in page 50, line 16, leave out 'relevant period' and insert

'period beginning with the date on which the shares are issued and ending four years after that date'.

No. 5, in page 50, line 21, leave out

"'company" does not include a company'

and insert

'references to a company or subsidiary do not include references to a company or subsidiary'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 6, in page 50, line 23, at end insert

'or Part VII of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 7 and 8.

Mr. Chris Smith: The amendments extend to Northern Ireland the scope of the business expansion scheme relief for the setting up of companies engaged in letting property. In our debates on the Budget and the Finance Bill, we have consistently made plain our complete and utter distaste for this use of the business expansion scheme.

One aspect of this group of amendments concerns us particularly. Assured tenancies under the Housing Bill do not apply to Northern Ireland, so the Government have come up with the amendments to enshrine the BES provisions for Northern Ireland. However, amendment No. 8 gives the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland almost blanket approval for establishing whatever terms and conditions of tenancy it considers appropriate under the scheme. At least with assured tenancies—bad though they are—we knew where we stood, because the provisions were enshrined in the Housing Bill. But amendment No. 8 gives the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland carte blanche to come up with regulations at some time in the future to set up a form of tenancy which will be the subject of considerable tax relief. We cannot but view this open-ended proposal with disquiet and we seek firmer information about the Government's intentions in the amendment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As I explained in Committee, the market for rented housing in Northern Ireland is different from the market here, in that it is already deregulated to a substantial extent, so the new assured tenancy scheme will not apply there. As the BES relief in the Finance Bill is linked to the assured tenancy scheme, it follows that such relief would not be available in Northern Ireland. However, although Northern Ireland does not have the same shortage of rented accommodation, there is a shortage of good modern housing. We therefore decided to extend the BES relief to Northern Ireland, and that is what the amendments would achieve.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) specifically asked about amendment No. 8. It provides that in Northern Ireland a qualifying tenancy is one which complies with conditions to be prescribed by regulations. We intend that the tenancies should be broadly similar to assured tenancies in terms of both the type of property and the security of tenure. They will be very similar.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 7, in page 50, line 26 leave out 'or'.

No. 8, in page 50, line 28 at end insert—

'or

(c) in Northern Ireland, a tenancy which complies with such requirements or conditions as may be prescribed by regulations made by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland,'.

No. 9, in page 50, line 29 leave out from 'tenancy' to end of line 31 and insert—

'which falls within subsection (3A) below'.

Page 50, line 33 at end insert—

'(3A) A tenancy falls within this subsection if—

(a) it is a tenancy granted in consideration of a premium within the meaning of Schedule 3 to the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979; or

(b) any option to purchase in relation to the dwelling-house has been granted to the tenant or an associate of his;

and in this subsection any reference to the tenant includes, in the case of a joint tenancy, a reference to either or any of the joint tenants.'.

No. 11, in page 50, line 33 at end insert—

'(3B) Regulations under subsection (3) above shall be made by statutory rule for the purposes of the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 and shall be subject to negative resolution within the meaning of section 41(6) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Schedule 4

Business Expansion Scheme: Private Rented Housing

Amendment proposed: No. 12, in page 130, line 21, leave out paragraph 4 and insert—

'4. In section 291 (individuals qualifying for relief), after subsection (1) there shall be inserted—

"(1A) An individual is connected with the company if—

(a) he, or an associate of his, occupies or is a tenant of a dwelling-house in which the company holds an interest; and

(b) the interest held by the company is superior to any interest in the dwelling-house held by the individual.".'—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Chris Smith: In Committee we proposed that the disqualification from relief should apply not just to tenants of the properties provided by the company doing the letting but to subtenants. The amendment seems to enshrine that principle, albeit by a somewhat roundabout route and we must therefore give it a warm welcome and thank the Government for picking up the point we made in Committee.

Amendments made: No. 13, in page 132, line 25, after 'Wales', insert 'or Northern Ireland'.

No. 14, in page 132, line 29, leave out

'Part V of the Housing Act 1985'

and insert—

'the right to buy legislation'.

No. 15, in page 132, line 30, after 'Wales', insert 'or Northern Ireland'.

No. 16, in page 132, line 34, leave out 'Part' and insert 'legislation'.

No. 17, in page 132, leave out lines 38 and 39 and insert—

'(4A) In sub-paragraph (4) above "the right to buy legislation" means—

(a) in relation to a dwelling-house in England and Wales, Part V of the Housing Act 1985

(b) in relation to a dwelling-house in Northern Ireland, Chapter I of Part II of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983;

and "flat" and "house" have the same meanings as in that legislation.'

No. 18, in page 132, line 47, leave out 'or'.

page 132, line 51, at end insert—

'or

(c) a dwelling-house in Northern Ireland which is unfit for human habitation within the meaning of Article 46 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 or does not have all the standard amenities within the meaning of Article 59 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.'.

No. 20, in page 133, line 34 at end insert—

'Interpretation of certain expressions: Scotland

18. In the application of the above provisions of this Part to Scotland, references to acquiring an interest shall be construed, if there is a contract to acquire the interest, as references to entering into that contract and for the purposes of paragraph 16(2)(b) above, a company or subsidiary shall be regarded as owning an interest during the period between its entering into such a contract as regards that interest and its acquiring the interest.'—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 51

Restriction of relief

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I beg to move amendment No. 72, in page 53, line 15, at end add—

'(3) Where a company has been trading for a period of less than two years, subsection (1) and (4) above shall have effect as if for the amount there specified there were substituted £2 million.'

I shall be brief in view of the time. First, I wish to make a point about the difficulty that larger start-up companies with a potentially low return on capital will have in raising money. Secondly, I wish to get a clearer idea of what the Treasury see as the future, if any, of the BES.

One of the factors contributing to the Treasury's views has been the opinion of the Venture Capital Association that adequate financing exists from its members for start-up companies. In some respects that is unreliable and BES financiers believe that a certain number of projects fail to get venture capital, so never get off the ground. It would also be useful to know whether the Treasury will monitor this over the next year and, if so, how it intends to do so.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We discussed this issue at length in Committee. One of my hon. Friends tabled a similar amendment and I explained that it was right that the BES should be targeted more on small companies and that there had been too much investment on asset-backed enterprises. That would be good for small businesses and the venture capital industry. There can be arguments over the precise figure. There is no science about that. But we shall monitor this because we are aware of all the schemes that go ahead and, if it is necessary, we shall alter this.

Mr. Nicholson: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for explaining the Government's position on this and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 6

Commercial Woodlands

Amendment proposed: No. 23 in page 140, line 11, leave out 'he' and insert—

'(a) that person; or

(b) in the event of his death, any other person who occupies them by virtue of any disposition (whether effected by will, under the law relating to intestacy or otherwise) of property comprised in his estate immediately before his death'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 24.

Dr. Marek: Will the Government forgo any revenue as a result of amendment No. 23 and have they had any representations about it?

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost is negligible and yes, we had representations.

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 24, in page 140, line 12, at end insert

'and the reference in this subparagraph to a disposition includes a reference to a disposition as varied under section 142 of the Inheritance Act 1984'.

No. 25, in page 142, line 13, at end insert—

'(1A) In section 67(1) of the Taxes Act 1970 (Schedule A), in paragraph 3 of Schedule A (exceptions), after paragraph (a) there shall be inserted—

"(aa) to any profits or gains arising from a person's occupation of any woodlands which are managed on a commercial basis and with a view to the realisation of profits, or".'.

No. 26, in page 142, line 33, at end insert—

'(4A) In section 15(1) of the Taxes Act 1988 (Schedule A), in paragraph 3 of Schedule A (exceptions), after paragraph (a) there shall be inserted—

"(aa) to any profits or gains arising from a person's occupation of any woodlands which are managed on a commercial basis and with a view to the realisation of profits, or".'.

No. 74, in page 142, line 46, leave out '(2), (4)' and insert—

'(1A), (2), (4), (4A)'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 65

COMPANY RESIDENCE

Amendments made: No. 31, in page 62, line 40, at beginning insert—

'Subject to the provisions of Schedule *[Exceptions to rule in section 65(1)]* to this Act.'.

No. 32, in page 62, line 44, leave out subsections (2) and (3).

No. 33, in page 63, leave out lines 20 to 23.

No. 34, in page 63, line 24, after 'section', insert—

'and Schedule *Exceptions to rule in section 65(1))* to this Act'.

—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Clause 94

ASSETS HELD ON 31 MARCH 1982

Sir William Clark: I beg to move amendment No. 106, in page 78, line 17, at end insert—

'(1A) That person may elect whether the asset shall be taxed by reference to the provisions of subsection (1B) or subsection (2) below and such election shall be made by notice in writing to the inspector given within two years from the end of the year of assessment or accounting period of a company in which the disposal is made or such further time as the Board may by notice in writing allow.

(1B) Where an election for treatment under this subsection is made under the provisions of subsection (1A) above the amount of the gain on the relevant disposal shall be calculated under the rules in paragraph 11 of Schedule 5 to the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 as if references therein to 6th April 1965 where references to 31st March 1982.'.

I need not detain the House for long, but this is an important point. We have a time apportionment amendment to ascertain the value of property, shares or investments on 31 March 1982. The Revenue will say that that is difficult because a valuation in those circumstances would involve the long delay since the asset values in 1982. Earlier, my right hon. Friend said that the Revenue did not have records for rollover relief. I said on Second Reading that I could not understand that. When capital gains tax was introduced in 1965 the taxpayer had the option of a 1965 valuation or the historical cost to 1985 on time apportionment.

I cannot see why we should not do the same for 1982. One can easily determine the value of a share in 1982, but it is terribly difficult to ascertain the value of property and other assets six years ago. Will my right hon. Friend consider whether it might be much better to have a straight line valuation, from the historical cost up to 1982 and then up to now? That would be much easier for the Inland Revenue and taxpayers alike.

1 am

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has identified the issue of time apportionment. At this time of the evening I shall put to him a case of how it would work: an acquisition cost of shares in 1972 of £10,000, a market value in 1982 of £30,000 and disposable proceeds in 1992 of £100,000. Under the Bill, the gain, ignoring indexation, is £70,000. Again ignoring indexation, with time apportionment the gain would be £45,000—half the difference between £100,000 and £10,000.

A considerable cost to the Exchequer would arise out of my hon. Friend's proposal. In fact, the sheer cost to the Exchequer would be sufficient grounds for rejecting it.

Sir William Clark: It is easy to quote a case of defining the value of shares in 1982, or whenever one bought them. But the valuation of investment property in 1982 cannot be defined as clearly as my right hon. Friend has said. He is oversimplifying the problem. The amount of work and expense to which people will be put in trying to determine a 1982 valuation will be tremendous. The burden of valuation will be put on the potential capital gains taxpayer. I hope that my right hon. Friend will re-examine —not necessarily now, but at some later stage—the possibility of alleviating the liability, responsibility and expense that will be put on the taxpayer.

Dr. Marek: Can the Paymaster General estimate the size of the concession that the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) is asking for? The Opposition see no excuse for it—especially at this time in the morning.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of the relief is unquantifiable, but it could well be as high as £100 million.

To answer my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), practical experience of the time apportionment option for 1965 suggests that many taxpayers would feel it necessary to undertake an additional set of computations to see whether they would be better off with time apportionment or with 1982 market values. For those people, there would be an extra compliance burden.

Secondly, over the years a number of people have complained by letter that when they decided which basis to adopt, they did not fully appreciate the implications and made the wrong choice.

Sir William Clark: My right hon. Friend's reply was very disappointing, but because of the lateness of the hour, and because I will pursue it on the next Budget, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 37, in page 78, line 23, at beginning insert—

'Subject to subsection (4A) below,'.

No. 38, in page 78, line 28, leave out second 'or'.

No. 39, in page 78, line 31, at end insert—

'or

(d) where neither a gain nor a loss would accrue by virtue of any of the spcified enactments.'.

No. 40, in page 78, line 38, at end insert—

'(4A) If a person so elects, disposals made by him (including any made by him before the election) shall fall outside subsection (3) above (so that subsection (2) above is not excluded by that subsection).

(4B) An election by a person under subsection (4A) above shall be irrevocable and shall be made by notice in writing to the inspector at any time before 6th April 1990 or at any time during the period beginning with the first day of the first relevant disposal and ending—

(a) two years after the end of the year of assessment or accounting period in which the disposal is made, or

(b) at such later time as the Board may allow;

and "the first relevant disposal" means the first disposal to which this section applies which is made by the person making the election.

(4C) An election made by a person under subsection (4A) above in one capacity does not cover disposals made by him in another capacity.

(4D) All such adjustments shall be made, whether by way of discharge or repayment of tax, the making of assessments or otherwise, as are required to give effect to an election under subsection (4A) above.'.

No. 41, in page 78, line 40, at end insert—

'and in subsection (3)(d) above "specified enactments" means the enactments specified in paragraph 1(3) of that Schedule.'.

—[Mr. Norman Lamont.]

Schedule 7

CAPITAL GAINS: ASSETS HELD ON 31ST MARCH 1982

Amendments made: No. 57, in page 143, line 17, after '273', insert—

'340(7), 342, 342A, 342B,'.

No. 58, in page 143, line 20, after '1985;', insert—

'(ee) section 486(8) of the Taxes Act 1988;'

No. 43, in page 143, line 21, at end insert—

'1A.—(1) Sub-paragraph (2) below applies where a person makes a disposal of an asset acquired by him on or after 6th April 1988 in circumstances in which either of the relevant enactments applied.

(2) Where this sub-paragraph applies—

(a) an election under subsection (4A) of section 94 of this Act by the person making the disposal shall not cover the disposal, but

(b) the making of such an election by the person from whom the asset was acquired shall cause the disposal to fall outside subsection (3) of that section (so that subsection (2) of that section is not excluded by it) whether or not the person making the disposal makes such an election.

(3) Where the person from whom the asset was acquired by the person making the disposal himself acquired it on or after 6th April 1988 in circumstances in which either of the relevant enactment applied, an election made by him shall not have the effect described in sub-paragraph (2)(b) above but an election made by—

(a) the last person by whom the asset was acquired after 5th April 1988 otherwise than in such circumstances, or

(b) if there is no such person, the person who held the asset on 5th April 1988, shall have that effect.

(4) In this paragraph "the relevant enactments" means—

(a) section 273 of the Taxes Act 1970, and

(b) section 44 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.'.

No. 44, in page 143, line 27, leave out

', and so made for the year 1982-83 or any subsequent year of assessment,'.

No. 45, in page 144, line 34, at beginning insert—

'Except where an election under section 94(4A) of the Finance Act 1988 has effect,'.

No. 46, in page 144, line 36, at end insert—

'Elections under section 94(4A): excluded disposals

11.—(1) An election under section 94(4A) of this Act shall not cover disposals such as are specified in sub-paragraph (2) below.

(2) The disposals mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) above are disposals of, or of an interest in,—

(a) plant or machinery,

(b) an asset which the person making the disposal has at any time held for the purposes of or in connection with—

(i) a trade consisting of the working of a source of mineral deposits, or

(ii) where a trade involves (but does not consist of) such working, the part of the trade which involves such working, or

(c) a licence under the Petroleum (Production) Act 1934 or the Petroleum (Production) Act (Northern Ireland) 1964;

but a disposal does not fall within paragraph (a) or (b) above unless a capital allowance in respect of any expenditure attributable to the asset has been made to the person making the disposal or would have been made to him had he made a claim.

(3) Where the person making the disposal acquired the asset on a no gain/no loss disposal, the references in sub-paragraph (2) above to that person are references to the person making the disposal, the person who last acquired the asset otherwise than on a no gain/no loss disposal or any person who subsequently acquired the asset on such a disposal.

(4) In this paragraph—

(a) "source of mineral disposits" shall be construed in accordance with Schedule 13 to the Finance Act 1986, and

(b) references to a no gain/no loss disposal shall be construed in accordance with paragraph 1 above.

Elections under section 94(4A): groups of companies

12.—(1) A company may not make an election under section 94(4A) of this Act at a time when it is a member but not the principal company of a group unless the company did not become a member of the group until after the relevant time.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, an election under section 94(4A) of this Act by a company which is the principal company of a group shall have effect also as an election by any other company which at the relevant time is a member of the group.

(3) Sub-paragraph (2) above, shall not apply in relation to a company which, in some period after 5th April 1988 and before the relevant time, is not a member of the group if—

(a) during that period the company makes a disposal to which section 94 of this Act applies, and

(b) the period during which an election under subsection (4A) of that section could be made expires without such an election having been made.

(4) Sub-paragraph (2) above shall apply in relation to a company notwithstanding that the company ceases to be a member of the group at any time after the relevant time except where—

(a) the company is an outgoing company in relation to the group, and

(b) the election relating to the group is made after the company ceases to be a member of the group.

(5) In relation to a company which is the principal company of a group the reference in subsection (4B) of section 94 of this Act to the first relevant disposal is a reference to the first disposal to which that section applies by a company which is—

(a) a member of the group but not an outgoing company in relation to the group, or

(b) an incoming company in relation to the group.

13.—(1) In paragraph 12 above "the relevant time", in relation to a group of companies, is—

(a) the first time when any company which is then a member of the group, and is not an outgoing company in relation to the group, makes a disposal to which section 94 of this Act applies.

(b) the time immediately following the first occasion when a company which is an incoming company in relation to the group becomes a member of the group.

(c) the time when an election is made by the principal company,

whichever is earliest.

(2) In paragraph 12 above and this paragraph—

"incoming company", in relation to a group of companies, means a company which—

(a) makes its first disposal to which section 94 of this Act applies at a time when it is not a member of the group, and

(b) becomes a member of the group before the end of the period during which an election under subsection (4A) of that section could be made in relation to it and at a time when no such election has been made, and

"outgoing company", in relation to a group of companies, means a company which ceases to be a member of the group before the end of the period during which an election under section 94(4A) of this Act could be made in relation to it and at a time when no such election has been made.

(3) Section 272 of the Taxes Act 1970 shall have effect for the purposes of paragraph 12 above and this paragraph as for those of sections 272 to 281 of that Act.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 102

DEEMED DISPOSAL OF ASSETS ON COMPANY CEASING TO BE RESIDENT IN UK

Amendment made: No. 35, in page 83, line 2, leave out

'paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (1) shall cease to have effect'

and insert—

'in subsection (1), paragraphs (a) and (b) shall cease to have effect and in paragraph (c) for the words "so resident" there shall be substituted the words "resident in the United Kingdom".'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Schedule 8

GAINS ARISING FROM CERTAIN SETTLED PROPERTY

Sir William Clark: I beg to move amendment No. 71, in page 144, line 42, after 'settlement', insert—

'made on or after 15th March 1988'.

I wonder whether I might have more success on this amendment. I say at the outset that I have no vested interest in it.

There is an element of retrospection in this. If the settlement is on the settler's own interest, there is a liability of 40 per cent., but if it is for his family, it is 25 per cent. Consequently, there is an anomaly that should be ironed out.

If, as my right hon. Friend said in Standing Committee, the clause was intended primarily to prevent avoidance arrangements developing, my amendment proposes that, if any settlement is made after 15 March, it should be caught. However, for anything done before 15 March—probably 10 or 15 days earlier—there should be no retrospection.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Schedule 8 provides broadly that gains of a settlement in which the settler or spouse has an interest will be taxed as though they accrued directly to the settler. My hon. Friend's amendment seeks to confine that to settlements after Budget day. Existing settlements are already within the scope of the equivalent income tax provisions, and our main objective this year is to assimilate the rates of tax, gains and income.

To exclude existing settlements from schedule 8 would mean that the gains concerned would be completely sheltered from the 40 per cent. charge. Apart from that general point, this would be a substantial advantage and an opportunity for avoidance of the higher rate. There would be nothing to stop further assets being transferred into existing settlements shortly before being sold. The terms of an existing settlement could be varied so that the settler or the settler's spouse would be appointed as beneficiary.

I will consider what my hon. Friend has said, but I do not think that there can be any justification for creating a situation in which capital gains would be taxed at a different rate. In one sense, any alteration in the capital gains tax rate will be accused of being retrospective because it hits accrued gains. That is an inevitable feature of any change made at any time to capital gains. One could not have a safe harbour for capital gains for somebody who happened to have a trust before the 1988 Budget. In some cases the schedule 8 rules may lead to an increase in the tax rate on gains, although there will be other cases where it will be at the basic rate.

The position here is little different from that of other cases where higher rate payers pay tax at 40 per cent. of gains on existing assets. A number of people have put to me the proposition that it may be difficult for the trust to be varied, but I do not believe that that is so. There are a number of ways around that. I shall think about what my hon. Friend has said, but it would not be right to have a different rate just because a trust has been set up.

Sir William Clark: If a settlement has been made and it is not changed, why should not the provisions of my amendment be acceptable? If the settlement is changed, I accept that the extra settlement in the trust will be affected after Budget day, but if there is no change, why should there be this difference?

Mr. Lamont: I do not see why such settlements should not be subject to the same rate of tax as other taxpayers. There is no greater element of retrospection here. I raised the point about changing the trust because some people have argued that, if it is not possible to change a trust, trusts will not have the flexibility to deal with the higher rate.

Dr. Marek: I wait with bated breath to hear how much this concession will cost.

Mr. Lamont: The cost is uncertain—I shall go no further than that. I shall look at what my hon. Friend has said, although I doubt that he has a strong case. I should be happy to discuss it with him.

Sir William Clark: In view of my right hon. Friend's assurance that he will look at it again—if he will do so, it is obvious that the Treasury accepts that there is a case—I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 9

CAPITAL GAINS INDEXATION: GROUPS AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

Amendments made: No. 47, in page 148, line 4, at beginning insert—

'Subject to sub-paragraph (2A) below,'.

No. 48, in page 148, line 10, at beginning insert—

'Subject to sub-paragraph (2A) below,'.

No. 49, in page 148, line 18, at end insert—

'(2A) Where—

(a) there is a disposal by a company of a debt on a security owed by another company,

(b) the debt constituted or formed part of the new holding received by the company making the disposal on a reorganisation, and

(c) sub-paragraph (1) or (2) above would apply in relation to the disposal but for this sub-paragraph,

neither of those sub-paragraphs shall apply in relation to the disposal, but any indexation allowance which, apart from this sub-paragraph, would be due on the disposal shall be reduced by such amount as appears to the inspector, or on appeal the Commissioners concerned, to be just and reasonable.'

No. 50, in page 148, line 24, after 'person' insert—

'(aa) the company and that person are not linked companies immediately before the disposal,'.

No. 51, in page 148, line 30, leave out 'Where—

(a)' and insert—

'This paragraph applies—

(a) where'.

No. 52, in page 148, line 36, leave out 'and (b)' and insert—

'or

(b) where—

(i) there is a disposal by a company of a holding of shares of another company which is not a holding falling within paragraph (a) above,

(ii) the holding constituted or formed part of the new holding received by the company making the disposal on a reorganisation, and

(iii) but for section 78 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 that reorganisation (or in a case where the holding disposed of derives, in whole or in part, from assets which were original shares in relation to an earlier reorganisation, that reorganisation or any such earlier reorganisation) would have involved a disposal in relation to which paragraph 1 above would have applied or this paragraph would have applied by virtue of paragraph (a) above,

if.'

No. 53, in page 148, line 39, at beginning insert—

'(1A) Where this paragraph applies'.

No. 54, in page 150, line 15, at end insert—

'(1A) In this Scedule the expressions "reorganisation", "original shares" and "new holding" have the meanings given by section 77 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 except that, in a case where sections 78 and 79 of that Act apply in circumstances other than a reorganisation (within the meaning of section 77 of that Act) by virtue of any other provision of Chapter II of Part IV of that Act (conversion of securities, company reconstructions and amalgamations etc.), those expressions shall be construed as they fall to be construed in sections 78 and 79 as they so apply.'—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 115

Amendments of Finance Act 1985

Amendments made: No. 42, in page 90, line 28, leave out from 'asset' to 'as' in line 29.

No. 55, in page 90, line 39, after '273', insert '340(7), 342, 342A, 342B,'.

No. 56, in page 90, line 44, after '1985;', insert—

'(ee) section 486(8) of the Taxes Act;'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 116

Current year assessments

Amendments made: No. 59, in page 91, line 4, leave out 'In section 29(1)' and insert '(1) Section 29'.

No. 60, in page 91, line 5, after 'procedure)', insert—

'shall have effect subject to the following amendments.

(2) In subsection (1),'.

No. 61, in page 91, line 12, at end insert—

'(3) After subsection (1) there shall be inserted—

"(1A) Where an assessment is made by virtue of subsection (1)(c) above, any necessary adjustments shall be made after the end of the year (whether by way of assessment, repayment of tax or otherwise) to secure that tax is charged in respect of income actually arising in the year."'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 120

Three year time limit

Amendments made: No. 62, in page 94, line 24, leave out 'At the end of' and insert 'In'.

No. 63, in page 94, line 25, leave out 'there shall be added' and insert—

'after subsection (3) there shall be inserted'.

No. 64, in page 94, line 26, leave out '4' and insert '3A'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 131

General Commissioners for Northern Ireland

Amendments made: No. 67, in page 103, line 19, leave out '263(5)'.

No. 68, in page 103, line 19, after '1988', insert—

'(and the corresponding enactments repealed by that Act) and in section 11(4) of the Taxes Act 1970'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 132

Cases stated in Northern Ireland

Amendments made: No. 69, in page 104, line 30, leave out '263(5) and (6)'.

No. 70, in page 104, line 31, at end insert—

'(or the corresponding enactments repealed by that Act), section 11 of or'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Schedule 10

Building Societies: Change of Status

Amendment proposed: No. 75, in page 152, leave out lines 12 to 21 and insert—

'Capital gains: shares, and rights to shares, in successor company

5.—(1) Where, in connection with the transfer, there are conferred on members of the society—

(a) any rights to acquire shares in the successor company in priority to other persons, or

(b) any rights to acquire shares in that company for consideration of an amount or value lower than the market value of the shares, or

(c) any rights to free shares in that company,

any such right so conferred on a member shall be regarded for the purposes of capital gains tax as an option (within the meaning of section 137 of the Capital Gains tax Act 1979) granted to, and acquired by, him for no consideration and having no value at the time of that grant and acquisition.

(2) Where, in connection with the transfer, shares in the successor company are issued by that company, or disposed of by the society, to a member of the society, those shares shall be regarded for the purposes of capital gains tax—

(a) as acquired by the member for a consideration of an amount or value equal to the amount or value of any new consideration given by him for the shares (or, if no new consideration is given, as acquired for no consideration); and

(b) as having, at the time of their acquisition by the member, a value equal to the amount or value of the new consideration so given (or, if no new consideration is given, as having no value);

but this sub-paragraph is without prejudice to the operation of sub-paragraph (1) above, where applicable.

(3) Sub-paragraph (4) below applies in any case where—

(a) in connection with the transfer, shares in the successor company are issued by that company, or disposed of by the society, to trustees on terms which provide for the transfer of those shares to members of the society for no new consideration; and

(b) the circumstances are such that in the hands of the trustees the shares constitute settled property, within the meaning of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

(4) Where this sub-paragraph applies, then, for the purposes of capital gains tax—

(a) the shares shall be regarded as acquired by the trustees for no consideration;

(b) the interest of any member in the settled property constituted by the shares shall be regarded as acquired by him for no consideration and as having no value at the time of its acquisition;

(c) where a member becomes absolutely entitled as against the trustees to any of the settled property, both the trustees and the member shall be treated as if, on his becoming so entitled, the shares in question had been disposed of and immediately reacquired by the trustees, in their capacity as trustees within section 46(1) of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, for a consideration of such an amount as would secure that on the disposal neither a gain nor a loss would accrue to the trustees (and accordingly section 54 of that Act shall not apply in relation to that occasion); and

(d) on the disposal by a member of an interest in the settled property, other than the disposal treated as occurring for the purposes of paragraph (c) above, any gain accruing shall be a chargeable gain (and accordingly section 58(1) of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 shall not apply in relation to the disposal).

(5) Where, in connection with the transfer, the society disposes of any shares in the successor company, then, for the purposes of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, any gains arising on the disposal shall not be chargeable gains.

(6) In this paragraph—

"free shares", in relation to a member of the society, means any shares issued by the successor company, or disposed of by the society, to that member in connection with the transfer but for no new consideration;

"member", in relation to the society, means a person who is or has been a member of it, in that capacity, and any reference to a member includes a reference to a member of any particular class or description;

"new consideration" means consideration other than—

(a) consideration provided directly or indirectly out of the assets of the society; or

(b) consideration derived from a member's shares or other rights in the society.

(7) References in this paragraph to the case where a member becomes absolutely entitled to settled property as against the trustees shall be taken to include references to the case where he would become so entitled but for being an infant or otherwise under disability.

Distributions

5A—(1) Where, in connection with the transfer, qualifying benefits are conferred by the society or the successor company on members of the society, the conferring of those benefits shall not be regarded as either—

(a) the making of a distribution, within the meaning of the Corporation Tax Acts; or

(b) the payment or crediting of a dividend for the purposes of section 476 of the Taxes Act 1988 or any regulations under that section (building society interest etc.).

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) above does not preclude any qualifying benefit (and in particular, any qualifying benefit which in the hands of the recipient would, apart from that sub-paragraph, constitute income for the purposes of income tax) from from being a capital distribution for the purposes of section 72 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, and in that section "distribution" shall be construed accordingly.

(3) In this paragraph "qualifying benefits" means—

(a) any such rights as are mentioned in paragraph 5(1)(a), (b) or (c) above, and any property obtained by the exercise of those rights;

(b) any shares issued or disposed of as mentioned in paragraph 5(2) above;

(c) any shares issued or disposed of, or to which a member becomes entitled, as mentioned in paragraph 5(3) or (4) above, and any interest in the settled property constituted by those shares;

(d) any payment in lieu of a qualifying benefit falling within paragraphs (a) to (c) above;

(e) any distribution made in pursuance of section 100(2)(b) of the Building Societies Act 1986.

(4) "Member" has the same meaning in this paragraph as in paragraph 5 above.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Mr. Chris Smith: This amendment brings a substantial new section into schedule 10. It relates to the provisions for the transfer of building societies from mutual societies into public limited companies. As I made plain some hours ago, the Opposition remain deeply unhappy about the prospects of building societies converting and we remain strongly opposed to the rush with which one society, the Abbey National, has decided to propose conversion to its members.

However, one of the points that we made in Committee was that the same fiscal arrangements ought to apply to the issuing of free shares in a created public limited company upon conversion, as the Government were originally proposing. The Government have accepted that point and are including within the provisions, by means of the amendment, the issuing of free shares. That is a sensible move. Although we remain deeply sceptical about the entire process of conversion, we none the less think that within that process the Government's proposal in the amendment is sensible.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 11

Post-Consolidation Amendments

Amendment made: No. 103, in page 154, line 31, at end insert—

'17A. In section 155(2) of that Act for "282(1) and (2)" there shall be substituted "282".'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

New schedule

'Exceptions from Rule in Section 65(1)

Cases where rule does not apply

1.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) below, section 65(1) of this Act shall not apply in relation to a company which, immediately before the commencement date—

(a) was carrying on business;

(b) was not resident in the United Kingdom, having ceased to be so resident in pursuance of a Treasury consent; and

(c) where that consent was a general consent, was taxable in a territory outside the United Kingdom.

(2) If any time on or after the commencement date a company falling within sub-paragraph (1) above—

(a) ceases to carry on business; or

(b) where the Treasury consent there referred to was a general consent, ceases to be taxable in a territory outside the United Kingdom,

section 65(1) of this Act shall apply in relation to the company after that time or after the end of the transitional period, whichever is the later.

(3) If at any time on or after the commencement date a company falling within sub-paragraph (1) above becomes resident in the United Kingdom, section 65(1) of this Act shall apply in relation to the company after that time.

2.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) below, section 65(1) of this Act shall not apply in relation to a company which—

(a) carried on business at any time before the commencement date;

(b) ceases to be resident in the United Kingdom at any time on or after that date in pursuance of a Treasury consent; and

(c) is carrying on business immediately after that time.

(2) If at any time after it ceases to be resident in the United Kingdom a company falling within sub-paragraph (1) above ceases to carry on a business, section 65(1) of this Act shall apply in relation to the company after that time or after the end of the transitional period, whichever is the later.

(3) If at any time after it ceases to be resident in the United Kingdom a company falling within sub-paragraph (1) above becomes resident in the United Kingdom, section 65(1) of this Act shall apply in relation to the company after that time.

Cases where rule does not apply until end of transitional period

3.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) below, in relation to a company which—

(a) carried on business at any time before the commencement date;

(b) was not resident in the United Kingdom immediately before that date; and

(c) is not a company falling within paragraph 1(1) above,

section 65(1) of this Act shall not apply until after the end of the transitional period.

(2) If at any time on or after the commencement date a company falling within sub-paragraph (1) above becomes resident in the United Kingdom, section 65(1) of this Act shall apply in relation to the company after that time.

4.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, in relation to a company which—

(a) carried on business at any time before the commencement date;

(b) ceases to be resident in the United Kingdom at any time on or after that date in pursuance of a Treasury consent; and

(c) is not a company falling within paragraph 2(1) above,

section 65(1) of this Act shall not apply until after the end of the transitional period.

(2) If at any time after it ceases to be resident in the United Kingdom a company falling within sub-paragraph (1) above becomes resident in the United Kingdom, section 65(1) of this Act shall apply in relation to the company after that time.

Supplemental

5.—(1) In this Schedule—

"the commencement date" means the date of the coming into force of this Schedule;

"general consent" means a consent under any section to which sub-paragraph (2) below applies given generally within the meaning of subsection (4) of that section;

"taxable" means liable to tax on income by reason of domicile, residence or place of management;

"the transitional period" means the period of five years beginning with the commencement date;

"Treasury consent" means a consent under any section to which sub-paragraph (2) below applies given for the purposes of subsection (1)(a) of that section.

(2) This sub-paragraph applies to the following sections (restrictions on the migration etc. of companies), namely—

section 765 of the Taxes Act 1988;

section 482 of the Taxes Act 1970;

section 468 of the Income Tax Act 1952; and

section 36 of the Finance Act 1951.

(3) Any question which arises under any of the provisions of this Schedule shall be determined without regard to the provision made by section 65(1) of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Schedule

'DEFERRED CHARGES ON GAINS BEFORE 31ST MARCH 1982

Reduction of deduction or gain

1. Where this Schedule applies—

(a) in a case within paragraph 2 below, the amount of the deduction referred to in that paragraph, and

(b) in a case within paragraph 3 below, the amount of the gain referred to in that paragraph,

shall be one half of what it would be apart from this Schedule.

Charges rolled-over or held-over

2.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, this Schedule applies on a disposal, not being a no gain/no loss disposal, of an asset on or after 6th April 1988 if—

(a) the person making the disposal acquired the asset after 31st March 1982,

(b) a deduction falls to be made by virtue of any of the enactments specified in sub-paragraph (3) below from the expenditure which is allowable in computing the amount of any gain accruing on the disposal, and

(c) the deduction is attributable (whether directly or indirectly and whether in whole or in part) to a chargeable gain accruing on the disposal before 6th April 1988 of an asset acquired before 31st March 1982 by the person making that disposal.

(2) This Schedule does not apply where, by reason of the previous operation of this Schedule, the amount of the decuction is less than it otherwise would be.

(3) The enactments referred to in sub-paragraph (1) above are—

(a) section 21(4) and (5) of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 (roll-over where replacement asset acquired after receipt of compensation or insurance money;

(b) section 111A of that Act (roll-over where replacement land acquired on compulsory acquisition of other land);

(c) section 115 of that Act (roll-over where replacement asset acquired on disposal of business asset

(d) section 123 of that Act (roll-over where shares acquired on disposal of business to company);

(e) section 126 of that Act (hold-over where business asset acquired by gift); and

(f) section 79 of the Finance Act 1980 (hold-over where asset acquired by gift).

Postponed charges

3.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, this Schedule applies where—

(a) by virtue or any of the enactments specified in sub-paragraph (2) below a gain is treated as accruing in consequence of an event occurring on or after 6th April 1988, and

(b) the gain is attributable (whether directly or indirectly and whether in whole or in part) to the disposal before 6th April 1988 of an asset acquired before 31st March 1982 by the person making that disposal.

(2) The enactments referred to in sub-paragraph (1) above are—

(a) section 268A of the Taxes Act 1970 (postponement of charge where securities acquired in exchange for business acquired by non-resident company);

(b) section 278(3) of that Act (charge on company leaving group in respect of asset acquired from another member of same group);

(c) section 84 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 (postponement of charge where gilts acquired on compulsory acquisition of shares);

(d) section 111B(3) of that Act (postponement of charge where depreciating asset acquired on compulsory acquisition of land);

(e) section 117(2) of that Act (postponement of charge where depreciating asset acquired as replacement for business asset);

(f) section 79 of the Finance Act 1981 (activation of charge rolled over under section 79 of the Finance Act 1980 on emigration of donee); and

(g) paragraph 10 of Schedule 13 to the Finance Act 1984 (postponement of charge on reorganisation etc. involving acquisition of qualifying corporate bonds).

(3) Where a gain is treated as accruing by virtue of section 278(3) of the Taxes Act 1970 this Schedule applies only if the asset was acquired by the chargeable company (within the meaning of section 278) before 6th April 1988.

Previous no gain/no loss disposals

4. Where—

(a) a person makes a disposal of an asset which he acquired on or after 31st March 1982, and

(b) the disposal by which he acquired the asset and any previous disposal of the asset on or after 31st March 1982 was a no gain/no loss disposal,

he shall be treated for the purposes of paragraphs 2(1)(c) and 3(1)(b) above as having acquired the asset before 31st March 1982.

5.—(1) Sub-paragraph (2) below applies where—

(a) on or after 6th April 1988 a person makes a disposal of an asset which he acquired on or after 31st March 1982.

(b) the disposal by which he acquired the asset was a no gain/no loss disposal, and

(c) a deduction falling to be made as mentioned in paragraph (b) of sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph (2) above which was attributable as mentioned in paragraph (c) of that sub-paragraph was made—

(i) on that disposal, or

(ii) where one or more earlier no gain/no loss disposals of the asset have been made on or after 31st March 1982 and since the last disposal of the asset which was not a no gain/no loss disposal, on any such earlier disposal.

(2) where this sub-paragraph applies the deduction shall be treated for the purposes of paragraph 2 above as falling to be made on the disposal mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(a) above and not on the no gain/no loss disposal.

6. For the purposes of this Schedule "no gain/no loss disposal" has the same meaning as in paragraph 1 of Schedule 7 to this Act.

Assets derived from other assets

7. The references in paragraphs 2(1)(c) and 3(1)(b) above to the disposal of an asset acquired by a person before 31st March 1982 include references to the disposal of an asset which was not acquired by the person before that date if its value is derived from another asset which was so acquired and of which account is to be taken in relation to the disposal under section 36 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

Claims

8.—(1) No relief shall be given under this Schedule unless a claim is made—

(a) in the case of a gain treated as accruing by virtue of section 278(3) of the Taxes Act 1970 to a company which ceases to be a member of a group, within the period of two years beginning at the end of the accounting period which ends when the company ceases to be a member of the group,

(b) in any other case, within the period of two years beginning at the end of the year of assessment or accounting period in which the disposal in question is made, or the gain in question is treated as accruing,

or within such longer period as the Board may by notice in writing allow.

(2) A claim under sub-paragraph (1) above shall be supported by such particulars as the inspector may require for the purpose of establishing entitlement to relief under this Schedule and the amount of relief due.'—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 12

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 65, in page 158, line 3, at end insert—

'1970 c.9.	The Taxes Management Act 1970.	In section 18, in subsection (1), the words "other than interest to which subsection (4) below applies" and subsection (4).'

No. 66, in page 159, line 58, column 3, after 'Schedule 29,', insert—

'in paragraph 7, sub-paragraphs (1) and (3) and'.

No. 27, in page 161, line 31, column 3, leave out from beginning to end of line 34 and insert—

'Section 67(3).'.

No. 28, in page 161, line 35, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 108, in paragraph 1(b) of Schedule D, the reference to Schedule B.

In section 109(2), in Case VI, the reference to Schedule B.'.

No. 29, in page 162, line 20, column 3, leave out from beginning to end of line 22 and insert—

'Section 15(3).'

No. 30, in line 23, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 18, in subsection (1), in paragraph (b) of Schedule D, and in subsection (3), in Case VI, the reference to Schedule B.'—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Short Speeches

1.16 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That—

(1) Mr. Speaker may announce at the commencement of public business that, because of the number of Members wishing to speak in a debate on one of the matters specified in paragraph (2) of this Order, he will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock on Monday to Thursday sittings, and between half-past eleven o'clock and one o'clock on Friday sittings, to speak for not more than ten minutes; and whenever Mr. Speaker has made such an announcement he may, between those hours, direct any Member who has spoken for ten minutes in such a debate to resume his seat forthwith.

(2) This Order shall apply to debates on:

(a) the second reading of public bills;

(b) matters selected under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) for consideration on allotted Opposition days;

(c) Motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown; and

(d) Motions for an Address in answer to Her Majesty's Speech.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I announce to the House that I have selected amendments (a), (b), (c) and (e). I suggest that we have a general debate on the motion in the name of the Leader of the House. I will ask the hon. Members concerned to move their amendments at the end. Is that agreed?

Mr. Wakeham: I will set an example and be brief.

Before commenting on the amendments called it might be of help to the House if I were to give a sketch of the background to the motion, and what I believe to be its advantages.

Following a report by the Procedure Committee in 1978, an experiment was held in the 1979-80 Session, whereby during the Second Reading of Bills, Mr. Speaker was able to apply a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm. However, no assessment was ever made of the experiment, and it duly lapsed.

A second experiment was carried out during the 1984-85 Session. This experiment went slightly wider than the previous one: the debates in which speeches could be limited to 10 minutes were extended to include Opposition days and Government motions, as well as Second Readings; and the hours during which you, Mr. Speaker, could implement the rule were between 6 pm and 8 pm or between 7 pm and 9 pm on Mondays to Thursdays, and between 11.30 am and 1 pm on Fridays. During the Session the temporary Standing Order was applied 24 times, after which the Procedure Committee subsequently reported that the experiment had been a useful and successful one, and recommended the continuation of the temporary Standing Order for a further Session.

The House did not agree to this until February 1986, and the Order came into force for the rest of the 1985-86 Session, during which it was applied six times. Again, the Procedure Committee monitored the experiment and this time recommended that the temporary Order be made permanent. Today's motion seeks to give effect to that recommendation and in moving it, I should like to thank the Committee and its chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), for their work.

I propose just one alteration. Previous experiments did not include the debate on the Address in the list of those occasions when you, Mr. Speaker, might decide to restrict speeches. This was because the experiments, being sessional orders, were not usually approved until after the debate on the Address had taken place. I have added this debate to the list. As a major debate on the Floor, it is similar to Government motions and Opposition days in nature, and it would seem odd if it were not covered by the Standing Order I propose.

The pros and cons of a short speech rule were well explained in the Procedure Committee reports after each of the two experiments in the last Parliament, and are generally known in the House. I do not need to rehearse them fully now. The advantages are not revolutionary—not every Member who wishes can be called in a debate when the rule is in operation, but from the Chair's point of view, the rule does guarantee scope to call at least 12 Members between 6 pm and 8 pm or 7 pm and 9 pm.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Am I correct in saying that this is the first time that this Order is being made permanent rather than experimental, and that it will be incorporated, as it is on the Order Paper, in the Standing Orders?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. It is the first time. The previous two occasions were experimental and were considered afterwards by the Select Committee on Procedure, whose recommendation we are seeking to implement tonight.

Moreover, judging from the experiment, the rule seems to have had a salutary effect on those speaking both before and after the two-hour period. They also have tended to keep their speeches shorter. On the debit side, there was perhaps a greater reluctance by some Members to give way when making a short speech, but interventions nevertheless continued to occur and the character of debate was not greatly affected. In any case, I do not think it practical to implement the kind of complicated stopwatch approach that the amendments in the names of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) would necessitate.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we are not talking so much about the stopwatch approach as about allowing you, Mr. Speaker, some discretion on the subject of interventions?

Mr. Wakeham: The wording of the motion gives you, Mr. Speaker, some discretion in deciding when to bring in the rule. The motion states that Mr. Speaker

"may, between those hours, direct any Member who has spoken for ten minutes in such a debate to resume his seat forthwith."

It does not state that he has to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I presume that you would be reasonable and would allow a Member making an important speech to finish his sentence, but that is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, and not for me.

This is an essentially modest proposal, for a rule to be applied by you, Mr. Speaker, at your discretion, when you consider that the number of Members wishing to speak in a debate warrants it, and to be applied for a period of two hours only. If it were to extend to all Back-Bench speeches, along the lines of the amendment being proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I would not be proposing it. I consider it essential that Back Benchers should continue to be able to speak for longer than 10 minutes, if they wish to do so, perhaps because they are spokesmen of other parties, regions or committees, or because they have a particular constituency or personal interest, or a distinctive and complicated case to put forward.

I understand the reasons behind the amendment in the name of the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn), but, if we are to preserve flexibility, I believe that it is necessary for you, Mr. Speaker, to have the option of calling for short speeches during either of the two-hour periods proposed. I have no doubt that you will take into account, where you feel it to be necessary, the desire of the spokesmen of parties other than the official Opposition to speak before the rule comes into operation.

I recognise that the proposal will not find favour with those who argue against any restriction on the length of time a Member may address the House. Equally, others, as is evidenced by one of the amendments tabled to the motion, are pressing for the ten minutes rule to be extended to almost all speeches. Both my predecessor and myself have tried long and hard to find a solution that is generally acceptable and I believe that the motion before us is the nearest we can come to it. It is now for the House to decide.

Mr. Speaker, the House has now had three experiments on short speeches, the latter two being the subject of careful assessment and reporting by the Procedure Committee. The experiments were generally felt by the House to be a success and I believe that the time has now come to make this modest proposal into a Standing Order of the House.

1.23 am

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I shall begin on a sour note by saying that, if anything shows that some of our procedures need to be changed, it is the fact that we are here at 1.23 am, when the nation sleeps, still rabbiting on about various matters. In many respects, our procedures are utterly bewildering to people outside. They do little to ensure democratic control of the Government and I look forward to other changes than the modest ones that we are considering tonight. I am in favour of short speeches and of the motion and, in making a speech on short speeches, I shall ensure that my remarks are short.

I am a sceptic about excessive complications in our Standing Orders. It is important that not only hon. Members should understand them but the public too, particularly if we are to allow the cameras into this place. Therefore, I do not want to see excessive rigidity in the way in which we conduct our debates.

The merit of the proposal is that it is restricted. It has been tested twice in this form in recent years and it has not drastically altered the character of debate in the House. The anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that any restriction on speeches would limit interventions is legitimate, but in practice such restrictions have not altered the character of debates that much. The third report of the Select Committee makes the point that it is important for everyone to bear in mind that we should try to preserve the character of debate, which involves exchanges which enliven a debate which could otherwise be rather dull.

The experiment has shown that the proposal has the clear advantage of enabling more hon. Members to speak in important debates. The increase is not dramatic—three or four, or perhaps more, in a Second Reading debate. We all know the great frustration of not being able to speak. We also know the frustration of having to explain to bewildered constituents why we have not spoken on, say, the Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill, in vain pointing out the simple arithmetic that there are 650 hon. Members and, with luck, about 20 will be able to speak. We are an unusually large Parliament—I think that we are the largest in the Western world—so pressure on time is severe.

The proposal is limited and it has been tested. It may well be desirable to extend it in future. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is seeking an extension of the 10-minute rule and there may be good grounds for that at a future date. However, at this stage the right thing would be to do as the Select Committee on Procedure has suggested.

Some hon. Members suggest that 10 minutes is a rather severe restriction. I have spent some time in an industry where 20 seconds is considered a generous allotment of time—scriptwriting for television—and working at the scripting rate of three words a second and 20 seconds per promotion, as hon. Members who are familiar with the Finance Bill will know, means 60 words, and 60 words in prime time is worth most other forms of communication available to any of us.

Anyone who can do the arithmetic will know that a 10-minute speech at three words a second is about 1,800 words. I tend to think that any hon. Member who cannot put his case in 1,800 words probably does not have a precisely thought-out case. I hope that I have managed to contain my speech to 1,800 words and have not badly overrun. That is about the number of words on the front page of most newspapers, give or take a little. It is a lot of words and it is important——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There are about six on the front page of *The Sun*.

Mr. Grocott: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, but I was talking about newspapers.

The advantage of the proposal is that it may well lead to sharper, more precise, contributions. It may make our debates more interesting to the outside world. Ten minutes is a long time, and I am in favour of the proposal.

1.28 am

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I welcome the proposed Standing Order at long last. It has been on the Order Paper for nearly 18 months. I hope that some of the recommendations in future reports from the Procedure Committee will come before the House a little more quickly, particularly if we can debate them shortly and precisely.

The Procedure Committee has gone to a great deal of trouble especially to ensure that the character of debates is not altered. The former right hon. Member for South Down and for Wolverhampton, South-West, Mr. Powell, believed that the experiment would affect the complete character of debates and he urged people to vote against the proposal when it came before the House some time ago. However, the proposal has not altered the debates. There is flexibility open to Mr. Speaker as he can allow an hon. Member to speak for a moment or two longer than the 10 minutes—even though the rule is there—if the hon. Member has allowed interventions or if it is obvious that something needs to be said. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House stressed that point.

I believe that the proposal offers a major benefit to the Chair. While the Chair is in a difficult position because it cannot speak for itself, the Committee took advice from occupants of the Chair who told us that the proposal was a useful method to ensure that a few more hon. Members —only a few more, as this is not a revolutionary proposal —perhaps two, three or four more, could speak.

Mr. Dalyell: With regard to the character of the House, the hon. Gentleman's memory and mine go back 25 years to when he was the hon. Member for Reading. Why were the debates in the House massively more attended then than now? Is the hon. Gentleman sure that the character of the House has not been altered?

Sir Peter Emery: The Committee studied that point. If we look back long enough we discover that the speeches of the Chancellor of the Exchequer were thought to be quite inadequate unless they ran for five or six hours. I do not believe that we have lost anything in relation to the Budget speech. I remember when I was the hon. Member for Reading that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would speak for about two hours. He would wait until the market had finished. He would rise at 3.30 pm and not finish until 5·15 pm. Sensibly, the Chancellor's speech now runs only for about an hour. I do not believe that that has altered the character of the House; I think that it has improved it.

I urge the House to accept the recommendation from the Procedure Committee without the amendments. The most important amendment—with no disrespect to the others—is that in name of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I understand that the minor parties might be concerned if they believed that their spokesmen might be limited in a major debate in which they wanted to make specific points because a statement had been made which delayed the start of debate until 5 pm. Half an hour might be allowed to the two Front Benches and at 6 pm Mr. Speaker might remind the House that he had announced earlier that the short speeches rule would apply. The minor parties would then discover that their spokesmen would be limited to only 10 minutes. I do not know when that situation arose during the experiment.

I believe that in many instances the House works on the good will of all sides working with the Chair. I believe that in the situation that I have described, the Chair is likely to be entirely sympathetic if a major point had to be made. The minor parties' worry, which the Committee considered fully, exists more in theory than reality. If it was found that that was not the case and there was a major objection, I am certain that the Procedure Committee would be willing to look at the matter again. On the whole, I believe that that circumstance would not arise.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is saying that the matter is at the discretion of the Chair. He does not agree with my amendments, but they come within the discretion of the Chair. They do not pose any dangers for minority parties.

Sir Peter Emery: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says.

The Committee accepted that there are several occasions on which it is necessary for an hon. Member to have more than 10 minutes to make a speech. I have implied that. We do not wish to leave the decision on which speech shall or shall not be of a certain length purely to the discretion of the Chair. We are trying to give guidance to the Chair and suggest that exceptions will be limited and should not worry the House. The Select Committee considered that there will be times when an hon. Member who has a specific or constituency point to make and who needs longer than 10 minutes should not be given prime time—in other words, before 8 o'clock. If the ten-minute rule can apply from 6 o'clock until 7.50 pm, an hon. Member who must make a lengthy constituency point will have a chance to do so between 8 o'clock and 9 o'clock, which is not prime time.

We do not see why an hon. Member who wishes to make a long speech must always be called before the ten-minute rule applies from 7 o'clock until 9 o'clock. It is perhaps a convoluted point, but it is a real one. That is why we considered that the Chair should have the discretion to call an hon. Member from 6 o'clock until 8 o'clock, rather than only from 7 o'clock until 9 o'clock.

This matter will be particularly important when the televising experiment occurs. Many more hon. Members will want to be called to speak. Therefore, it is even more important for the Chair to have the discretion to use the rule sensibly and sparingly. I hope that the House will support the Procedure Committee's recommendations and adopt the measure as a Standing Order from now on.

1.37 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said, the amendment in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) is directed to the difficulty that those of us in a so-called minority party—not the major Opposition party—fear might arise if the Standing Order were to come into being, with the possibility of there being short speeches between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm. As has been said, there may be days on which there will be statements, points of order, Standing Order No. 20 applications, and ten-minute Bills. It has been argued that my party's contributions could possibly be limited, if the ten-minute rule came into effect at 6 pm. It was well recognised in the Procedure Committee's report that there is often a more general argument to deploy, and that

[Mr. James Wallace]

should not be restricted. The hon. Member for Honiton rightly said that he could not recall an occasion during the experiment when that had happened.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, one occasion when the rule was to apply from 6 pm, in the days when I perhaps had a greater community of interest with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). On that occasion, it appeared that there was an attempt by a previous speaker to carry his speech over into the 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock period. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) persuaded you, Mr. Speaker, to resume the Chair. You announced that, rather than running from 6 pm till 8 pm, the period would be from 7 pm to 9 pm.

From what I have heard tonight, I think that there is a recognition in the House that the minority parties have a general case to deploy, and it has been useful to get that on the record. Although we cannot ask you to give any undertakings, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you have heard what has been said by other hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) argued that his amendment would not stop the Chair exercising its discretion to allow some flexibility to a minority party spokesman, someone with a particular constituency interest or, for that matter, a Select Committee member. When there is great pressure on the Chair from hon. Members wishing to speak, there are always many who are disappointed at the end of the day. The Chair would be put in an invidious position if it had to decide who should and who should not have a longer time in which to speak within the 10-minute period. For that reason, I do not particularly agree with the hon. Gentleman's amendment.

Nevertheless, I do not propose to push my amendment to a vote, as I feel that it has achieved its purpose of focusing attention on the position of minority parties. I am encouraged by what has been said, and I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, will have taken note of it.

1.41 am

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I am very sympathetic to the purposes behind the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to support it. However, I find it more difficult to follow his logic when he says that he believes that the introduction of ten-minute speeches would have no material effect on the willingness of hon. Members to accept interventions.

It is obviously desirable for more hon. Members to be able to take part in debates, and it is equally desirable that we should all have an inducement to be as precise and succinct as possible. I shall try to do that this evening, even without a ten-minute limitation.

But it is, I feel, of major importance that nothing should be done to damage what I believe—if I can say so without pretentiousness, having sat in the House for only a year—is one of the great qualities that distinguishes this place from so many other parliamentary assemblies throughout the world. Many amount merely to ceremonial auditoria, with an endless succession of set speeches delivered in set times and in a set form. One of the great qualities of this House is the spontaneity—and hence, often the unpredictability—of our debates. There can be cut and thrust; there can be unrehearsed interventions and unprepared replies; there can be clashes of ideas and hon. Members can think on their feet.

I find it difficult to believe that hon. Members would still be prepared to give way to interventions, and that debates could remain as spontaneous, if speeches were limited to 10 minutes. I would be extremely wary of taking interventions if I had planned a speech that I expected to last for eight or nine minutes, because there would be a good chance that I would not be able to finish it in the way that I had intended. In extreme cases, unless an amendment were accepted along the lines that I propose, hon. Members might find that they were never able to rise to their feet again and complete their speeches at all.

There are two arguments against an amendment such as mine. One is that it is technically not feasible to extend the time to take account of interventions. I have not heard tha argument developed very credibly as yet, although I remain open to persuasion. It seems to me that it would be possible for the Clerk to advise you, Mr. Speaker, or your Deputies, of the time taken by interventions. Perhaps you or one of your Deputies could give an hon. Member a warning one minute before his time was up. If there had been interventions, he might find it difficult to know where he stood simply by watching the clock. That is not infeasible.

The second alleged problem is one that I too have some difficulty in understanding. It is said that if an amendment along the lines of the one that I have suggested were put into effect, there would be a danger of filibusters. It is argued that hon. Members could avoid a ten-minute rule by persuading their colleagues deliberately to intervene to prolong the debate. The House has lived with the danger of filibuster, and indeed its existence, for a long time. I have no doubt that some of the experts, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), could tell us for how many centuries the danger has existed. It is one that could only be lessened if there were a ten-minute speech rule. I believe that the change would be only for the better.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman should be careful about the use of "danger". Parliamentary time is the only weapon that an Opposition has under our system. If ever the hon. Gentleman goes into opposition and he has a cause, he will be grateful for parliamentary time. The use of that time is not necessarily filibustering.

Mr. Davies: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, which reinforces my argument. The risk or possibility of debates being extended by speeches being extended unpredictably is not necessarily undesirable.

Before the House takes a decision on this issue, I hope that it will consider carefully whether there is not a means—perhaps along the lines that I have suggested, or along different lines—whereby we can get the best of both worlds, which is to say shorter speeches and all the benefits that they will bring along with retaining the essential quality of spontaneity of the House.

1.48 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There is a good attendance in the Chamber, given that it is nearly 1.50 am. There has been much criticism in the newspapers about our sparsely attended debates, and usually the criticism comes from journalists whose only grasp of

history is the knowledge of who bought the previous round of drinks. The criticism tends to reveal a lack of appreciation of the nature of the modern Parliament. We do not sit in the Chamber as independent Members listening to the ebb and flow of the debate, making up our minds when the Division Bells ring how we shall vote. A good speech might give us pleasure but it will rarely change anything in this place. We know that we are here because of our party labels. Once we are here, either because of the whipping system that operates within the parties, or because of our own ideological reference points, voting patterns are highly predictable. There is the occasional exception, but it is the exception that proves the rule.

There is not a political need for long speeches to attempt to influence the outcome of a vote. There might be good reasons, however, for long speeches in circumstances and on occasions other than those specified in the motion, but these will not be affected by the proposed change in the Standing Orders. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said in an intervention, the filibuster—the use of time—is the only weapon that the Opposition have.

I have in mind some highly controversial private Bills that have been before the House. Members have used their right to make long speeches to try to thwart such Bills. It is a legitimate tactic. It might not be liked by those who are sponsoring such a Bill, but it is a legitimate use of parliamentary procedure. That is not affected in any way by the motion. This morning, we are talking about debates in which there is a great deal of pressure from hon. Members to speak. In such circumstances it becomes extremely frustrating to sit there like Cicero or Demosthenes, burning to speak while some boring old fartbag goes on for hours and hours and rambles on endlessly.

There is no one as selfish as a Member of Parliament with a very long speech whose time has come. We have all had to suffer that. There are times when I believe that nothing is too horrid to happen to such a miscreant. I would want you, Mr. Speaker, to have much greater powers, perhaps a series of levers and trap doors which would send the individual plunging into the cellar, or perhaps they should be forced to learn by heart the collected works of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). He is not here, and it is always good to be rude about someone who is not here.

There is general agreement that ten minutes is long enough for most speeches. Most people would say that that is nine and a half minutes too long. As George Eliot wrote, "Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving us wordy evidence of the fact." If Abraham Lincoln knocked off the Gettysburg address in three minutes, quite frankly, hon. Members with three times longer to make a point have ample time indeed.

My amendments seek to give the Chair maximum flexibility in announcing the ten-minutes rule. It is a matter of discretion for the Chair. It is nothing to be worried about. Under the amendments the Chair can exercise discretion and announce that there will be a ten-minutes rule at any particular time. Of course, that will enable the Chair to structure and order our debates. Not everyone who wishes to speak in a debate actually writes in to the Speaker's Office and gives notice of a desire to speak. It might well be only when the debate starts that the occupant of the Chair realises how many hon. Members wish to speak, or during a debate a large number of hon. Members are suddenly moved to speak. That would allow the occupant of the Chair to say, "In view of the number of hon. Members now wishing to speak, I intend to operate a ten-minutes rule."

We are not laying ourselves open to any danger whatsoever; we are saying that we elect a Chair and the Chair is there to exercise discretion on our behalf and allow as many hon. Members as possible to speak.

I see no reason to restrict the ten-minutes rule to certain time bands. Clearly, we are here to get what we are saying heard and detected outside. In terms of securing media coverage, that oftens means that the more points we can get in before 6 pm, the more likely we are to find the odd sober journalist capable of writing.

In my second amendment, I have accepted the need to allow Front Benchers winding up longer than the ten minutes. However, having listened to some recent winding-up speeches, quite frankly I believe that they do not all deserve such generous treatment. It is still at the discretion of the Chair. Both my amendments give discretion to the Chair. That means that Mr. Speaker, or whoever occupies the Chair, may direct an hon. Member to cease a speech. I hope that the amendments, which I have tried to move in a short and sincere fashion—which is a reasonably good description of myself—commend themselves to the House.

1.53 am

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): First, I congratulate the Chairman and the Procedure Committee on their work now and over the years, as this measure has taken a very long time. In 1966, the order was debated, but not moved. I and my colleagues then tabled early-day motions entitled "Opportunities for Back Benchers" from 1971 to 1984 when the experiment was introduced. It was unfortunate that it was only an experiment, as I believe that it has proved a great success. It is particularly important because the number of parties and, of course, the number of Conservative Members have increased.

As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has said, it is important that your discretion, Mr. Speaker, should still exist and that you can use it within the prohibited hours. It is almost impossible for people not to say what they want to within 10 minutes. I am sure that I may have exceeded that sometimes because of interventions. I can see that adding injury time for interventions is difficult. However, it would be up to you, Mr. Speaker, to allow the hon. Member extra time for interventions. I am told by the Clerks that it would be difficult to time the interventions and add injury time, and I accept that.

When I first came to the House in 1959 there were few Back-Bench Privy Councillors. Now, almost every other Member is a Privy Councillor. I once said to a Privy Councillor, "You are lucky now because you will be able to speak when you like." He said, "That would be an abuse of my power." It annoys many Back Benchers who have sat here for hours that a Privy Councillor can walk into the Chamber and without warning, within two or three speakers, he is able to address the House. That will have to be looked at.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you have been giving a little less privilege to Privy Councillors. "Erskine May" lays down the rights of a Privy Councillor but that is out of date because of the number of Privy Councillors on the Back Benches.

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

After all these years we have at last reached the point where the House has to decide whether to adopt the order permanently. This is the first chance that the House has had to do that, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has confirmed. Since 1987, a successful experiment has not been able to be operated simply because we have been unable to find time to debate the measure. I am sure that the experiment was a success. The ten minutes rule will give more hon. Members a chance to speak. I do not think that television has anything to do with the matter. There is simply more pressure on you, Mr. Speaker, because more hon. Members wish to speak and express their opinions. If they cannot do that in 10 minutes, they should not do it at all.

1.58 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): It is sad that we are now proposing to put the experiment into the Standing Orders permanently without having tried one or two other variations to see whether we could have done better than what I believe is a somewhat cumbersome order.

I think that everyone agrees that what would be most effective would be if every hon. Member showed self-restraint. We all know from experience that that does not happen. Every time, somebody—often more than one person—abuses the request to keep speeches to a reasonable length so that more hon. Members can take part.

If we are to have restraint, we should try to organise it in as flexible a fashion as possible. The most effective way is to confer greater powers on the Chair. I support the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Let me remind the House of the greatest abuse. At around 8 o'clock, calculations are done; the Whips move from side to side and it is worked out that perhaps six or seven more hon. Members can be allowed to speak. They will probably have been present throughout the debate. Instead of keeping to the time allocated, one of those hon. Members may go on at length so that one or two of the others who have sat through the whole debate get squeezed out.

The great advantage in the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West would be that the Chair could announce at any time that speeches were to be kept to 10 minutes. That would make it easier to formalise what the Whips try to do at the moment, which is to allow a given number of hon. Members to speak at the end of the debate.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend is using terms that were never used years ago. The term used then was probably to the effect that it was for the convenience of all that the arrangements were made. Does he remember how Mr. Speaker Lloyd used to remind us that the Chair had a memory? Would not that memory help to reinforce the informal arrangements, which often work quite well?

Mr. Bennett: A possible alternative might be a blacklist or a memory of those who abuse the system.

We should be introducing a greater flexibility into the system, and we should have tried several other experiments. For example, we could have allowed the Chair to introduce a ten-minute limit at any time during a debate, as it became clear how many hon. Members wished to speak. I would also argue that a time limit other than 10 minutes may be appropriate on occasions—especially towards the end of the debate when we may be trying to enable several hon. Members to speak.

The members of the Procedure Committee may not be the best people to judge whether the experiment was of the best. By that Committee's very nature, those who serve on it tend to be hon. Members with considerable experience of the House. They therefore tend not to be called late in a debate. I suspect that not many hon. Members who serve on the Procedure Committee spent much time sitting in the Chamber during the experiment.

Although it was a very big plus that more hon. Members were called in debates during the experiment, there were at least two distinct disadvantages. First, many more hon. Members went to the Chair pleading to be called before the point at which the time limit came into operation. That does not seem to me to have been particularly helpful, and on at least one or two occasions hon. Members made pressing scenes in an attempt to be called early in the debate. It would have been far better had the Chair been able to make it clear that the ten-minute limit would apply as soon as the opening speeches from the Front Benches, and perhaps from one of the minority parties, had been made.

The second major disadvantage was that the experiment cut down interventions. Hon. Members felt that they would get their 10 minutes without being granted injury time for interventions and they therefore did not give way. It has been emphasised that the proposal before us provides flexibility. However, I think that it would be far better if the amendment in my name was accepted, to make it clear that injury time would be given. If it is possible for us to time the two minutes for Tellers to be named and the eight minutes for the doors to be locked, it should be fairly easy to time a 30-second intervention in a speech and to allow for that. If we want to have real debate, it would be better to encourage interventions, and that should be done.

There is also a negative reason why we should not make it too difficult for hon. Members to intevene. That is simply that if an intervention is not accepted, hon. Members tend to shout their remarks from a sedentary position. That is not a particularly desirable development.

The practice has been creeping into the House that when an hon. Member refuses to give way, a spurious point of order is raised into which the intervention is worked, sometimes with ingenuity but sometimes with little ingenuity. They waste even more time because you, Mr. Speaker, have to point out that it is not a point of order for the Chair. For both those reasons it is important to make it clear in any permanent change that we do not wish to discourage interventions.

There is the question whether interventions from both sides or only the opposite side should qualify for injury time. My amendment (d) seeks to allocate injury time only for interventions from the opposite side of the House because that encourages debate and interchange. On occasions an intervention from one's own side is simply a device for three hon. Members to get their view on the record rather than one. Sometimes when two or three hon. Members are waiting to speak the first agrees to accept an

intervention from the others. Therefore, it would be worth while to make it clear that injury time should be given for genuine debate, which is usually across the Chamber.

I hope that the House will question whether we should put the proposal in our Standing Orders rather than continue experimenting with one or two imaginative options. If such provision is to be made permanent in our Standing Orders, I hope that we shall spell out that 10 minutes should not discourage interventions.

2.6 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): It cannot have escaped your notice, Mr. Speaker, in the long time that you have been here that Members of Parliament are extremely generous at least in one respect: in giving others our views. As you said to us when you first welcomed us to the House, with 650 of us that tends to make a few problems for you.

I welcome the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I am sorry that I was a little late and did not hear all the earlier arguments, but it seems that there are only two arguments against it. The first is that it would diminish the rights of the Opposition, but Opposition Members who have spoken in favour of the motion made it clear that that is not the overwhelming view on their side. The second is that, because newer Members inevitably see themselves getting a smaller slice of the cake than senior Members, such as Privy Councillors, it is felt that as Members become more senior they will favour arrangements which benefit them increasingly.

There is a difference between a new Member now and a new Member as little as 10 years ago. Fifteen years ago only three parties were in Parliament, excluding one or two individual Members, whereas now there are 10. Fifteen years ago there were only three or four Committees, whereas now we have a whole structure of Select Committees and the Chairman of the relevant one is nearly always called after the Front-Bench speakers. The result is that Back Benchers' slot of the total time has got progressively less.

At the same time, for several reasons, some relating to constituency pressures and some to parliamentary pressures, hon. Members are having to spend more and more time in the Palace, which means inevitably that they are that much more anxious to speak in debates. Therefore, there is less time available, with more hon. Members trying to speak.

I have been fortunate, Mr. Speaker, in catching your eye 15 times—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—which I would not admit to if we were not so close to the end of the Session. That has been mainly because I sought to speak in debates on subjects that were not particularly popular. However, on three or four consecutive occasions some of my hon. Friends, having put a lot of work into their speeches, have tried without success to speak in debates on popular subjects in which many hon. Members wanted to speak. That is why I strongly support the motion.

I also support the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). An allowance for injury time will keep up the spirit of cut and thrust. I also support amendments (a) and (b). Giving you that extra flexibility, Mr. Speaker, in no way forces you to use it; it merely means that you can extend the rule over a longer period if you choose to do so. I urge the House to support the motion and the three amendments that I have mentioned.

2.11 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) pointed out that a speech does not often change a vote. However, there are many occasions—this debate is one —when hon. Members just contribute ideas that throw light on issues. Such speeches may not change a vote, but they may change the situation. That is an aspect of debate in this place that is sometimes forgotten. On occasions, we try to persuade. It would be a great pity if we departed too far from the idea of trying to persuade, even if unsuccessfully.

Tonight I shall not oppose the entrenchment of what has hitherto been an experiment. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was right to say that there may be other ways in which to develop this idea. I shall not oppose the motion, but it is important to ensure that we are not creating a rod for our own backs that may turn out to be longer than we had imagined. It has been said that great benefits will flow, but we know from the table that the Select Committee on Procedure has provided us with—HOC 592 of Session 1985-86—that this rule will be used on the big occasions. When there is an international crisis, for instance, views on the matter have to be ventilated—not arguments made. Hon. Members have said that two or three more hon. Members might have a chance to speak. That may be so, but is that worth the complications that may arise? Some of those complications were outlined well by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, although I do not agree with his conclusions. Television may be one.

When we talk about getting into a debate, we often mean being able to send off a paragraph to show that we said something in the House. That will become a greater temptation with television. We must be absolutely sure that this problem will not become greater.

I understand the purpose of the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, who is a living example of how easy it is for a person of ingenuity and talent to speak in this place. He shows up the false claims of hon. Members on both sides who often say they have no chance to speak. They may not be able to speak on the big occasions, but if they are as assiduous, and develop their parliamentary talents in the same way as my hon. Friend, there are all sorts of ways in which they can contribute—as he has shown. While I will not oppose the amendments, I believe that the House should be very careful, because the claimed benefits will be rather less than people suppose.

2.14 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am uncomfortable for the sort of reason that has been given by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), with whom I shared an amendment that, rightly or wrongly, was not selected.

I concede that, of course, selfishness is intolerable. It was salutary for me within a few months of coming here to be told rather witheringly by that nice man, Mr. Speaker Hylton-Foster, that I would be punished for having

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

spoken too long and kept someone else out of the debate. Speakers should be able to deliver such punishments, which is partly why we elect Speakers.

The problem is that that could spill over into something else. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South I cannot vote against the Standing Order as it stands, but what happens if people try to extend it, especially to the Committee Stage of Bills?

I say from the Back Benches, that the trouble does not only come from the Back Benches, but a lot of it comes from the Front Benches. I say quite frankly "Front Benches"—I am not just getting at Ministers. A very close personal friend of mine spoke for far too long on sport yesterday. Consequently, at 1.30 in the morning a number of us were kept out. I make no personal complaint because I had more than my share, but my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who really knows about chlorofluorocarbons, was kept out, along with other of my hon. Friends, because of unnecessarily long Front-Bench speeches. The sooner the parties tackle the Front-Bench speeches as well as the Back-Bench speeches, the better it will be for all of us.

I will be forgiven for being personal, but there are examples of occasions when those of us who had a cause —let us not dwell too much on the justice or otherwise of it—have been snuffed out at an early stage. In 1980, by keeping the House up for most of the night, I was successful in changing the policy on retrospective sanctions towards Iran. I am not saying whether it was justified or not, but I do not think that I could have done that under the present arrangements, because a Minister would have made a decision in that case. That is partly why my hon. Friend and I tabled that amendment.

I do not want to provoke unnecessary speeches from Members of the Scottish National party who are keeping a close eye on me, but at 2.15 in the morning one can be candid. The hon. Members know very well that George Cunningham, Enoch Powell and I would have found it very difficult to keep the House going for 47 days on the Scotland and Wales Bills under this dispensation, but it would certainly have been impossible if this had been allowed to spill over. Apart from the merits or demerits, this was a legitimate political act and, if we are changing a political act, we had better be clear about what we are doing.

Mr. Andrew Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that in all those examples there was not an end time limit laid down, so, in effect, anyone who wanted to speak could get in? Therefore, there would be no justification for the Chair limiting speeches. The proposals contain nothing that would do that. Those opportunities existed because there was no end time limit. No one is suggesting that it should be brought in in those circumstances.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend is right. However, he said that no one is suggesting at the moment that speeches in Committee should be limited. I started by saying that if this spills over into Committees, we are in a different ball game.

Sir Peter Emery: The Select Committee on Procedure looked at, and rejected, the concept that this rule could be extended to Committees. It is important that this should be put on record, because such an extension would be wrong.

Mr. Dalyell: That is accepted. I wish that the hon. Gentleman were right. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is right.

I think of the late 1960s when, from the position in which the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) is sitting, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), and, behind him, the late Jack Mendelson, used the House of Commons to make long speeches on Vietnam. Others may not agree, but I think that it was those speeches from those Benches that prevented Harold Wilson, who was then Prime Minister, from acceding to Lyndon Johnson's request to send what the President called a "battalion of bagpipers"—his words, not mine—to Vietnam. This was of major political importance, and an action of the House of Commons.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent has said that he is against short speeches, and if we had sat at an earlier hour he would have been here. I wish that he could have spoken for himself. He could not have done what he did, which was of crucial international importance, in the major debate to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South referred, unless he had the time to develop the argument.

Mr. Brazier: On an earlier occasion, the hon. Gentleman was courteous enough to finish his speech early to allow in the last hon. Member who wished to speak —that happened to be me. Therefore, I am surprised that he of all people should suggest that the efficacy of a speech should lie in its length. That is an amazing proposition. As we have already heard, the Gettysburg address lasted two rather than three minutes.

Mr. Dalyell: The Vietnam argument was complicated, and if one were to argue on equal terms with Michael Stewart, the then Foreign Secretary, who was an eloquent man, one had to have equal time to do so. It would have been impossible to hold the attention of the House otherwise. In those days, many people came in to hear what Jack Mendelson or a number of others were saying, because the argument was very much among members of the Government party. I do not want to be personal about this and what I say is meant in a flattering way, but I remember occasions when we debated other subjects, and Quintin Hogg, as he was then, could not, in 10 minutes, have made an argument that would sway the House of Commons and alter attitudes on penal affairs and other vital matters. To be eloquent, he had to have at least 25 minutes, and possibly longer.

Is it more important that major speeches should be made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent, Quintin Hogg, or whoever, or that three or four extra people should get in at the tail end of a debate to get their names in their local paper? I happen to think that the House of Commons is the place where people should be persuaded. We have to achieve an important balance. Those who are determined enough to get in at all costs should recognise that sometimes, on major occasions, the point of view put forward by an orator is more important than the fact that they are called to speak.

Often it is difficult to compress speeches. I give a current example. It so happens that in this morning's *Daily Mail* the banner headline is:

"Brittan back in favour—Exclusive—Maggie offers top job".

That raises all sorts of questions about the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) becoming a European Commissioner. People such as me might want to make a speech on this. We might want to ask how it is that the great job of European Commissioner should go to a man who in January 1986 for 14 days—*[Interruption.]* This is an example. For 14 days the right hon. and learned Gentleman supposedly—I repeat, supposedly—misled his senior civil servants, his Cabinet colleagues and his Prime Minister. This may be an unpopular view and I may be told quite nicely by Conservative Members not to do it, but I am afraid that it is an example. When we get to complex, sensitive matters like Westland, we need time to expose the case.

Next week, or some time soon, we shall be discussing the legislation on official secrets. I know that many Conservative Members think that what Clive Ponting did was wrong. I could never have made the case that led to all this if I had not had time. Parliamentary time is necessary to make a serious case. I do not want to draw on the patience of the House, but in a case such as——

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Is not the hon. Gentleman making a case for 10-minute speeches in that he has now spoken for 12 minutes?

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, and I must give way. I leave it like this. If one wanted to make a serious case about the appointment of one of our number as a European Commissioner, one would need more than 10 minutes to do it. On that I will sit down.

2.26 am

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I intend to be brief, but I want to offer support from this side of the House to the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on the direction in which they have pursued their comments. I came into the debate very sceptical indeed about the motion. I have listened intently to the debate. On reflection, we may have before us a motion which gets the balance right. Certainly I could not support any amendment which sought to increase the area covered by the motion. If we did so, we would be in danger of pursuing a negative, egalitarian policy on how hon. Members speak in the Chamber.

Although I have been a Member for only a short time, it has not taken me long to notice that hon. Members vary enormously in their experience, knowledge and amount of intimate detail which they can bring to bear on a topic. Often if we are talking about a complex matter, I agree with the hon. Members for Linlithgow and for Newham, South that hon. Members who have much experience of a subject can take a considerable time to build a well-structured argument and to portray to the House the cogent case that they wish to present.

In the short time that I have been here and in the debates that I have attended I can think of only one example where I have heard a speech which, if the debate had taken place under the rules which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) would like to see, might have been lost. I agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow that we do not need to measure subjectively the rights and wrongs of the contribution at hand, but my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), in the debate on the seamen's dispute, could not possibly have made his speech in 10 minutes, although he might have been able to tailor it down by five minutes or so. However, with his intimate knowledge of the dispute, being the constituency Member, if he had had to work within that constraint, both the argument and the House would have lost out, as he would not have been able to make that 20 or 30-minute contribution to a debate on which he was extremely well qualified to speak.

I do not intend to speak for 10 minutes myself. We may have the balance right on the motion, but I do not think that the proposal should be extended. I support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) on the intervention issue. Perhaps it is true to say that, if colleagues like myself, who are new to the House, sometimes feel a little put out when more senior Members have an opportunity to speak, then our turn will come. We should not therefore be too impatient, but should be reasonably relaxed about the way in which the House works in that respect.

2.30 am

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that there are too many long speeches from the Front Benches. In my previous incarnation, I did everything I could to curb them and my right hon. and learned Friend the Patronage Secretary is doing his best now.

I am grateful to everyone who has taken part in the debate. It has been a good debate and I am grateful for the support for the motion, although it has been given with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The House should heed those hon. Members who issued words of caution about going too far and I agree with virtually everything that has been said.

It would not be right to go any further than the Procedure Committee has recommended. It has considered the matter more than once. If hon. Members who have tabled amendments wish to press them, that is their right, but, if they do so, I shall certainly ask the House to reject them. To dissuade them from pressing their amendments, I should say that, if problems occur after a reasonable time, I am sure that it will be possible for the Procedure Committee to reconsider the matter. The fact that the Standing Order was there would not necessarily mean that it was there for ever and a day. I believe that it is the right proposal and that it is right to bring it into the Standing Orders, but, if there are difficulties, we shall face up to them and see what has to be done.

Mr. Dalyell: We should be clear about one point. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) were expressing a point of view about the 1960s and Vietnam, could you, Mr. Speaker, make a judgment that my right hon. Friend should be heard further? Would that be within your power, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously, it is for you, Mr. Speaker, to interpret the Standing Orders, but—if I may express a personal view—it appears clear from my motion that Mr. Speaker may direct a Member who has spoken for 10 minutes to resume his seat forthwith. The fact that the motion states that you, Mr. Speaker, may do so implies that you do not have to do so. Therefore, if you believe that it is right for an hon. Member to exceed the 10 minutes, the wording of my motion would allow you to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: Are we clear, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that you have discretion in the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: We are absolutely clear about that. As it is a matter for Mr. Speaker's discretion, the final judgment on how that is to be exercised is for Mr. Speaker, not me, but my reading of it is that in the circumstances outlined by the hon. Gentleman, Mr. Speaker would have the discretion to allow the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) to speak for more than 10 minutes.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is it the view of the Leader of the House that that discretion should extend to time being added on for interventions? It would help me in deciding whether to push my amendment to a vote to have it clearly on the record whether that is the will of the House. Certainly during the experiment many hon. Members felt that if they gave way they would lose some of the time allocated to them.

Mr. Wakeham: Looking back to the experiment, interventions still occurred and hon. Members managed to make their speeches within 10 minutes. The character of the debate was not severely altered in any way that would deter us from making the arrangement permanent.

My view is that the matter must be left to Mr. Speaker. I believe that he would be acting according to the will of the House if he allowed an hon. Member more time because he had seriously failed to put over his point of view in the 10 minutes or wanted a bit longer because of interventions. I should have thought that that would be perfectly acceptable to the House and I would not wish to quarrel with that.

Mr. Dalyell: Part of the reason why I push this point is that some of us think that it is desperately important that Mr. Speaker should have the power to protect the unpopular view. The difficulty is that the unpopular view often takes some time to explain. As soon as one expresses an unpopular view, be it about Westland or anything else, it needs time. That is why Mr. Speaker must have it in mind that part of his job is, on occasions, to protect the hon. Member who wishes to express an unpopular view.

Mr. Wakeham: We elect Mr. Speaker because we believe that he can exercise judgment and discretion in such matters. The motion allows him to exercise that discretion in the right cases.

Sir Peter Emery: The Procedure Committee understands the argument that has been put forward by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). That is why, where there is a need for, say, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), to make a long point, Mr. Speaker has a period during which he can call somebody without the ten minutes rule applying. That is why the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is not applicable. The Select Committee has realised that there are times when hon. Members need to make longer speeches. Mr. Speaker can allow such a speech to be made at the appropriate time.

Mr. Wakeham: There is no doubt that the essence of the motion would allow Mr. Speaker discretion.

Mr. Grocott: It is clearly the spirit of the Select Committee's recommendation that interventions enliven debate. It draws attention to that. It is my understanding of the debate that it is a near-unanimous view that, if interventions were lost, that would be to the detriment of the quality of debate. If that is understood on both sides of the House, I am sure that Mr. Speaker appreciates and understands that all hon. Members hope that the discretion given to him in the proposal will be exercised in favour of allowing interventions.

Mr. Wakeham: Fine. I think that that should have cleared up most of the points that have been worrying people. If anyone is in any doubt, I remind the House that the rule will apply to Privy Councillors and everyone else.

Mr. Spearing: Although I am aware that the hour is late, I must make this point because I cannot make it at another time. Is the Leader of the House aware that we are not simply talking about Mr. Speaker, but about the occupant of the Chair? I did not blame the previous occupant of the Chair at the time of the experiment for using his power of intervention to the second. The motion gives a discretion of "may". The House appears to feel that an intervention should not be made to the second, but that the occupant of the Chair should take account of the end of a sentence or, conceivably, of interventions. That raises difficulties for the occupant of the Chair that we have not discussed, although they are illustrated by some of the points that we have made. Although the feeling of the House is clear, I hope that the Leader of the House will agree that the occupant of the Chair has a little more flexibility than was exercised during the experiment.

Mr. Wakeham: Mr. Speaker will have heard the debate. He must decide how to exercise his discretion. I should think that he would exercise it to the general satisfaction of the House.

Amendment (a) *proposed to the Question*, in line 2, after 'business', insert—

'or at any time after the opening speeches in a debate.'.—*[Mr. Tony Banks.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 16, Noes 32.

Division No. 413] **[2.41 am**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Michael, Alun
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Redwood, John
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Bowis, John	Stevens, Lewis
Brazier, Julian	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Dalyell, Tam	
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Gill, Christopher	Mr. Tony Banks and
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*	Mr. John Watts.

NOES

Baldry, Tony	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Maclean, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Neubert, Michael
Dorrell, Stephen	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Durant, Tony	Ryder, Richard
Emery, Sir Peter	Skinner, Dennis
Foster, Derek	Spearing, Nigel
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Thurnham, Peter
Glyn, Dr Alan	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Grocott, Bruce	Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Hanley, Jeremy	Wallace, James
Harris, David	Waller, Gary
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*	Widdecombe, Ann
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Wilshire, David
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*	
Janman, Tim	Tellers for the Noes:
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark	Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Lightbown, David	Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being more than one and a half hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order of 20 May, to put forthwith the Question on another amendment selected by him.*

Amendment (e) proposed to the Question, in line 10, after 'forthwith', insert

'except that in the calculation of this period no account shall be taken of the time taken up by interventions from other Members.'.—*[Mr. Quentin Davies.]*

Question put forthwith, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 8, Noes 39.

Division No. 414] **[2.52 am**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Wallace, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	
Janman, Tim	Tellers for the Ayes:
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*	Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Speering, Nigel	Mr. Julian Brazier.

NOES

Baldry, Tony	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'ln'n & R'dish)*	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Maclean, David
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Neubert, Michael
Bowis, John	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Redwood, John
Dalyell, Tam	Ryder, Richard
Dorrell, Stephen	Skinner, Dennis
Durant, Tony	Stevens, Lewis
Emery, Sir Peter	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Foster, Derek	Thurnham, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Gill, Christopher	Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Glyn, Dr Alan	Waller, Gary
Grocott, Bruce	Watts, John
Hanley, Jeremy	Wilshire, David
Harris, David	
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Mr. David Lightbown and
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*	Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*	

Question accordingly negatived.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the order of 20 May, to put forthwith the main Question.*

Question agreed to.

Ordered,

That—

(1) Mr. Speaker may announce at the commencement of public business that, because of the number of Members wishing to speak in a debate on one of the matters specified in paragraph (2) of this Order, he will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock on Monday to Thursday sittings, and between half-past eleven o'clock and one o'clock on Friday sittings, to speak for not more than ten minutes; and whenever Mr. Speaker has made such an announcement he may, between those hours, direct any Member who has spoken for ten minutes in such a debate to resume his seat forthwith.

(2) This Order shall apply to debates on:

(a) the second reading of public bills;

(b) matters selected under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) for consideration on allotted Opposition days;

(c) Motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown; and

(d) Motions for an Address in answer to Her Majesty's Speech.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

Mentally Disordered Prisoners

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

3.3 am

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter, even at such an unsocial hour. My hon. Friend the Minister will recall the debate on prisons on 12 May. He will also recall that, although that debate was wide-ranging, the question of mentally disordered offenders in our prisons was not raised, although from time to time it appears in parliamentary questions, and two years ago it was raised in an Adjournment debate.

This morning I shall not explore the inadequacy of our prison system to deal with the mentally disordered offender—although that is not in dispute—nor do I wish to complain about the lack of alternatives for such people. Rather I wish to ask how it is, given the legal framework provided by the Mental Health Act 1983, that any offenders with a mental disorder as defined under the Act are in our prisons.

The Government are to be congratulated on their ambitious building and refurbishing programme for prisons. There has been a 117 per cent. increase in capital expenditure on prisons since 1979. By the mid-1990s we shall have 26 new prisons. At the prison in my constituency at Wayland near Watton, which is a new prison, the work being done demonstrates what a difference it can make to prisoners and staff to work in up-to-date surroundings.

It is true that our prison population is among the highest in developed countries. However, the Government have been energetic in pursuing alternatives to custody while balancing those with the proper public concern about safety and security in the light of increasing numbers of crimes of violence.

Despite those achievements, the prison service is under strain. The conditions in which some prisoners have to live are unacceptable by any standards and our prisons are peculiarly illequipped to deal with mentally disordered offenders. What is more, they and the staff could do without the additional problems created by the presence of such offenders. Therefore, it is all the more curious that there should have been as many as 315 mentally disordered offenders, as defined by the Mental Health Act 1983, in our prisons on the last date of counting, which was 30 September 1986, when a perfectly satisfactory legal framework exists to prevent their admission in the first place.

Apart from the additional strain imposed on the prison service by the presence of those offenders, conditions in prisons are not likely to help their illness. The Select Committee on Social Services found in 1986 that prison medical officers prepared for the courts in 15 months more than 9,000 psychiatric reports, compared with 219 physical health reports on people remanded in custody for medical assessment. Only 40 per cent. of prison medical officers have a qualification in psychiatry. Therefore, some psychiatric reports are prepared by people who are not psychiatrists. It is clearly of the utmost importance that court reports should be capable of giving good professional advice on whether a person should be sent to prison or dealt with through the hospital or probation systems.

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

There are far more mentally disordered people in our prisons than those defined as treatable under the Mental Health Act. The report of the Select Committee on Social Services suggested that there could be as many as 1,500 male prisoners suffering from a mental disorder. That figure does not necessarily include those who become disordered after admission.

The treatment available to those offenders is restricted by the prison environment and by the availability of appropriately trained staff. There are considerable problems surrounding the issues of consent to treatment. Prisoners remanded to hospital under section 36 of the Mental Health Act are subject to the consent to treatment provisions contained in section 58. Prisoners in prison are not, with the result that those who administer medication have to rely on the common law for their justification and the prisoner has no rights at all. There can be no doubt that prison medical officers are under pressure to tranquillise a difficult patient, even without his consent, when the alternative is a prison for the disturbed. That is fair on neither the doctor nor prisoner.

If conditions in prisons are so unsatisfactory for those suffering from a mental disorder and if their presence places an additional strain on a system which, for the moment, is somewhat overburdened, why are they admitted in the first place? Some would suggest a lack of alternative placements but I would not. Thirteen of the 14 regional health authorities have permanent regional secure units. The remaining region, South West Thames, proposes RSU provision which is to function in association with several "close supervision" units already operating in existing hospitals.

Although this is primarily a matter for the Department of Health and Social Security it obviously impinges on the prison service and the offenders to whom I am referring. The use to which the RSUs are put, the admission criteria and the local co-operation and co-ordination between all the relevant agencies, particularly the consultant psychiatrist responsible for the RSU, are more important than the number of places available. However, that too is being watched by the DHSS, which is awaiting the results of a research study on the eventual national need for such secure accommodation.

In Norfolk, we have the East Anglian regional secure unit based at Thorpe St. Andrew near Norwich. It has 36 beds but, interestingly enough, for the first 18 months or so of the unit's existence, only 16 of them were occupied. Not only was that clearly very wasteful of the overall investment, it did not allow the unit to function as intended.

Fortunately, the regional health authority medical officer was able to ensure that occupancy rates became more realistic, and the unit is at last performing the task for which it was built at huge expense. However, what happened in Norfolk may well be replicated elsewhere in the country.

I would not agree with those who argue that special hospitals need more finance. There has been considerable investment in such hospitals in recent years, not least at Broadmoor, where a completely new building is being provided right now. More important than providing yet more money for special hospitals is the minimising of delays for those awaiting transfer from prison, and that means speeding up the provision of reports and other admission procedures.

Given that our prisons are already under strain—for the moment anyway—and are not equipped with either the buildings or the staff to deal with mentally disordered offenders—and if alternative provision exists outside—why are 315 mentally disordered people, as defined under the Act, in the prison system? I suggest that it is because, despite the legal framework that exists to prevent it, there is still an imperfect understanding on the part of the courts of the alternatives available to them, and an imperfect relationship at local level between the judiciary, the penal system and the Health Service which, if it were used properly, could ensure a better use of facilities and a better disposal for the individual. Unfortunately for the moment, that arrangement does not function correctly.

The second biennial report of the Mental Health Act Commission, published last autumn, makes some interesting points. The commission set itself the task of collecting basic data that would give a broad indication of the level of achievement in practice of sections 35 to 38 of the 1983 Act, which provided that offenders who were thought to be, or had been judged to be, mentally disordered should not be held in prison. The commission was particularly interested in the extent of the use of section 35, which gives the power for remand to hospital for report to be used when remand on bail is felt to be inappropriate.

Two projects were set up. One in a Crown court division fell by the wayside because of the small number of returns made. The other was conducted with all the 314 magistrates' courts in England and Wales. Its aim was to chart the progress of defendants remanded for psychiatric reports from remand to final disposal over a three-month period. Returns were made on 241 cases. In 41 of those cases, despite the fact that the offenders could have been remanded to hospital for psychiatric reports, they were remanded in custody. Twelve per cent. were remanded to hospital as a condition of bail and only 11 per cent. were remanded to hospital under section 35; 36 per cent. got unconditional bail.

Given the high hopes attached to that part of the Act when it came into force, those figures are disappointing by anyone's standards. They may be explained by a variety of factors. Lack of familiarity with the provisions of the Act on the part of the courts looms large among them. Another is reluctance on the part of doctors to accept remands under section 35, possibly because such patients are also subject to common law principles on consent for treatment.

What happened to the 99—the 41 per cent.—who were first remanded in custody? Of those, 32 received hospital orders under section 37; two received interim hospital orders under section 38; 17 were imprisoned; and 48 received non-custodial sentences. The point about those figures is that during that period our prison service was burdened with a further 99 offenders all of whom might have been remanded to hospital under section 35 for report, and of whom a third ended up in hospital in any case, and half got non-custodial sentences. Of the 26 who were remanded under section 35, 15 got hospital orders under section 37 and nine got non-custodial sentences, which suggests that in their cases the use of section 35 was the right disposal.

I know that there has been a joint Home Office-DHSS working group, which reported last autumn to Ministers on some of these questions, and that the Government accepted all the 16 recommendations. I would particularly welcome information from my hon. Friend the Minister about the exact ways in which at local level, both magistrates and Crown courts and their officials are being made aware of their powers under sections 35 to 38 of the Act, and what effect this has had in the past six months on reducing the number of mentally disordered offenders in our prisons.

I should be grateful for any information on progress to encourage co-operation between judicial, penal and health services at local level, and the kind of information now required by courts about the availability of beds and so on. My hon. Friend will be familiar with the recommendation of the commission that more consideration be given to sections 35 and 36 with a view to giving a single power for both reports and treatment.

Our prisons have problems. Given that the Government are making such vigorous efforts to overcome them and that the 1983 Act is Government legislation, it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the success of the one programme is not jeopardised by less than satisfactory functioning at local level of the other.

3.16 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) for allowing me to intervene briefly. I wholeheartedly support her arguments. Clearly, prison is not the right place for many categories of mentally ill offenders, particularly schizophrenics.

My hon. Friend referred to the East Anglian regional secure unit, which is in my constituency. I have experience of, and have had talks about, what happens in Norwich prison. Many problems there serve only to underline what my hon. Friend has said. Recently, we have had suicides in prisons in the United Kingdom which also serve to underline the seriousness of this issue. I welcome the Home Office guidelines which were detailed in a written reply to me some months ago.

I should like briefly to draw attention to the work of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship both nationally and in Norwich in supporting families and campaigning on these issues. My hon. Friend referred to sections 35 to 39 of the Mental Health Act 1983. We may have to go further than she has suggested and amend the legislation so that health authorities cannot escape their obligations so easily and so that mentally ill patients are kept out of our often overcrowded prisons.

The continuing closure of our large mental hospitals is undoubtedly exacerbating this problem. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will talk urgently with colleagues in the DHSS about that matter and the other points that we have raised.

3.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) for giving the House this opportunity to discuss the treatment of the mentally disturbed individuals who come before the courts. If I may say so, she has reviewed the problems with considerable clarity and is right to stress that the prison environment is not an appropriate place for keeping mentally disordered people. I suspect that her analysis of the reasons why there are in the prison system as convicted persons a number of mentally disordered people is, broadly speaking, correct.

There is no doubt that this is an important issue which causes the Government considerable anxiety. The House will be aware that my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Social Services set up in 1986 an interdepartmental working group on mentally disturbed offenders. It reported last year, and all its substantial recommendations were accepted by the Government. I am glad to say that good headway is being made with implementation of those recommendations.

My hon. Friend has asked me a number of specific questions. At the moment I am not in a position to answer them in the detail that she would like. For some time past I have been concerned with this issue. I am now trying to draw up for my own purposes a schedule of the sort of issues that the Home Office and the DHSS need to address, with a view to determining how we can reduce the number of mentally disordered people in the prison service. When I have had a chance to review the options I shall be in a better position to answer the sort of questions that my hon. Friend has asked tonight. I hope she will forgive me for saying that I find it difficult at this stage to give the sort of conclusive view that she wants. She has anticipated my deliberations by some weeks.

It is important to recognise that there is no single category of mentally disordered offenders. There is a complex group of people with differing medical conditions and varying needs for treatment, care and control. We must also recognise that psychiatric medicine is going through a period of fundamental change. Professional attitudes towards the way in which patients should be treated have changed profoundly. Change on this scale is bound to cause strains and dislocation.

An important distinction has to be made between people whose mental disorder falls within the scope of the Mental Health Act 1983 and who consequently may be detained in hospital for treatment, and those who, while they are mentally disordered, do not suffer to a degree that warrants their detention in hospital. These are separate groups, and we need to examine their problems individually.

People whose mental disorder brings them within the scope of the Mental Health Act can be dealt with in a variety of ways. Section 136 authorises the police to take them to hospital for assessment if they are found in a public place and appear to be in need of care or control. That applies whether or not they have committed an offence, and is a useful way of enabling the police to divert minor offenders from the courts.

I suspect that the police do not make sufficient use of this power. I also suspect that too often people are brought before the courts for relatively minor offences when they could be dealt with under the section to which I have referred. I should like the police to consider using that section more frequently.

When the police and the Crown prosecution service believe it is in the public interest to proceed with a prosecution, the courts have a number of powers available to them. Courts wishing to obtain psychiatric reports on defendants do not, of course, have to rely on the provisions of the Mental Health Act as an alternative to

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

remanding them in custody. In some instances, it may be possible to adjourn and ask a social worker or the police to take the defendant to a hospital. In others, it may be possible to grant him bail either on the understanding that he will seek medical treatment or on condition that he resides in hospital for such treatment.

Section 35 of the 1983 Act is also available to magistrates and Crown courts which want reports on the accused's mental condition. This requires the written or oral evidence of a medical practitioner that there is reason to suspect that the defendant is suffering from one of the four categories of mental disorder specified by the Act. The remand may be for 28 days at a time, with a maximum of 12 weeks.

Section 36 of the 1983 Act enables Crown courts to remand an accused person to hospital for treatment on the written or oral evidence of medical practitioners that he is suffering from mental illness or severe mental impairment of a nature or degree which makes it appropriate for him to be detained in hospital. The remand may again be for a period of 28 days at a time with a maximum of 12 weeks.

When a defendant who comes within the scope of the Mental Health Act has been convicted of an imprisonable offence, Crown courts and magistrates courts can make a hospital order under section 37 of the Act. Before doing so, they must have written or oral evidence from two medical practitioners that the offender is suffering from one of the four categories of disorder of a nature or degree that makes it appropriate for him to be detained in hospital for medical treatment.

My hon. Friend has emphasised the number of people who are in prison and who, in the view of the prison medical service, are such that they should be detained in hospital for treatment, and she has stated the numbers correctly. The last census in September 1987 showed that 188 remand prisoners and 156 sentenced prisoners fell into that category. The distinction must be made between remand and sentenced prisoners for these purposes. The remand prisoners are generally those who are awaiting assessment by doctors from the special hospitals or from the NHS to arrange for their admission if courts make hospital orders following conviction. I would like to see greater use made by the courts of arrangements such as remands direct to hospital, or of informal arrangements with local hospitals so as to reduce the number of people remanded to prison.

It is inevitable that there will be in prison on remand at any time a number of people who are mentally disordered within the meaning of the Act, and who are susceptible to treatment in hospital, but who, because of the court's order, have to be in prison or on remand pending assessment. I do not find that quite as troubling as the number of sentenced prisoners in prisons.

We must accept that in some cases, especially the more serious ones, remand to prisons, at least initially, cannot be avoided. The prison medical service provides an essential service in liaising with the special hospitals and the NHS to make arrangements for admissions to hospitals either on transfer under section 48 of the Mental Health Act or after conviction.

I hope that the House accepts that the problem of mentally disordered offenders is one which the Government take very seriously. There has been a steady improvement in the facilities available in the special hospitals and in the NHS for people who can be detained in hospital for treatment. The 1983 Act introduced a number of measures designed to avoid the use of custody for mentally disordered people, including the power to remand for reports and treatment under sections 35 and 36 of the Act. It also enables the courts to make guardianship orders or to make interim hospital orders to enable a person's response to treatment to be assessed before the courts make a final decision. The Act has therefore given the courts a great deal of help towards enabling them to get mentally disturbed offenders into hospital care instead of into prison.

We recognise that much more needs to be done and this led us to set up in 1986 the interdepartmental working group, which involved work between the Home Office and the DHSS and, as I have already stated, the Government have accepted the great majority of the substantial recommendations, which we are now putting in place.

My hon. Friend has raised a very serious point, because there are a number—not a huge number—of mentally disordered people in the prison system. Many people suffer from mental handicap of a different kind, but that is a different problem. We are talking about mentally disordered people within the meaning of the Act, and there are too many of those.

The presence of the remand prisoners is probably inevitable, and I am troubled rather more by the presence of the sentenced prisoners. We must identify where it is that either the substantive law or the way that we implement the law is failing to prevent the entry into the prison system of such people. I propose to try with officials and, if necessary, with Ministers to identify such points and discover if there are a range of measures that we could introduce that would reduce the number of such persons in prison. As my hon. Friend has made her interest clear, I will do my utmost to involve her in the work that I should like to see carried forward.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

REVOLUTIONS OF 1688-89 (TERCENTENARY)

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham) reported to the House, That Her Majesty, having been waited upon, pursuant to the order of 7 July, humbly to know Her Majesty's pleasure when she will be attended by this House, has been pleased to appoint to be attended on Wednesday 20 July at 11 o'clock in Westminster Hall, and has given her permission for this House to be accompanied by representatives of overseas Parliaments of the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Speakers Conference

Mr. Speaker: As the Leader of the House has reported, the Address celebrating the tercentenary of the revolutions of 1688-89 and the Bill of Rights and the Claim of Right will be presented to Her Majesty in Westminster Hall on Wednesday 20 July. That ceremony will also be attended by the Speakers and Presiding Officers of 35 Commonwealth Parliaments. They will be in London at the invitation of the Lord Chancellor and myself to take part in the ninth conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers, which will be held in the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre during the remainder of that week.

As Speaker of the host country it falls to me to preside over the conference. My duties at the conference and towards our Commonwealth visitors will to some extent restrict my appearances in the Chair during the period 20-22 July, and I hope that I may have the understanding of the House that this will be so.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO.2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration read

To be considered on Thursday 21 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

York City Council Bill *[LORDS] (BY ORDER)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 21 July.

BREDERO (BON ACCORD CENTRE ABERDEEN) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

HIGHLAND REGION (LOCHINVER HARBOUR) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Third World Debt

1. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions took place at the Toronto economic summit relating to Third world debt; if there will be an increase in aid to less developed nations; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): An agreement was reached at the economic summit in Toronto last month, along the lines of the initiative that I launched in April last year, to reduce the debt burden of the poorest, most heavily indebted countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, which are following approved economic policies.

Mr. Franks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that Britain's role in securing that agreement was decisive? Will he continue his efforts to ensure that the agreement is implemented as soon as possible?

Mr. Lawson: Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. It has been our persistence, since I launched the initiative in Washington at the interim committee meeting in April last year, which I believe allowed us to get the agreement in Toronto, which is of the first importance for the heavily indebted poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Earlier this week there was a meeting of senior officials, under the aegis of the Paris Club, at which a substantial amount of agreement was reached on the nuts and bolts. I hope that, as my hon. Friend has said, it will not be too long before the agreement can be implemented.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Does the Chancellor recognise that the cost of debt, particularly in Latin America, can be measured directly in jobs lost in this country through lost exports? What steps will he now take to ensure positive action by the richer nations of the world to ease the debt problems of Latin America?

Mr. Lawson: The middle-income debtors of Latin America indeed have substantial debts. It is a great problem, which has been there since 1982. During that time we have had a well-developed debt strategy for dealing with the problems, but it is not just a matter of the International Monetary Fund taking a lead, as it does very valuably, or of the commercial banks rescheduling debts, which they are doing. It is also vitally important for those countries to put their own economic houses in order.

Mr. Lester: I welcome the additional information that my right hon. Friend has been able to give about recent action in the Paris Club. Can he tell how long it will be before its members will be in a position to implement the scheme that his energies have helped to create, and what scale of benefit we may expect to see for those poorest countries?

Mr. Lawson: I pay tribute to the part that my hon. Friend has played in the House in consistently drawing attention to these matters. I cannot tell him how long it will take, but we are going ahead as quickly as possible; and the fact that the special meeting was held at the Paris Club earlier this week is an indication of that.

As for the benefit for the poorest countries, it is difficult to say. It will build up over a period. It could, however, eventually add up to as much as $500 million a year if the countries concerned participate fully in their proper economic adjustment programmes.

Mr. Holland: The Chancellor's debt strategy may well develop, but it is not very athletic. Surely he realises that, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), up to a quarter of a million jobs have been lost in the export sector in the United Kingdom since 1981 alone because of the Latin American debt crisis.

As for sub-Saharan Africa, why did the Chancellor not respond to the challenge and invitation issued by the new French Government and President Mitterrand to write off one third of the debt of the 20 least developed African countries? Surely he recognises that it is time to act on debt rather than talk. Otherwise, we shall neither resolve the crisis for the countries concerned nor restore British export trade.

Mr. Lawson: I am astonished at the ill-informed nature of the hon. Gentleman's comments. We have done far more in connection with writing-off old aid loans than France. However, I do not want to enter into competition, because the United Kingdom and France have been working very closely together on the initiative on which agreement was reached in Toronto and which was further discussed at the Paris Club this week.

As for unemployment, I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should mention it without welcoming today's figures, which show that unemployment in this country has fallen by well over half a million since the general election alone.

Sir William Clark: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his welcome initiative. Does he agree, however, that it is the height of irresponsibility to promise a massive increase in aid when, if the Labour party ever regained office, our economy would be in such a parlous state that we would not be able to afford an increase in aid, and might not even be able to afford the aid that we now provide?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. It is very easy for the Opposition to say, as they do, that they will increase aid. The Leader of the Opposition—who at present is safely away from these shores—has said that they will increase it by two and a half times, and raise the basic rate of income tax by 2p to pay for it. But, of course, if there were ever another Labour Government the economy would be in such dire straits that I doubt whether even a 2p increase in income tax would be sufficient to pay for it.

Balance of Payments

2. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current balance of payments position.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): In the first five months of this year the current account deficit was estimated at £4·7 billion.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister admit that the figures for May were absolutely appalling—the worst monthly figures on record for any period? Is not the deficit for the first five months of this year three times the size of that for the whole of 1987, and are not all the indications that the position will worsen? Is this the foundation for what the Chancellor calls our economic recovery?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman should recognise that there is all the difference in the world between a country that is running a deficit on its payments when it has a surplus on its public finances, and one that is running a deficit that reflects not the growth of investment domestically but a deficit that its Government are running, as the Labour Government that the hon. Gentleman supported produced for this country.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is it not inevitable, when the latest Department of Trade and Industry intention investment survey projects a 16 per cent. rise in manufacturing investment, that that should be reflected in our import figures? Do not those figures, and the excellent figures from the Department of Employment today, which show that manufacturing productivity is continuing to rise by 6 per cent., offer the best hope for continuing improvement in our competitiveness?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. The investment boom to which he refers also shows up in the import figures. In the past three months the growth in imports of investment goods was about 19 per cent. and that of consumption goods only about 10 per cent.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is not the most worrying aspect of the high interest and high exchange rate policy now being pursued, not only that the Chancellor will be the first Chancellor in history to preside over a manufacturing trade deficit in excess of £10 billion, but that the trade deficit is deteriorating sharply in the new industries on which our industrial future depends—computers, information technology and electronics—where it is estimated to be £2 billion alone? Will the Treasury now honour the promise made by the Minister for Trade yesterday in the House to publish the revised forecasts for the balance of payments deficit and publish the forecasts for this year and for next year, or is it too ashamed of the real figures even to do that?

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has said that he will publish the revised forecasts in the normal way in the Autumn Statement as required under the Industry Act. The hon. Gentleman's presentation of the position of British manufacturing industry is grotesque, particularly in a week when we have heard that Britain has won the largest export order of manufactured goods ever. Clearly, that is not a sign that we are doing badly.

As for the overall picture of gloom and doom painted by the hon. Gentleman, it is clear that he does not really believe that there is a serious problem because the policies that he advocates are precisely those designed to create a real balance of payments problem.

Manufacturing Profitability

3. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the rise in manufacturing profitability in 1987.

6. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the rise in manufacturing profitability in 1987.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): Manufacturing profitability is estimated to have risen by about 1¼ percentage points in 1987 to 8¼ per cent., the highest level since the beginning of the 1970s.

Mr. Hunter: Does my right hon. Friend's answer not highlight one of the many strong features of our economy, as without profitability there can be no expansion through reinvestment, and without that expansion there can be neither the job nor the wealth creation to finance our welfare and social programmes?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. The fruits of that success have been shown in expenditure programmes over recent years. In addition, profitability has risen each year since 1981, and that is a most welcome trend.

Mr. Curry: Are not improved industrial relations contributing substantially to improved profitability? Is it not therefore particularly silly and reactionary for the Trades Union Congress to seek to drive out from its ranks those unions willing to conclude single union agreements, to the great benefit of the company for which they work, the real earnings of their own work force and employment?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, but it would be indelicate for me to intrude in the misery of the trade union movement.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a major threat is posed to manufacturing profitability by the high pound and high interest rates, which are estimated to cost £600 million this year?

Mr. Major: Profitability frequently depends on competitiveness, and competitiveness is best measured by performance. British industry is performing better today than it has done for many years.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Minister encourage some of that profitability to be reinvested, particularly in research and development? We still have a shocking record of investment in research and development in this country, particularly in the northern region, and we need that research and development to ensure future capacity in manufacturing and in the real economy, which will produce the jobs and the prosperity of the future.

Mr. Major: I have some sympathy with what the hon. Lady says. There is a substantial amount of public sector investment in research and development, and I would welcome increased private sector investment in research and development. I hope that that forms part of the significant investment boom that we are now seeing.

Productivity

4. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average annual increase in the productivity of the whole United Kingdom economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: Since 1980 output per head in the whole economy has grown at an average rate of 2¾ per cent. per year, about the same as Japan and faster than any other major industrialised country.

Miss Widdecombe: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House how far the increase in productivity compares with our performance in the 1960s and 1970s and with that of our competitors over those years?

Mr. Major: The improvement in productivity is greater now than at any stage in recent years, including the 1960s. The most effective recent comparative figures are that growth has been averaging 2¾ per cent. per annum since 1980, compared with a growth pattern between 1973 and 1980 of only 0·7 per cent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why is the increase in productivity linked to such a massive balance of payments deficit? Is not the problem for the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he cannot leave his job next year? He is locked into his appointment because he is scared stiff of leaving a balance of payments deficit.

Mr. Major: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the ingenuity of his question. I share his wish that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will remain Chancellor for a considerable period. As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury said, the deficit on the balance of payments and the balance of trade reflects partly a strong growth in domestic activity. It reflects also —this is material to manufacturing—the fact that a great deal of the import growth relates to capital, semi-capital and intermediate goods, which are being imported as part of the investment boom.

Sir John Stokes: Good as the figures are for manufacturing productivity, is my right hon. Friend not a little concerned about the large rise in wage rates? If they continue, they could threaten our economic growth.

Mr. Major: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the rise in wage rates, not least because we wish to see the dramatic reductions in unemployment continue. The rise in wage rates in part reflects overtime earnings and productivity bonuses, and that we welcome.

Imports (Tax Cuts)

5. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the impact of top rate tax cuts on imports.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): The elimination of the top rates of tax over 40 per cent. will improve economic performance and thus lead to higher living standards all round.

Mr. Clelland: Will the Minister confirm that Britain's balance of trade in cars with West Germany has deteriorated more sharply than any other part of the balance of trade since 1979? Will he also confirm that his £2 billion tax give-away to those on the highest tax rates will find its way into the purchase of BMWs, Audis and Porsches, which will further deteriorate the balance of trade in cars?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has asked me a rather long question, especially if the terms of it are taken back to 1979. He referred to the current balance of payments deficit. He should realise that the increase in investment goods imported is considerably larger than the increase in consumer goods imported.

Mr. Latham: Less than two years ago imports were lower, the economy was stagnant and in recession and tax rates were much higher. Were the Opposition whingeing then as well?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Chris Smith: Is not personal consumption the highest import content of any economic activity within the economy? If so, why did the Chancellor of the Exchequer decide in his Budget to place such emphasis on top-rate tax cuts? Those cuts will undoubtedly fuel consumption rather than investment in our infrastructure and worsen the already bad balance of payments position. Will the Minister now answer the question that was put to him earlier this afternoon by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)? Will the balance in manufacturing trade reach a deficit of £10 billion this year?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman's question linked a series of hypotheses. I continue with the observation that I have just made. In terms of the current balance of payments deficit, the increase in investment goods imported is rising much faster than the increase in consumer goods.

Inflation

7. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of future inflation.

17. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Lawson: The rate of inflation in May stood at 4·2 per cent.

Mr. Knight: Despite some signs that the economy may be starting to overheat, is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members, and most of the country, have absolute confidence in his ability to keep our economic progress on course? But will he give the House an unequivocal undertaking that in no circumstances will he accept advice from the Labour party, bearing in mind that in August 1975 inflation hit a 20th century peak of 26·9 per cent. under a Labour Government?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his earlier remarks. The annual rate of inflation under Labour in August 1975 of 26·9 per cent. is an interesting figure, because in that one year inflation was more than in the past five years put together. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that I am still not satisfied with the rate of inflation in Britain and, despite the fact that it is only a fraction of what it was under the Labour Government, I am determined that we shall get it down, and our policy will be directed to that end.

Mr. MacKay: As we have been told that today's Cabinet meeting has reached a decision on total public expenditure for the coming years, can my right hon. Friend confirm that the rate of inflation will influence the next expenditure round?

Mr. Lawson: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend is right. One of the fundamental reasons for Britain's economic success has been our firm control of public expenditure, which has fallen steadily as a share of GDP since 1982-83. In the Cabinet this morning we reaffirmed that strategy and agreed that public expenditure should continue to fall as a share of GDP throughout the next three years.

Mr. Alton: Despite what the Chancellor says about economic success, does he agree that today's Trustee Savings Bank report on the economic indicators in Northern Ireland demonstrates just how patchy that recovery is? For instance, in Northern Ireland last year employment in manufacturing industry fell by 1·3 per cent. and output is only now reaching 1979 limits. Does he agree that the overheated economy in the south-east of England contrasts with those less prosperous regions of the United Kingdom, where unemployment is still the major problem facing the people living there?

Mr. Lawson: I must confess that I have not read the latest TSB report, but the hon. Gentleman is somewhat mistaken. First, on the question of Northern Ireland, as he is well aware, that unhappy Province has particular problems of its own which are not purely economic—indeed, not economic in origin at all—but obviously have a great bearing on the economic performance of the Northern Ireland economy. However, the figures that have been published hitherto for Northern Ireland may have understated the growth of output in the Province. The hon. Gentleman will welcome today's excellent unemployment figures, which show not only a further massive fall for the 23rd month in succession, but that the biggest fall of all has been in the west midlands, the north-west and the north of England.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer explain something that is puzzling many people: why, whenever inflation in goods and services is low he takes credit for it, but when we have a historically high level of inflation in house prices he says that it is due to something else?

Mr. Lawson: I did not know that there had been any discussion today about inflation in house prices. House price inflation is a different matter from general price inflation. *[Laughter.]* If Opposition Members laugh, that only shows their ignorance. Let them explain how it is that, while inflation in Japan is very close to zero, property prices in Tokyo and Osaka have risen far faster than in London.

Mr. John Townend: Further to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) about the current danger of overheating in the economy, will he confirm that the Cabinet today decided not to exceed in 1989-90 the amount laid down for public expenditure in the medium-term financial strategy? Will he confirm that it would be dangerous if public sector wage settlements for the coming year exceeded inflation?

Mr. Lawson: What we agreed was wholly consistent with the pledge in our election manifesto last year. Public expenditure for the coming three years should be kept as close as possible to the planning totals, and public expenditure should continue to fall as a share of GDP throughout the next three years. My hon. Friend is right in saying that that pay settlements, both in the public and the private sector, have a very important bearing on the public expenditure totals, and, indeed, on the performance of the economy.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: May I drag the Chancellor away from the problems of the Japanese housing market and his reminiscences of the last Labour Government to discuss inflation? Does he agree that the largest single pressure on the retail prices index is the 11 per cent. price rise in electricity, the 10 per cent. price rise in water charges, the 12 per cent. price rise in rates and the 6 per cent. overall rise in gas prices? Those are all in the public sector and the Government should take responsibility for them. What will the Government do to curb that sort of inflation?

Mr. Lawson: All the matters that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned are taken into account in the retail price index, which has gone up by 4·2 per cent., according to the latest figure. However, rate increases are the responsibility, not of the Government, but of Socialist councils up and down the country.

Indirect Tax Rates

8. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to approximate indirect tax rates to the European Community average.

Mr. Lilley: No, Sir.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my hon. Friend agree that the EEC Commission proposal to harmonise VAT rates throughout the Community is based on the fallacy that different rates distort competition? Will he point out to the Commission that that is not the case, because VAT is a tax on consumers, not on production costs, and that businesses can reclaim VAT? Does my hon. Friend agree that the EEC Commission might find it inconvenient and untidy to have different rates of tax in different parts of the Community, but that that hardly justifies an assault on the tax powers of individual Parliaments?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that VAT causes no distortions of commercial trade, because it applies equally to imported and domestic goods, and requires comparatively limited border control. The only distortion is cross-border shopping. The European Commission's proposals to deal with that are rather misconceived. That is perhaps better solved by liberalising controls on cross-border shopping, and then leaving market forces to constrain individual countries through the rates of VAT that they choose to apply.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Minister confirm that all those goods and services that are currently zero-rated will continue to be so rated for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Lilley: I can confirm that the British Government will not allow their powers to retain zero rates to be constrained by the EEC.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the lesson of the United States of America is instructive? In that single market individual states are free to levy their own rates of indirect taxation. The outturn is that market forces are the ultimate constraint on those rates.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That illustrates that it is quite unnecessary to constrain the sovereign power of individual countries to set their own

indirect tax rates. It would be paradoxical if the member states of the European Community had less power in this respect than the individual states of the United States of America.

Dr. Marek: Will the Economic Secretary state here and now that there will be no VAT on transport, books, newspapers and periodicals? If he will not, does he realise that these items will then be the subject of some shabby horse-trading in a smoke-filled room some time in 1992 when the Common market comes to make its compromises?

Mr. Lilley: I have made it absolutely clear already that we shall not concede our right to retain the zero rate on any products on which we already have it.

Economic Output

9. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in economic output during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: Over the 12 months to the first quarter of 1988 total output grew by 5 per cent.

Mr. Thurnham: I welcome today's fall in unemployment, which marks the longest continuous period of falling unemployment since the war. Does this not provide convincing evidence of the much greater success of this Government's economic policies than any of the policies that were ever adopted by the Opposition?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct when he refers to today's excellent figures for unemployment and employment. He might also have a look at today's figures for manufacturing output, which show that it is some 6½ per cent. up on a year ago and that this is the fastest rising sector of the economy.

Mr. Skinner: Can the Chancellor of the Exchequer explain to the House why it is that, on another economic output front—the invisibles, which in election year were running at £700 million a month—had fallen to £400 million a month in the first three months of 1988? There is a point of view that these figures were fiddled during election year to assist the balance of payments during that year. Will he take into account the fact that if that £400 million continues throughout 1988 it will produce another £2 billion deficit on his balance of payments?

Mr. Lawson: I must say in all seriousness to the hon. Member that the figure for the balance of invisible trade, which is frequently revised in both directions by the Central Statistical Office, is worked out totally independently by that office. He has cast a very serious slur on the Central Statistical Office and the civil servants who work for it, and I hope that he will withdraw it.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the west midlands is working again, producing again and making profits again? Does this not speak volumes for the policies of my right hon. Friend and the Government?

Mr. Lawson: Yes, indeed, and as an east midlands Member I am delighted to see the rapidly growing prosperity of both the east and west midlands. It is one of the most encouraging aspects of the remarkable growth that we have had in this country over the past five years and more that it is now being seen in all parts of the economy.

Interest Rates

10. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to manufacturing industry of the cumulative rise in interest rates since 1 June.

Mr. Lawson: Bank base rates currently stand at 10 per cent. This is roughly in line with the average level of interest rates during the last five years, during which manufacturing output has increased by over 20 per cent.

Mr. Evans: Does the Chancellor accept the CBI's figures, which show that the five interest rate increases that we have had since 1 June have cost industry about £25 million, that industry is now bearing the brunt of his policies and that in the long term his policies, which might prove beneficial to financiers in the City of London, are proving disastrous for what is left of manufacturing industry in Great Britain?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Member really is living in a world of his own. If he were to go out into the real world, if he were ever to meet anyone in manufacturing industry, if he were ever to see inside a manufacturing company, he would realise that manufacturing industry is doing better than ever before. Manufacturers know this and acknowledge it.

Mr. Duffy: Given the Chancellor's earlier reference to the Tokyo property market, is he prepared to say that the Prime Minister's insistence on tax encouragement to wealthy people to buy high-priced dwellings, thereby unnecessarily boosting credit, is not bringing his interest rate policy at some point into conflict with non-inflationary growth and jeopardising the investment plans of manufacturing industry at its lower, smaller end?

Mr. Lawson: At the time of the Budget I felt that there was a case for cutting back on the extent of that sort of credit. That is why I removed the multiple mortgage relief for sharers and abolished altogether the relief on home improvement loans. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman voted for those clauses. I seem to recall that he did not.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is it not the case that the increased interest cost to manufacturing industry can largely be offset by sensible wage settlements?

Mr. Lawson: Yes, my hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that industry is more concerned about the level of inflation than the level of interest rates and that there is widespread recognition of his successful use of interest rates as a means of keeping inflation down?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is something that I have said time and time again. I have shown by my actions that interest rates will be set at whatever level is necessary to bear down on inflation.

Currency

11. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent assessment he has made of the popularity of the various coins and bank notes in current usage.

Mr. Brooke: The Government recently reviewed the United Kingdom coinage following a successful public consultation. The most popular option included smaller 5p and 10p coins, which will be introduced in the early 1990s. The Bank of England is responsible for the note issue, which it keeps under careful review.

Mr. Canavan: Can the Minister tell us one other country in the world, apart from England, whose lowest value bank note is as high as £5 sterling or equivalent? If the Bank of England is so insensitive to public opinion that it refuses to give people a choice between a pound note and a pound coin, why not make Scottish bank notes legal tender throughout the United Kingdom instead of forcing people to use unwieldy pound coins which are so heavy, so thick and so unpopular that they remind me of a certain person on the Treasury Bench?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has made much more pithily the speech that he made on 8 July 1986 in proposing his Bill about the Scottish pound note. His abbreviation today was admirable.

Overseas Assets

12. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets both in value and as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Major: The United Kingdom's net overseas assets were estimated at some £90 billion at end-1987, about 21 per cent. of gross domestic product.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the figures are an excellent measure of the restoration of the economic strength of Britain in the world? Would he care to comment on the effect that the return on those investments has on the British economy at present?

Mr. Major: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's first point. On the second point, those overseas investments brought in nearly £6 billion in annual income in 1987, the highest level ever recorded. The returns from the first quarter of 1988 suggest a similar return this year.

Third World Debt

14. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Japanese Government's proposals at the Toronto summit to, in effect, turn part of the commercial bank debt into Government bonds and to ease the amount of debt payments.

Mr. Lilley: These complex proposals were not discussed at Toronto and still need to be clarified.

Miss Lestor: Bearing in mind that, as a proportion of GNP, aid from Britain to the Third world is now at its lowest ebb, debt becomes an important part of easing the burden of those countries. Also bearing in mind that the Japanese proposals relate particularly to middle-income countries, where malnutrition is rising and whose incomes are falling, could not the Chancellor be persuaded to look more closely at the Japanese proposals, which have a contribution to make?

Mr. Lilley: I would have hoped that the hon. Lady, who takes a great interest in these matters, would pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's success, through his dogged persistence, in achieving agreement at Toronto on the initiative to help the sub-Saharan African countries, which is a major and important priority. We shall, of course, consider in detail any proposals that the Japanese put to us. As we see in the hon. Lady's question, she has misinterpreted what the proposals probably are.

Privatisation

15. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his current estimate of Treasury receipts from sales of public assets in 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, respectively.

Mr. Brooke: The latest estimate of privatisation proceeds is shown in the Government's public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Darling: Has the Chancellor made an assessment of the likely price for the electricity industry if it is sold off, and has he made any assessment of the amount that is likely to be bought by foreign interests rather than by people living in this country?

Mr. Brooke: The public expenditure White Paper estimated proceeds, to which I referred, cover a period of years. The programme which will follow hereafter will undoubtedly sustain those estimates.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having meetings later today.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is remarkable that Mr. Gorbachev should look to her and to a Conservative Administration rather than to a Socialist Administration for ideas and inspiration? Does she further agree that, whereas the Russians were delighted to stop jamming so that millions could hear her across Russia, they are most unlikely to do the same for the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that the Soviet people wish to hear about successful policies. They want to get away from failed Socialism.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Prime Minister give a categorical assurance that every regional health authority will receive sufficient additional Government funds to meet the cost of the nurses' pay award and the regrading which she promised to finance in full?

The Prime Minister: The Government have made available £566 million additional to the extra amount of £237 million already in the forecast for the nurses' pay award this year. This includes the whole of the estimated cost of the clinical grading exercise put forward by the Nurses' Pay Review Body.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister must try to grasp the question, because she has chosen to answer one which I did not ask. So I ask her again: will every regional health authority be given sufficient additional funds to meet the cost of the new pay bill, because five of them understand that they will be left short in October? Yes, or no.

The Prime Minister: The amount that has been made available was the amount that was estimated by the Nurses' Pay Review Body. That full amount has been put forward *[Interruption.]* The formula used for estimating the total sum required was agreed between representatives of National Health Service chairmen and the review body. That amount is intended to be the amount which they said regrading of the structure would cost.

Mr. Hattersley: The sum was not agreed, but the Prime Minister's error of fact is not the matter at issue. The issue is that unless every regional health authority can be sure of its ability to meet the increased pay bill there will be closed wards and bed cuts—five authorities say that. Does the Prime Minister not understand that, or does the Cabinet, insulated by private medical care, not care what happens in the Health Service?

The Prime Minister: No, £803 million was the figure estimated not by the Government but by the Nurses' Pay Review Body. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman, instead of trying to make trouble— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would first read the letter of 13 July 1988 from Mr. Trevor Clay—[HON. MEMBERS: "Read it."] I shall gladly read it out, but I thought that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition might be able to read it for himself. Mr. Clay said:

"There are many problems at local level. But some managements are succeeding in some districts. Why can't others make the same speed?"

Secondly, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will remember that it was his Government who cut nurses' pay, whereas this Government have increased it. He is the cutter of nurses' pay.

Mr. Batiste: What hope can my right hon. Friend offer to the many air travellers stranded at British airports that their plight, caused by air traffic control problems over Europe, will not get progressively worse in the years to come? What initiative can the British Government take with their European partners to provide a long-term solution to the problem?

The Prime Minister: We shall certainly have a look at that. My hon. Friend asked about our air traffic control. As he is aware, we have been trying to get the very latest computers, which should be sufficient and well able to cope with the increase in air traffic control needs. We shall have a look at the co-operation, which I am sure our air traffic controllers have, and need to have, with other air traffic control authorities.

Q2. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Prime Minister concur that those Conservative Back Benchers who voted against the European Communities (Finance) Bill earlier this week in all likelihood share her gut instinct? Given that she seems to occupy an increasingly ambivalent position at home, and an increasingly isolated position within the Community on greater financial integration, will she concede that the net outcome is likely to be final confirmation of Frankfurt and the Bundestag as the sole financial centre of Europe, to the long-term loss of our country?

The Prime Minister: I would reply to that by saying that my position is direct at home and direct in Europe, and both are to the advantage of Britain.

Q3. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bellingham: In the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend plan a visit to west Norfolk? If she comes to west Norfolk she will be told that today's excellent unemployment figures are reflected locally. Since 1983 unemployment has fallen by half to 7·5 per cent., and since 1979 expenditure on the local health authority has increased by a staggering 60 per cent. in real terms. Is that not a classic case of wealth creation benefiting the whole community?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The record has been excellent. Since the last election unemployment has fallen by half a million. The increase in employment goes on apace. The increase in prosperity also proceeds apace, and it is due to the excellent policies pursued by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—policies which must continue into the future and which benefit the whole country.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has the Prime Minister read the report of the Scottish constitutional steering committee entitled, "A Claim of Right for Scotland"? Is she yet aware of the strain that her Administration are placing on the unity of the United Kingdom, and are there any circumstances in which she would be prepared to take account of our national status and the wishes of the people of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: Scotland has its own national status and always will. That has never been in doubt, since the very Union between Scotland and this country. I have not read the report, but I doubt very much whether either the hon. Gentleman or the Labour party wishes Scotland to separate from England.

Q4. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cran: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the latest seven years for which statistics exist GDP grew in the

north of England at the rate of 90 per cent. per head of the population, which was above the British average, and that the figure for Yorkshire and Humberside was 89 per cent., which was the British average? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to announce her intention to improve on that in the coming years, and to improve the prosperity of every region in the United Kingdom, which is undoubtedly the case at the minute?

The Prime Minister: The figures given by my hon. Friend are excellent, but then the record for the whole country is excellent as the new prosperity spreads over every region. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has provided a firm basis of prosperity that will continue and stretch long into the future.

Q5. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Boyes: Does not the proposed privatisation of the water industry make nonsense of the arguments used on the Conservative Benches that privatisation leads to greater competition among suppliers and greater choice for consumers? When the right hon. Lady turns on a tap in the morning, does she have a choice of supplier, and where is the competition?

The Prime Minister: Many water companies are already in private hands. There is nothing new about water being in private hands, as the hon. Gentleman would know if he knew history.

Mr. Conway: During the course of my right hon. Friend's busy day, will she reflect on the fact that home ownership has grown substantially during her premiership, and that that growth could not have occurred without her protection of mortgage interest rate relief? Will she assure the House that that relief will not be tampered with and that the Government do not intend to introduce a property tax of any kind?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that we would not have seen the enormous extension of home ownership without mortgage interest tax relief. I am a great believer in it. As my hon. Friend knows, I get very cross if anybody wants to stop it, when they themselves got their foot on the first rung of the ladder by making use of that very relief. So long as I am here, it will continue.

Q6. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Salmond: Can the Prime Minister explain to the House why, if no decision has been made about the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig, Sir Robert Scholey should be publicly writing its obituary? Will she undertake to visit the Ravenscraig complex, to meet the shop stewards and a representative selection of Scottish opinion, and to hear at first hand why the closure and dismemberment of the Ravenscraig plant is not acceptable to the Scottish nation?

The Prime Minister: I answered an almost identical question last Tuesday, except that I was not asked to visit Ravenscraig. I doubt very much whether I can take up that kind invitation immediately. The position was made clear by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Trade and Industry when he answered a parliamentary question last December concerning the future of Ravenscraig, privatisation and the difficulty with hot strip mills, where there is at the moment a surplus of capacity. We do not know what will be the position following the abolition of European steel quotas. When we do, we shall know precisely whether hot strip mill capacity will be in excess of demand and whether some mills may have to be closed.

Q7. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marlow: May I ask my right hon. Friend what responsibility she has for British citizens overseas? I give as an example a pair of innocents abroad—a short, red-headed Welshman and his wilful wife—who, no doubt tanked up on South African wine, have offered to give £1,500 million of British taxpayers' money to their hosts each year.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will relate his question to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Marlow: Is that something that we ought to ignore, or should we think about taking away their passports?

The Prime Minister: I thought that my hon. Friend started off his question by asking about overseas aid, but it was a little difficult to hear. Is that correct?

Mr. Marlow *indicated assent.*

The Prime Minister: The overseas aid record of this Government is extremely good, not only in terms of direct aid, but in terms of the massive amount of investment that has gone overseas from the private sector. I agree that to increase it enormously, as has been proposed, would put a great deal of burden on our people. I also commend the excellent initiative taken by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to cancel some of the aid loans, which has now been taken up by the Toronto summit. I hope that my hon. Friend heard more of my reply than I did of his question.

Q8. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Madden: Will the Prime Minister break the habit of a lifetime and give a straight answer to a straight question that has been put to her four times? Will the Government fund fully the pay award and the regrading exercise for our nurses? Does she understand that nurses in every constituency do not regard concern about their pay as troublemaking? They are much more concerned with Government treachery. That is what will be committed if the Prime Minister now says that the Government will not fund fully the pay award to the nursing professon.

Hon. Members: Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The amount necessary to fund that award in full is £803 million. That was not calculated by the Government, it was calculated by the Nurses' Pay Review Body. It is intended to fund it in full—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?]—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not have the chanting of that sort of thing here.

The Prime Minister: Most nurses in the United Kingdom rejoice at the £803 million, compared with the cut, cut, cut that they had under Labour.

Cervical Cancer Screening (Christie Hospital)

3.31 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the errors found in the cervical screening tests performed at the laboratories at Christie hospital in Withington, Manchester.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): The Christie hospital in Manchester processes some 250,000 cervical smears per year. I understand that it undertakes work for several health authorities, including North Staffordshire.

As a result of a routine check, some doubts were expressed about 60 slides that are now being checked by independent advisers from other regions. I understand that part of the problem relates to the process by which the slides were made, which has made them somewhat difficult to interpret.

I am satisfied that appropriate action has been taken promptly. All the slides were taken quite recently and all the clinicians concerned were notified at once. Where appropriate, repeat smears have been, or are being, taken.

We have complete confidence in the Christie, which has an international reputation in this area.

Mr. Bradley: I am grateful for the answer that the Minister—the junior Minister—has given.

I should like to praise the Christie hospital, which is based in my constituency of Withington, as it is a centre of excellence and I believe that it is one of the best-run laboratories in this country undertaking cervical screening. I have particular praise for Dr. Yule and his staff who have worked under tremendous pressure during the past few years when the financial resources to the South Manchester health authority have been extremely limited.

When the errors—as they have been called—which were identified came to light in north Staffordshire, why were Dr. Yule and his staff not informed of that fact? No discussion has taken place between the Christie laboratories and north Staffordshire about the differences that have been found.

The Labour party welcomes the extension of cervical screening—we have been pressing for that for a number of years—and the regular call and recall of women. It is absolutely essential that resources are made available to ensure that there is reliability and a high standard of staff within the laboratories such as the Christie laboratories. Such reliability should continue, not only in public laboratories such as Christie's, but in the private laboratories to ensure that proper procedures and reliability are maintained. Finally—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a question, not a statement. I appeal to the hon. Member to be brief.

Mr. Bradley: Briefly, when will the Government recognise the pay and conditions of the laboratory staff and ensure that they are adequately funded, trained and maintained in the public sector of public health?

Mrs. Currie: As the hon. Gentleman may well know, since January this year, when a circular was sent out from my Department, all laboratories taking part in the cervical cancer screening system are required to have external policy assessment systems. The standard practice is to do a quality check on one in 10 smears. At the Christie the staff routinely read one in seven. Therefore, their checking procedures, which are of the utmost vigour, set higher standards than are routinely required. The normal practice where there is a dispute between clinicians, as there is in this case, is to call in a third party, and that is precisely what we have done. We wait to see exactly what they will recommend to us, if anything.

The hon. Gentleman may well know that the MLSO training scheme has not until now included specific training for cervical cytology, but it is under consideration. We are keen to standardise both training and qualifications in this area. I am satisfied that it has not been a question of resources but of how the slides were prepared and whether there is any genuine dispute about the results that they might or might not show.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Is my hon. Friend aware that her tribute to the excellence of the Christie hospital will be much appreciated by my constituents and people throughout the north-west of England? Will she confirm that the Christie hospital conducts more cervical screening than any other hospital or centre in the country? Is not the suggestion that the specific smears, which have been alluded to as being faulty, were apparently sub-standard, of concern? Was that due to human failure or the failure to provide the correct, most modern equipment for the smears to be taken? As the Christie hospital draws 95 per cent. or more of its patients from outside the South Manchester health authority area, will she seriously consider putting it on the same basis as the Royal Marsden in London, which is its own health district?

Mrs. Currie: It would probably be premature of me to comment on what went on, if anything, in the terms my hon. Friend suggests. The Christie does 250,000 smears a year out of a national total of 4 million. Therefore, it is a major part of our screening programme, as my hon. Friend said, although many of those smears come, not through the screening programme, but through work done on patients who have other conditions. I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that the woman in danger is the woman who has never had a smear. It continues to be true in Manchester, as in the rest of the country, that the majority of deaths occur in woman who have never been tested.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal for brief questions.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): My hon. Friend announced that cross-checks have been taken in respect of women who have had smears in north Staffordshire. Can she confirm that cross-checks will be made on samples taken elsewhere, particularly in the north-west, including my constituency of Stockport?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, this is standard practice and we expect first-class internal and external quality control systems to be implemented. I have no information that that is not the case.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Does the Minister accept that she is wrong when she tells the House that the woman in danger is the woman sho has not had a test? The woman who has had a wrongly diagnosed test is in considerable

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

danger. Can she satisfy the House that this cluster of samples which showed problems is a one-off and has no implications for any other district? As the Minister said, many district health authorities use the good facilities at Christie, but we want to ensure that if mistakes have been made in north Staffordshire, they have not been made anywhere else.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, I am satisfied that this is an unusual incident that deserves the full investigation that it is receiving. I repeat what I said earlier: the women who are in danger are those who have never been tested. Most deaths in this country from cervical cancer among our women are those of women who have never had a smear test. I notice that the lady Members in the House are nodding as I say that.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): In view of this morning's press report that the Christie has taken work from large numbers of other authorities, including St. Helens, will the Minister undertake to return to the House with a full statement once she has concluded her investigations? Obviously, a number of women up and down the counry must be worried.

Mrs. Currie: I am satisfied that it is entirely right that the outstanding work at the Christie, which is one of the world's greatest cancer hospitals, with first-class laboratories, should be available to a large number of health authorities. The hospital also acts as assessor for other authorities, which is entirely right and proper. I am satisfied that this batch of 60 slides, which come from one part of the country and whose problems may be due to the way in which the slides were prepared and not so much to the way in which they were read, is being properly investigated and any cause for concern is being alleviated.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The situation on Merseyside should again exercise the mind of the Minister. If such things happen they will obviously undermine women's confidence in the service, and the women the Minister mentioned who have not had a smear may not trust the system. Should she not be seriously concerned to ensure that there is no recurrence of this sort of thing?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman will know of the efforts that my Department made to ensure that the problems in Liverpool were dealt with as promptly as possible once we had been alerted to them. We have learnt the lesson from Liverpool. In part, it was that there was no clear internal or external quality control system. In this case, quality control systems have picked up problems extremely quickly. All the smears that are the subject of dispute were taken within the past few weeks and all the clinicians concerned have been contacted.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Sadly, cases of this sort will continue as long as we have cytological methods that are slow and up to 40 per cent. inaccurate, and which examine only normal looking cells. Will my hon. Friend do all that she possibly can to divert more resources into research relating to automation and accuracy?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, we are as interested as my hon. Friend in eventually getting some form of automation, especially as we are dealing with 4 million smears a year. I was pleased to note at a recent scientific meeting in the Department that about 13 different proposals were presented to us, some of which looked promising. Getting it right is a slow business; for the time being we shall continue to rely on the excellent people who work in our laboratories.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I want to take up the point the Minister made about the women who have not had the test being at greatest risk. Is she satisfied that there is enough expenditure on promotions to encourage women to have the test? Will she assure the House that if there are greater financial needs at Christie hospital and similar hospitals she will ensure that the funding is available to expand the service?

Mrs. Currie: The work in Manchester in particular suggests that one of the key problems in getting people to respond is that the FPC registers are not always accurate. Sometimes that is because the names and addresses of the women concerned have changed and they have not notified their GPs. I met the Manchester family practitioners committee recently. It is taking vigorous steps to update its FPC registers, so we hope that some of the problems will diminish in future.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Will the Minister ensure that when there is a difference between two health districts about the accuracy of smears her Department is called in at an early stage to provide independent assessment? Does she accept the proposal of the Institute of Medical Laboratory Sciences that there should be annual proficiency checks for all cervical cancer screeners as part of a national quality control programme in our laboratories?

Although the Government have numerous procedures for measuring the cost of laboratory services, is it not true that they have no national procedures for monitoring their quality? Will she use national television advertising to give women the confidence to go for a smear test, and will she set up quality control to justify that confidence? Does she accept that there are more likely to be further doubts about the quality of the screening programme in view of the cuts and closures of family planning clinics and the collapsing morale of underpaid laboratory staff? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question.

Mrs. Currie: In answer to the hon. Lady's first question —and I am sure that she would like to hear the answer —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are indeed very serious matters. Let us listen to the answers.

Mrs. Currie: In answer to the hon. Lady's first question, my Department does not itself provide independent assessment. What happens is that the departments that are in dispute are required to call in third party assessment, and that is what they have done from two different regions.

In answer to the second question, we are interested in annual checks on staff proficiency, and we are working together with the profession to see whether it can be introduced. In answer to the third point, that there are no national procedures, let me gently recommend the hon. Lady to go to the Library and read the circular that I issued in January this year. The reference number is

HC(88)1. She will find that the procedures are contained in it. */Interruption./* If the hon. Lady has not read it, I am not surprised that she does not know about it.

In answer to the question about television advertising, as 4 million smears are being taken every year it is probably now unnecessary to organise a campaign of that kind. In answer to the last two questions, I do not think there is any reason for doubts of the kind that the hon. Lady has expressed. Opposition Members have called for 20 years for the cervical cancer screening programme to be brought in. We have now done that, and I am satisfied that it will save many lives in future.

Business of the House

3.46 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 JULY—Supplemental timetable motion on the Education Reform Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Education Reform Bill (1st Allotted Day).

TUESDAY 19 JULY—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Education Reform Bill (2nd Allotted Day).

Motions relating to the Housing Benefit, The Family Credit and the Income Support (General) No. 2 Amendment Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 20 JULY—Supplemental timetable motion on the Local Government Finance Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Motion on the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity.

THURSDAY 21 JULY—Estimates Day (3rd Allotted Day). There will be debates on hospital and community health and other services, England (class XIV, vote 1) and on the Training Commission (class VII, vote 5) so far as it relates to adult employment and youth training.

Motion on the British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order.

Motion on the Church of England (Pensions) Measure.

At Ten o'clock the Question will be put on all outstanding estimates.

FRIDAY 22 JULY—There will be a debate on the White paper "Reform of Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911" (Cm. 408) on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 25 JULY—Remaining stages of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill */Lords/*.

The House may be asked to consider any Lords amendments which may be received. The House will also wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the summer Adjournment on Friday 29 July until Wednesday 19 October.

Mr. Dobson: It is customary to thank the Leader of the House for his business statement, but I would be a hypocrite if I thanked him for what he has told us today.

Before I deal with the business set down for next week, may I ask the Leader of the House to tell us when we are likely to get the next statement on the Rover fiasco? The work force at least is entitled to find out as soon as possible what its future is to be.

From the proposed business for next week, it is clear that we have now reached the ridiculous stage where the Government's legislative business is being organised and master minded by the same people who are organising flight departures at Gatwick airport. It is proposed that on Monday and Tuesday we are to have guillotined debates on the Lords amendments to the Education Reform Bill. The Lords have made, in case the yobboes on the Government Benches have not noticed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Moderation in language is the rule here.

Mr. Dobson: They are honourable yobboes.

The Lords have made more than 569 amendments to the Education Reform Bill. The amendments cover no fewer than 97 pages and a wide variety of important issues, including parents' ballots, academic freedom, the funding of universities, including those in Scotland, and, particularly, the vexed and delicate topic of religious education and religious services in schools.

The proposed time to be made available to debate all those issues works out at about 80 seconds per amendment —not enough time to read them out, let alone debate and consider them. The Government proclaimed tht the Education Reform Bill was a matter of the utmost importance, but the timetable proposed for next week shows that they intend to treat the Bill, the House of Commons and the nation's children with contempt. I remind Conservative Members that, if the Bill is as important to the future of our children's education as Ministers claim, there are no action replays of childhood. The House must get things right, but there is no chance of getting them right as things stand at present.

On Wednesday, we are expected to debate the Lords amendments to the poll tax Bill. The Lords have made at least 482 amendments—that was the latest count—to that flagship of the Government's legislative programme. The time proposed to be made available to debate the amendments is equivalent to about 60 seconds per amendment.

Both those Bills have been changed almost beyond recognition by the Lords, yet scarcely any time is provided for this elected House to scrutinise the Bills. I say to the Leader of the House, Ministers and Conservative Members that, if they do not make more time available to debate those measures, these will not be Acts of Parliament; they will be little more than ministerial directives, unconsidered by the elected part of this Parliament.

Will the Leader of the House reconsider his proposals? Will he give those people affected by the changes in the Lords the opportunity to advise hon. Members about what they think of the changes that have been made and then bring the Bills back and provide time to debate them properly? We hear a lot of cant from time to time about the need to sustain parliamentary democracy, and Conservative members should remember that, on all occasions, Opposition Members have sustained that position.

The biggest threat to parliamentary democracy is when Governments treat democracy with contempt. That is what we face now, and we call upon the Leader of the House to reconsider the proposals and come back with something sensible that can be sustained.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked me first about the Rover company. I do not think that there is anything useful that I can say at the moment, but the Government certainly intend to keep the House informed in the appropriate way. We can discuss the matter through the usual channels.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the Education Reform Bill and, in particular, four issues that he said were extremely important. The amendments to the Bill are available in the Vote Office. I intend to table the timetable motion later today. I believe that the time allocated for consideration of the Lords amendments will prove to be adequate. In view of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I am prepared to have the matter examined again through the usual channels.

I believe that a full day's debate on the Lords amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill will prove to be adequate. I listened to what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said and I am prepared to examine the matter again through the usual channels.

Some of the more general remarks of the hon. Member were a bit rich. I reject his criticisms. We shall complete our consideration of the Finance Bill this evening, and I have announced the concluding stages of three major Bills and the proposal that we rise for the summer recess before the end of July. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that points to disarray in the Government's business programme, he must be thankful that he was not here to see the legislative programme of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): To take up my right hon. Friend's welcome response to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), will he bear in mind that Conservative Members would like to debate the Education Reform Bill and the Local Government Finance Bill in some detail and with some seriousness? Will he consider devoting all of next week to the Education Reform Bill, leaving the Local Government Finance Bill until we return in October? Many of us would be perfectly happy to consider the Bills in August as well. I know that my right hon. Friend accepts that these are matters that deserve the most careful and earnest consideration. I hope, therefore, that he will think again.

Mr. Wakeham: I have said to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that I shall consider these matters again. I have not yet given an undertaking that I can make any changes. I accept that there are a great many amendments to both Bills, but most of them are technical and drafting. A further significant number arise from concessions and commitments which were made during the Bill's passage.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the Leader of the House agree that much time could be saved in debating the Lords amendments to both the Education Reform Bill and the Local Government Finance Bill if the Government were prepared to accept many of the sensible amendments that were won in another place, not least those relating to academic freedom and exemption for student nurses, which were tabled and moved by my noble Friends? Can the right hon. Gentleman give any hope that these amendments will be accepted? Various concessions have led to some amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill. They do not make it a good Bill, but if they are accepted it will be less bad. What arrangements are being made to extend the concessions to Scottish legislation?

Mr. Wakeham: The substance of the Bill will have to await the debate. The Government have examined carefully all the issues raised in debate and have accepted a number of suggestions from Opposition parties and from their own supporters. We recognise that in some respects the Bills have been improved. We are grateful to all

concerned for their contributions. We are criticised, however, for making concessions when it comes to bringing legislation forward from another place.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will my right hon. Friend confirm the rule that those who are paid under the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act should not normally absent themselves abroad while the House is sitting? Does he expect next week's business to be attended by the Leader of the Opposition? Does the accept that his safari is strictly necessary?

Mr. Wakeham: I have enough problems on my hands without worrying about the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Is the Leader of the House aware that he does his reputation no good when he boasts that he has announced the final consideration of two Bills and that the Government are managing the business properly, when he could not do that if he had not announced that the Bills were to be guillotined in the first place?

We and the country understand that the Cabinet consists of Members of Parliament and Members of the other place, but it is clear from the right hon. Gentleman's statement that there is not one parliamentarian among them. Why does he seek to undermine Members of Parliament, which is the effect of his statement? We are expected to say to our constituents, "Obey the laws that have been passed in a freely elected Parliament," when those laws have not been discussed? I cannot say to my constituents, "You must obey this law because it was debated. We lost the vote but it was debated."

It is unacceptable that we should be asked to deal with 500 amendments in one day on the poll tax Bill. It does not matter that all bar two of the amendments were tabled by the Government. We are entitled to discuss Government amendments. We know that—*[Interruption.]*—every one of those Government amendments in the other place was requested in the House of Commons in Committee and on Report and we are entitled to a proper and full explanation of why the Government have now amended the Bill in the other place—a Bill that they said could not be amended in the other place because it was a taxation matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman's comments are not entirely connected with the business for next week.

Mr. Rooker: Yes they are.

Mr. Wakeham: However, I appreciate that a great deal of business is set down for next week and I have said that I am ready to have discussions through the usual channels. But the hon. Gentleman will recall that on previous occasions the House has considered a large number of Lords amendments on a reasonable time scale. For example, in 1986, just over 580 Lords amendments to the Financial Services Bill were dealt with in just under eight hours.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the House is to have any regard to the statements made this afternoon by the hon. Members for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), the absence of the well-paid Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition is an outrage? Will he make arrangements to bring him back from looking at the one-party state of Zambia and the failed Marxist economy of Mozambique in order to participate in the important work of next week?

Mr. Wakeham: As I have said, I am not responsible for the Leader of the Opposition's travel arrangements. I have announced what I believe to be reasonable business for next week, and I have said that I shall look at it again in view of the request of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. However, I must point out that, while both Bills came under a guillotine motion, passed by the House, both allowed a considerable amount of time for discussion.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House bear in mind that on several occasions we have asked when legislation would be brought forward to restore democracy in Northern Ireland and on several occasions he has told us that discussions are going on? In the light of the impending end of term and the pressure of next week's business, and the reported comments of the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic that it is impossible to maintain a proper and civilised relationship with the United Kingdom, may we have a statement in the near future on when Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, will obtain proper democracy?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the anxiety about that matter. However, any changes in that system would best be considered against the background of the wider progress of Northern Ireland affairs. I intend to invite the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) to see me for a chat about those matters before the House rises. I cannot promise early progress, but I should very much like to hear his views.

Mr. Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): As my right hon. Friend has announced the dates for the summer recess, will he update us on the televising of Parliament? What progress is being made by the Committee that is considering the matter? Will its report be debated in the House? Without giving actual dates, can he give us some idea of when the experiment will start?

Mr. Wakeham: The Select Committee is making good progress and is working hard. I cannot give my hon. Friend any guidance on the date that its report will be published except to say that it will not be before the House rises for the summer. The House will have an opportunity to debate and make a decision on the report before the experiment is approved and takes place.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): May I press the Leader of the House further on the question of a debate on the future of Rover, particularly in view of yesterday's statement from the European Commission referring to the Rover Group's move from mass car production to specialist car production, a move that has never been debated in the House, which has enormous implications—even the buffoons on the Conservative Benches should listen to this—for the west midlands car components industry? Are those matters to be left solely to the decisions of Mr. Peter Sutherland and Lord Young, neither of whom is answerable to the House?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman, as a fair man, will recognise that we have had several debates on Rover and the substance of what was said in them is a matter not for me but for those taking part. I have said that I recognise

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that this is an important matter. The Government wish to keep the House informed of any developments, and I shall arrange for that to be done through the usual channels. That is the best way to proceed.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): If my right hon. Friend, as a result of his discussions through the usual channels on next week's crowded business, needs to find a little more parliamentary time, may I suggest that he considers postponing Friday's debate on the reform of the Official Secrets Act until the spill-over period? Is he aware that it seems a little over-secretive to be debating the reform of official secrecy in the dog watches of a July Friday when there is much interest in the matter which would benefit from further consideration of the recently published White Paper in prime parliamentary time?

Mr. Wakeham: Many of us find that we are in the House on Fridays and we are talking about a normal Friday. I recognise that for some people Friday is not the most convenient day, but I arranged the debate because the Government undertook to do so. Obviously, if there was a general wish to change it, I would consider that, but I believe that it is best to proceed as I announced.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made to the House on the current situation in Nicaragua—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may find this funny, but people are dying in Nicaragua and it is not a funny subject—particularly in the light of the actions of the Americans in the last few weeks, and bearing in mind that the American Senate is considering an amendment to reinstitute lethal aid to the Contra terrorists to institute violence, destabilisation and attacks on a young democracy. We as a democracy should be stating clearly our revulsion towards those activities and pressurising the Americans, through the House, to back off and leave Nicaragua alone.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise the hon. Lady a debate on that subject next week, but there are ways in which she may be able to raise it. I have seen the early-day motion on the subject in her name, but I have to tell her that the Government deplore that motion, which seeks to justify actions by the Sandinista Government which are in clear contravention of their commitment to the democratisation embodied in the Guatemala peace agreement.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Last Monday evening, when the Foreign Secretary appeared on television on "Wogan", the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland also appeared on television when he said that, in effect, it was vital that he should stay on an extra year in that office in order to bring his political initiatives to a successful conclusion. The people of Northern Ireland are mystified because they are not aware of any political initiative that would require the Secretary of State to stay on for another year to bring it to a conclusion. Therefore, may we have an urgent debate next week so that the Secretary of State can reveal to the elected representatives of Northern Ireland and to its people, who have been treated like a second-rate colony, this mystical so-called political initiative? The democracy that is so essential for Northern Ireland's progress might then be restored.

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that I cannot find time for a debate on Northern Ireland next week. I also regret that I do not have time to watch the television programme, whose name I have forgotten, that the hon. Gentleman saw last week. However, I wonder whether he has paraphrased exactly what my right hon. Friend said. My right hon. Friend is an excellent Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the longer he stays the better. However, if my right hon. Friend thinks that he can complete the task of solving the problems of Northern Ireland in one year, he is more of an optimist than I suspect he really is.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to hon. Members to ask questions about next week's business and not to make general comments.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to study the "A Claim of Right for Scotland" document produced yesterday by the campaign for the Scottish Assembly? Do the Government intend to make a statement on that document and explain for how long they will continue to ignore the overwhelming majority opinion in Scotland in favour of constitutional change?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman makes claims for his authority to speak for opinion in Scotland which I do not recognise in election results. I have not studied the document that he referred to, but if he sends me a copy I will look at it.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I hope that my right hon. Friend will join me in deploring some of the mischief-making by Conservative Members about the absence of the Leader of the Opposition while he is visiting black dictators in South Africa when he should be in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should ask about the business for next week.

Mr. Hamilton: Would it be in order for my right hon. Friend to authorise a debate next week on the value to this country of the Leader of the Opposition being abroad as often as possible, because confidence in Britain will inevitably grow the more he demonstrates to foreigners why the Labour party is unelectable?

Mr. Wakeham: I am quite sure that I could get such a motion in order, but I have no intention of trying.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat that business questions are supposed to be about business next week, not about scoring political points.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As it is Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday on Monday—Opposition Members honour his memory and would wish for a Government statement on the subject—is the Leader of the House aware that we are especially pleased that the Leader of the Opposition has been in southern Africa and making the sort of remarks about the criminal apartheid regime that the Government refuse to make? My right hon. Friend has been representing the majority British point of view about what is happening in South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing further to add. If the right hon. Gentleman has to explain himself to his colleagues, that is up to him.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider my request last week for an urgent debate on the Cleveland child sex abuse case? He courteously wrote to me and said that that was not possible, but since then Dr. Higgs has repeated her assertion that all her diagnoses were correct and Michael Bishop has repeated his assertion that his department was right to take children away from their parents when they were manifestly not sexually abused. One has only to read the judgment of both Judge Myrella Cohen and Lord Justice Butler-Sloss to come to that conclusion. It would be a manifest injustice to people in my constituency and the area if the House were to rise for the summer recess before we had a debate on this subject.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is an important subject and how strongly my hon. Friend and his constituents feel about it. I cannot promise him Government time, but there are ways in which he could raise the matter in the House before the summer recess. I invite him to do that.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that the amendments to the Education Reform Bill constitute a document that is larger than the Education Act 1944? Does he believe that it is reasonable and fair, or that it has anything to do with improving the education opportunities of all our children, to consider such a lengthy document with so many amendments in two days? Will he give a commitment that we will have more time to debate this issue, which is vital for the nation and its children?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is an important measure and also that it is substantially longer than the 1944 Act. A substantial number of the amendments are technical and constitute concessions, and I believe that the time that I have allocated is adequate and will prove to be so. I have said that I will consider the matter again, but I do not think I can add anything further.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend talk today to the Lord Chancellor and Lord Denham with a view to some action—not a statement—next week to prevent the very large number of our constituents who visit the Houses of Parliament having to queue in the rain before they come in? If we can put up an awning for the State opening of Parliament, we can put one up for the people who want to visit their Parliament day after day.

Mr. Wakeham: That matter has been looked at in the past and, of course, can be looked at again, but with all the powers I have, I do not think I could organise that for next week.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Will the Leader of the House give permission to the Prime Minister to tell us next week about the angry exchanges that she no doubt had with the President of Turkey about the lack of human rights and the lack of respect for the Helsinki Final Act in Turkey, and the angry demands which she no doubt made for the removal of his troops of occupation from the northern part of Cyprus? They have been occupying part of a fellow Commonwealth country since 1974.

Mr. Wakeham: I can only repeat what I said last week. Turkey is a dependable ally with which we enjoy a close relationship, and President Evren is a welcome guest here.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an urgent debate on the role of the Leader of the Opposition, especially with reference to the tradition of the House—which seems now to be cast aside—that senior politicians, such as the Leader of the Opposition, do not criticise the Government when abroad? Will my right hon. Friend also arrange for a debate on the encouragement of South African exports by the Leader of the Opposition in drinking South African wine? Also, will he arrange for a debate on the role of the Leader of the Opposition in by-elections? Perhaps he could suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should at least be in this country during by-elections.

Mr. Wakeham: As I have said to several of my hon. Friends, I have no responsibility—for which I am greatly relieved—for what the Leader of the Opposition decides to do or not to do. I have outlined some very important business for the House to deal with next week, and that will be the most profitable way for the House to spend its time. I have enough difficulties dealing with that business.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Leader of the House will no doubt be aware that, last Wednesday, the Public Accounts Committee published its 31st report on "Naval Warship and Weapons Procurement". I should like him to arrange a debate on that important report next week, but if he cannot do so will he draw the following controversial point to the Prime Minister's attention? The Ministry of Defence told the Public Accounts Committee that

"they sought to avoid getting into a situation where one contractor won all the business in warship procurement, which might give short-term but not long-term value for money."

That is what the Ministry of Defence told the Public Accounts Committee, yet the Leader of the House will recall that last Monday the junior Minister for Defence Procurement came to the Dispatch Box and announced that the whole frigate programme was being placed with one yard. That was precisely the opposite of what the PAC had been told. The House is entitled to know whether the MOD has changed its mind or whether the PAC has been substantially misled.

Mr. Wakeham: A third explanation is that the hon. Gentleman has got it a bit muddled. The Government respond to reports from the PAC at the proper time, when they have given them proper consideration, and that is what they will do on this occasion. I am not prepared to arrange a debate in advance of a response from the Government to the PAC's report.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that British Telecom is still giving franchises to allow the transmission of pornographic material on the telephones? Will he arrange for the Home Secretary to come to the House next week and put a stop to that vile practice which is corrupting our youth?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know that I can get my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to come to the House to make a statement, but I am sure that those responsible for such matters and those responsible when there are any breaches of the law will have heard what my hon. Friend said and will take the appropriate action.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): May I revert to the answer that the right hon. Gentleman gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), calling in aid the Financial Services Bill? That was not subject to a guillotine, whereas the Bill that we are to debate on Wednesday will be subject to a guillotine. When there is a guillotine on a Bill with 500 amendments time is needed to discuss it properly. While some of the amendments are technical, other amendments from the Lords concern matters which have not been discussed either in Committee or on Report in this House and there is need for time to do that. Does he realise that, although announcing the rising of the House on 29 July and the return on 19 October, he seems to be rushing a Bill which will affect every person and every family in this country, and that the country will not forgive a Government who rush through such a Bill or an Opposition that allow them to do so?

Mr. Wakeham: I did not pretend that I was quoting an exact parallel. I recognise that there is a difference between a Bill under a guillotine and a Bill not under a guillotine. But the House dealt with 580 amendments to the Financial Services Bill, which shows that inherently the number of amendments is not the only factor to take into account. The Education Reform Bill has already had more than 200 hours of discussion in the House of Commons and some 150 hours in the House of Lords. I believe that the time that I have allocated is adequate, but, as I have said, I am prepared to have discussions through the usual channels.

Mr. Andrew McKay (Berkshire, East): As I gather that next week the Leader of the Opposition will be coming back from his safari, would it not be a placatory end-of-term gesture for my right hon. Friend to change the business next week and arrange for a debate on one-party states in southern Africa to give the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to speak on something of which he has first-hand experience?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend tempts me, but I shall not fall for the temptation.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is there anything in the Education Reform Bill next week which will ensure that in future the Conservative party will be able to recruit much better qualified Back Benchers, rather than the bunch that we have had today asking illiterate questions based on an illiterate document and brief issued by Bernard Ingham? Surely for £22,500 their constituents are entitled to expect a much higher standard than primary 5 or 6.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman usually makes a better fist of it than that; he is usually a good performer on these occasions. I did not notice him here at 3 o'clock this morning to discuss the motion on short speeches, so that is not the excuse. I think that he must have welcomed my suggestion of a holiday beginning at the end of July.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on manners, conventions and the behaviour of Members of this place outside the Chamber? Is he not particularly disturbed at the denigration of this country by the Leader of the Opposition during his recent visit to Africa and his very unpatriotic remarks about the conventions of this House? Is not my right hon. Friend also disturbed by the fact that today some 40 Labour Members left the Kensington by-election to visit my constituency, without letting me know, on a fruitless exercise to celebrate the terrorist Nelson Mandela's birthday?

Mr. Wakeham: I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend, but conventions and good manners are primarily a matter of self-discipline. Right hon. and hon. Members must decide how they feel they should behave, and conduct themselves accordingly.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Hopefully, Sir, business for next week. As the West German courts have found that there was no Libyan involvement whatsoever in the bombing of the Berlin disco, and as the Prime Minister listened to and acted on the lying misrepresentations of General Vernon Walters about the involvement of Libya and allowed British bases to be used outside NATO arrangements for the bombing of Tripoli, when can the House have an opportunity to debate the necessary compensation that should be paid both to the Libyan Government and to the Libyan people?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept all the points in the hon. Gentleman's question, but it is not for me to comment in detail on what he said. I will see that the matter which he raises is referred to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As one who spends more time than some other hon. Members in this House, and as one who is used, particularly in important debates, to the sea-green purity, the ininterrupted purity, of those on the Opposition Benches, particularly in debates on education reform and the community charge, may I say how pleased I and, I am sure, many of my colleagues would be to stay here for the first week of August, or even the whole of August, to get that important, vital, popular and progressive business through the House? Will my right hon. Friend, when he is having discussions through the usual channels, ask the hon. Gentleman the shadow Leader of the House how many of his hon. Friends would actually be here in August to debate this business, because I think that when he gets the answer to that question he will find out the true meaning of the word "cant"?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is far too modest. I know from my time as Patronage Secretary, and my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary knows, that there are no limits to the support that my hon. Friend will give the Government on all occasions. If we asked him to stay for the whole of August and September, I know that he would do so very willingly, and I am very grateful to him for his support.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the proposed closure of Marconi Radar in my constituency and the decision by Marconi to concentrate production in the south-east? Does he not agree that this decision, which has caused dismay on

Tyneside, raises important regional and management considerations which should be given early examination by the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Lady's concern. I know that any closures are distressing to the people concerned, but some of them are inevitable and cannot be avoided. I recognise that this raises important issues. I have a lot of Marconi workers in my own constituency, and very high-quality, skilled workers they are, but I cannot promise an early debate on the subject.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Will my right hon. Friend resist demands for extra time to be given for the Local Government Finance Bill on the ground that, contrary to what we have heard today, given the number of concessions and the way in which the Government have won virtually every vote in the other place, there are only one or two matters of substantial difference between the two Houses? One night will be quite sufficient for the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) to make his reputation in the Labour party by explaining what Labour party policy is. How many seconds were available to discuss each amendment on the various Bills when the last Labour Government introduced four—or was it five?—guillotine motions in one day?

Mr. Wakeham: It was five guillotine motions in one day, but that was not something for which I had any responsibility. My hon. Friend makes a very fair point. The Local Government Finance Bill had two days' debate in this House on Second Reading; 147 hours in Committee and five days on Report and Third Reading. It has had one day in the Lords on Second Reading, over 54 hours in Committee, 24 hours on Report and one day on Third Reading. The matters that are outstanding are important, but, I believe, relatively simple for the House to resolve.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Should there not be a special debate next week on the role of the Tory media, remembering the slogan, "Make it simple, make it short and make it up"? I say that specifically about a rape case involving a young person who had her name mentioned in *The Sun*, causing great distress to her family. Is it not time that there were controls? Government Ministers speak about decency and good manners. Is it not time that we saw decency and good manners in the British media, particularly in the so-called popular press?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise when an injustice is done to somebody in the newspapers, but I have no comment to make on an individual case. There are ways of seeking redress, and I do not believe that a debate next week would be the way forward, although I recognise that this is an important matter.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): When my right hon. Friend is discussing through the usual channels the timetable for the Education Reform Bill, will he bear in mind that all the contentious issues raised today by the Opposition were fully explored in Committee and on the Floor of the House and that the concessions made arising from those discussions were widely welcomed on both sides of the House and outside? Will he also bear in mind that there are relatively few points of contention remaining between this House and the House of Lords and that, above all, those in schools, universities and polytechnics who are responsible for implementing the provisions of the Bill require certainty as soon as possible so that they can undertake the necessary planning?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely. My hon. Friend puts his points extremely clearly. I am sure that everybody accepts the validity of his argument.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): One of the great scandals in our midst is that of mass unemployment. From today's figures we can see that there are still large parts of the country with high unemployment. Wolverhampton is today marked as the black spot for unemployment in the west midlands. Lying behind those statistics is the human tragedy of people languishing on the dole when they want to make a contribution to society. I want to ask the Leader of the House if he will advise his Government that they should not be euphoric——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should ask for a debate.

Mr. Turner: I am asking the Leader of the House a question. Will he make a statement of hope to all those people whom I have mentioned? Will he, before the summer recess, give them some hope that the Government will provide an opportunity for them to find a job and security at an early date?

Mr. Wakeham: I know that the hon. Gentleman speaks for his constituents, and that is perfectly right. He must recognise that, although unemployment is a tragedy for anyone, the Government have to continue with the policies they believe will bring unemployment down, as it has been coming down month after month for many months now. A welcome from him for what has been achieved over the past two years or so in falling unemployment would be appreciated, particularly as one of the areas in which unemployment is falling fastest is the west midlands.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Will my right hon. Friend ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement to the House about British-Zimbabwean relationships because a gross insult was paid to the leader of the Opposition when he landed in Zimbabwe yesterday? There was no VIP to meet him and he was treated in a disgraceful way because he was not regarded as a very important person. Also, the Zimbabwean press has treated a senior Member of the House in a disgraceful way. He was not even recognised because journalists were asking, "Which one is Kinnock?"

Mr. Wakeham: That matter has been raised with me once or twice before. If I provided time for all the debates for which hon. Members are asking, it would not be a question of our rising on 29 July but we would hardly rise in time to come back on 19 October.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Leader of the House will be aware of the publication by British Rail this morning of possible options on rail links with the Channel tunnel. He will be aware that many people believe the report to be unambitious and inappropriate. Will he arrange for a statement on rail transport to be made next week?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government welcome the publication of the report, which gives British Rail's most recent analysis of the capacity of the existing network and

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the options for improving speed and capacity between London and the tunnel if, as seems likely, it becomes necessary at some time in the future. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that much more work needs to be done before British Rail is ready to offer firm conclusions and recommendations. It is for British Rail to pursue its studies in consultation with local authorities and other interested parties in the affected areas.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and arrange an urgent debate on Nicaragua next week? Will he accept that people who have been there perhaps know a little more about what is going on? Will he further accept that after a recent conversation with the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who came out with what I would consider to be non-factual information about the country, perhaps there is an urgent need for the House to have a debate, not least to educate some Conservative Members in what is happening there? That country, which is smaller than England and has a population of fewer than 3 million, is fighting a war against the most powerful nation on earth. Congress at this moment is being asked to reconsider funding lethal aid to a hostile army of 9 million. It is an urgent matter, and I urge the Leader of the House to reconsider his remarks.

Mr. Wakeham: I told the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) that I cannot find time for a debate next week. I have to stick to that view.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): May I make a helpful suggestion to the Leader of the House for when he returns to the usual channels to discuss next week's business? Would it not help if he were to propose that Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday should be spent on the Education Reform Bill, that the poll tax Bill should have three days' debate when we return in October and that the Housing Bill, which is in a shambles, should be dropped and we should have a new Bill in the next Session that really deals with the housing problems facing Britain? If the right hon. Gentleman has confidence in the legislative programme of the Government and believes in democracy, I am sure that he will recognise and be confident of the fact that the issues will be properly debated in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: I have confidence not only in the Government's legislative programme but in the fact that the House will approve it. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman made his suggestions in a spirit of helpfulness to the Government, but I regret that I must reject them.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The reply given by the Leader of the House to my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) is not good enough when we are talking about the poll tax. The Leader of the House accepted that the examples given in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr were not identical. Therefore, there is room for the Leader of the House to reconsider the time allowed—I am not talking about minutes—to discuss the massive number of amendments from the House of Lords.

The reference to the hours that have been spent on the Bill in the House has no significance when we consider that 500 amendments have been submitted for consideration by the other place. In all fairness to the House and the people outside, there should be sufficient time—not minutes, but days—to discuss the poll tax Bill amendments so that we can ensure that there is a full and honest debate on that important issue. May we have an assurance that there will be sufficient time, not seconds, to discuss that important Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: I should not have proposed what I have unless I thought that it allowed sufficient time. I stand by that view. It is no good me pretending that one can look back to a past Bill and draw a correct and complete analogy. I have to justify the time for this Bill and the Lords amendments. I believe that the time I have proposed is adequate. It will be for the House to decide, but I have told the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends that there will be discussions through the usual channels. I do not believe that I can be more reasonable than that.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Given the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), which makes it look as if there will not be an extension of the debate on the poll tax, and given the fact that the Bill will be in operation in Scotland, may we have a debate to discuss the serious constitutional and democratic crisis that has arisen as a result of the production of that legislation, which will cut the franchise, destroy civil liberties and bring about the end of local government as we have known it in the past? We should have a debate that covers the wide range of constitutional problems facing us now.

Mr. Wakeham: That sounds like a repeat of a speech which the hon. Gentleman may have made in the many hours during which we discussed the legislation, or perhaps a trailer for the speech which he hopes to make in the debate on the Lords amendments, if he is called. I do not believe that it requires any comment from me during business questions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On Friday 22 July the White Paper on official secrets is to be discussed. Will the Attorney-General respond to the debate? After all, he has spent over £1 million of taxpayers' money trying to suppress "Spycatcher". If he is in the House to answer the debate, as one hopes, we will be able to raise the issue of why he has allowed Tory sympathisers in MI5 to organise a seditious conspiracy against the 1974 Labour Government on evidence provided and never refuted by any member of the Government. Yet there has been no prosecution. Not even a little finger has been lifted by the Attorney-General to seek out the malefactors. Instead, he has thrown away £1 million of taxpayers' money on trying to suppress the truth.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not normal, in announcing the business, to announce who the speakers will be in any debate, but I should be surprised if the Attorney-General were to take part in the debate, which is in essence a Home Office matter. I should have thought that it was appropriate for the Home Secretary to take part. If the hon. Gentleman hopes to be called in the debate, may I suggest that he does a little homework before he comes to the House? He should recognise that the White Paper is about the reform of criminal law and that the matter to which he has referred was dealt with under the civil law.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): In all seriousness, will the Leader of the House reconsider the answer that he gave a few moments ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin)? Will he arrange for an early statement on what the Government intend to do to prevent the closure of Marconi in Gateshead, with the loss of 450 jobs? Will he repudiate the answer given by the Minister of Trade and Industry yesterday, who implied that this was not a matter for the Government? Given the fact that not only will social and economic issues face the locality, but that there will be a loss of Government revenue and an increase in Government expenditure consequent on the closure, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made? Will he reject the view that this is not a matter for the Government? If it is the view of Ministers that the closure is not a matter for the Government, is it not time that that view was changed?

Mr. Wakeham: Individual decisions by management as to how it organises itself are not a matter for the Government, and I see no case for the Government making a statement on the matter. That does not mean that we are not concerned about individual cases of unemployment. We will seek to do what can be done. The whole thrust of the Government's economic policy has been to produce lasting and worthwhile jobs. Surely the announcement of the unemployment figures today is adequate confirmation that that policy is working.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I raise two matters with the Leader of the House? First, I hope that he remembers that recently on business questions I raised with him the difficulties that would arise for local authorities, including Bradford, if they were forced to make refunds to water authorities of sewerage charges. Will he ask officials in the Department of the Environment to write to me suggesting how I can raise the matter in the avalanche of amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill, so that I may have some warning as to when I need to be in the Chamber?

Secondly, may I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1246, which is an attempt to secure a debate on the substantial increase in visa fees, which means that children are being charged £60 each to join their families in this country?

[That the Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 925), dated 25th May 1988, be revoked.]

Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate before 29 July so that Government Ministers can seek to justify why they are erecting financial obstacles to families being united in this country?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know what I can do to help the hon. Gentleman on the first point.

Mr. Madden: Just try.

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely; I will try. If we can indicate to the hon. Gentleman in any way when he should be in the Chamber to make his contribution to the debate, without having to sit around, we will do so. I shall ask the Minister who is on duty to do his best for the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot guarantee 100 per cent. success.

The other matter is one for discussion through the usual channels.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does the Leader of the House not stop trying to flannel hon. Members about the guillotine next week on the poll tax legislation? Why does he refer constantly to the fact that he will have discussions through the usual channels, when he knows full well that he has no intention of changing his mind? He is just waiting for the end of questions on the business statement so that he can heave a sigh of relief and say, "I have got away with all that." The truth is that the poll tax guillotine is set against a background of hostile opposition, not only from everyone on the Opposition Benches, but from 37 Tory Members who were against certain aspects of it and in the House of Lords they had to bring in the greatest number of peers—some from as far away as Canada—since the introduction of the Common Market legislation. If the Government had any ring of democracy about them, they would put that legislation on one side. As for the taunts about turning up in August, some of us would come here long before the grouse season begins to fight against the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Wakeham: It sounds to me as though the grouse season has already begun. I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is asking me to do. Is he asking me not to have discussions through the usual channels? I have indicated what I propose to do. Whether the hon. Gentleman likes it or not, I shall do as I have said. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Local Government Finance Bill has had a substantial amount of discussion, both in this House and in the Lords, and that I moved a timetable motion early on to make sure that it had proper discussion.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I thank the Leader of the House for his courteous response at 3 am this morning on the subject, among other matters, of the appointment of the European Commissioner? From his study of early-day motion 228 and the 10 other early-day motions, which Mr. Speaker has asked me not to mention by number so that they do not have to be printed in *Hansard,* does he not think it proper that the announcement of the appointment of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) as a European Commissioner should be made in the House of Commons, so that hon. Members can ask questions about whether it is proper to appoint one of our colleagues who supposedly—repeat, supposedly—for 14 days deceived not only his senior Cabinet colleagues but his senior civil servants and his Prime Minister?

If the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks really did that in January 1986 and really deserved to be ousted from his position by, among others, the then Chief Whip—the Leader of the House will remember that in a previous incarnation he was Chief Whip—who, if we believe the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) in his book "Heseltine", told him that he could not stay, is it proper that the right hon. and learned Member should be appointed this country's European Commissioner without at least a debate next week in the House?

[That this House notes in the book, Campaign, by Rodney Tyler, the Selling of the Prime Minister: from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative Central Office—A unique inside account of the Battle for Power that the author on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, states 'It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27th January 1986 when Mrs. Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign. . . . ' and on page 3 that 'On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shaky enough

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to doubt her future, though some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared the following morning. It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent', and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account of what transpired between 3rd January and 27th January 1986, at Number 10 Downing Street, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

Mr. Wakeham: In order to comply with Mr. Speaker's request I will not mention the early-day motions that the hon. Gentleman has tabled. The hon. Gentleman must have been a little near to sleep at 3 am this morning if he thought that my response to the debate mentioned my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks. (Mr. Brittan) in any shape or form. I did not mention him. The hon. Gentleman has a wild and fervent imagination. I am amazed at some of the things that he says in the House.

Mr. Harry Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for raising a point of order, but during my question to the Leader of the House I referred to Government Members asking illiterate questions based on an illiterate document issued by Bernard Ingham. In my question I compared Government Members to five and six-year-olds. On reflection, that is an insult to our five and six-year-olds. I unreservedly withdraw any aspersion that I cast on five and six-year-olds.

Mr. Speaker: I think that we should get on with the Finance Bill.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

KP Foods

4.49 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the past you have very kindly helped me when I have tried to raise the issue of the closure of the KP Foods factory in my constituency. I wonder whether you can help me further. I have since discovered that 550 of the workers who will lose their jobs in that factory will not show up in the Government's unemployment statistics. Perhaps you can guide me to the Department and the set of statistics in which I will find those 550 workers listed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady knows that it is not my role or function to give tactical advice. I am sure that there are others better qualified than me to do that.

Orders of the Day

Finance (No. 2) Bill

Order for Third reading read.

4.50 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill gives effect to the most far-reaching reforms of the personal tax system that we have witnessed in this country in a single Budget. Whatever else may divide us—we have discovered during the passage of the Bill that the Government and the Opposition are divided on some aspects of the Budget—we are united in recognising the significance of the reforms set out in the Bill.

Through all our debates, in Committee and on the Floor of the House, two facts have shone through with increasing clarity. The first is that the Government have a coherent and successful strategy for taxation, and the second is that the Opposition do not. Those facts not only divide the Government and Opposition; they are one of the main reasons that explain why we remain the Government and they remain the Opposition.

One notable feature of our debates has been the lengths to which the Opposition have often seemed to want to go to avoid debating taxation. They have been very reluctant to commit themselves to any specific proposals. Yesterday they tried, and failed, to have a rerun of the public expenditure debates that we all enjoyed last February.

It is no surprise that the Opposition want to avoid debating tax at all costs. They know, as we know and as the country knows, that the 1988 Budget of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was a landmark. It marked the final and decisive move away from a tax regime based on envy to a tax regime designed to promote enterprise and efficiency and thus to enhance prosperity. The measures contained in this Finance Bill are not a one-off; they are the logical consequence of a series of measures introduced in nine successive Budgets and enacted in successive Finance Bills with one clear aim in mind—not, as the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) would have it, to line the pockets of the "super-rich", but to improve the supply performance of the economy.

It is self-evident that that is working. Our macro-economic policies, designed to keep downward pressure on inflation and create the right framework for growth in the private sector, have been focused on improving incentives and creating a culture that encourages risk-taking and makes investment worth while. The investment boom, the like of which we have not seen for a considerable number of years, is not unrelated to the change in cultural attitudes that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his predecessors have brought about.

Opposition Members have either never understood that change or have never wished to understand it; it is not clear which. As far as one can see, they remain wedded to the orthodoxy of the 1960s—that the only purpose of cutting tax rates is to give a sluggish economy a short-term fiscal boost. That is stone age economics, and they ought to know better by now.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the Chief Secretary confirm a figure that the Treasury has produced? Will he confirm that of the £1·8 billion that has gone in tax

relief to the top 1 per cent., £0·7 billion—£700 million—has gone in tax relief on unearned income? That £700 million could have prevented cuts in housing benefit, the freezing of child benefit and the creation of the social fund. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how giving £700 million in tax relief on unearned income to the top 1 per cent., who already earn on average £75,000 a year, boosts incentives to work?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is talking about investment income, which provides jobs and the economic growth that funds so many of the social services, which the hon. Gentleman claims to care about. I propose to deal with that point directly later and we shall then examine the reality of the tax changes.

It is important to understand the distinction that I mentioned a moment ago. The measures on the Finance Bill—contrary to what the Opposition have said—do not add to demand. Although tax rates have been cut, the tax burden itself has not—as Opposition Members occasionally point out to us during Treasury Question Time. The measures were enough to prevent the tax burden rising, but no more. The Budget and the Bill improve incentives and hence improve supply side performance.

In the long run, that means more growth, more jobs and more prosperity. In their obsession with the short run, the Opposition never seem to think of the medium and long term, yet all of us should have our minds fixed firmly on the medium and long-term outcome. The Opposition have no answer to the fact that our supply side measures are working. That is why they have conjured up false dragons to slay. Ludicrously, they appoint themselves the guardians of fiscal rectitude—unlikely casting to the mind of anyone who remembers the Labour party in government—and they tell us that the Budget is irresponsible.

It is hard to take lectures on fiscal rectitude from a party which, 13 months ago, fought an election with plans to spend an extra £35 billion in its back pocket—a party that planned not a public sector debt repayment of £3 billion but a massively inflated borrowing requirement. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may giggle like schoolgirls on an outing, but they have no proper economic policy, no tax policy and no understanding of what is going on. Until they change all that, they will remain what they are now—an Opposition with no policy and no hope.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): How can the Chief Secretary equate the claim that the Government have not increased the tax burden overall with the proposition that the redistribution of the tax burden by the Budget does not contribute to demand? Surely, by giving differentially high tax breaks to people at the top end of the income scale, he is contributing to a massive and extremely damaging increase in imports and consumption. That has given rise to the extraordinary news that the trade gap expected for the whole year has now been massively exceeded in the first five months of the year, to the tune of £4·7 billion.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman makes some interesting observations, which suffer from only one defect: they are all wrong. The principal redistribution in the tax system is that there is now an increasing yield from corporate taxes because of the profitability of industry and commerce. That is why the sum total of the tax burden remains the same and has not fallen, and the burden of income tax has dropped—a very desirable development.

Yesterday we heard an interesting proposition about borrowing from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). Uncharacteristically, he praised the virtues of the Government's being in debt and borrowing rather than balancing the budget and being out of debt. That is a remarkable proposition. His speech was not a casual aberration; its substance seems to have been carefully press-released and circulated, apparently before the new clause was selected.

The only virtue in the hon. Gentleman's speech was that it called forth a gem of a response from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). Those who heard the debate will understand what I mean. I propose to place my hon. Friend's speech beside my bed for constant reference. It can sit there in precisely the same way as the speeches of the former Labour Prime Minister, Lord Callaghan, and the letters to Dr. Johannes Witteveen from the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), sit beside my hon. Friend's bed. Yesterday was a memorable occasion, and the most memorable aspect of it was the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Chief Secretary to the Treasury will, of course, have read the text of my speech in *Hansard*, rather than rely on his rather wayward recollection of what he thinks I might have said. If he reads my speech, he will find that I said:

"Inevitably from time to time a Government will need to borrow. There will be times when a Government want to be in surplus. It all depends on the circumstances at the time." —*[Official Report*, 13 July 1988: Vol. 137, c. 396.]

That is what his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne also said.

Mr. Major: I also had the pleasure of listening to the whole thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, which, as hon. Members who were in the House will recall, was precisely as I have described it. What the hon. Gentleman cannot take is the fact that the Government's finances are in surplus. The current account deficit, of which he tried to make so much a moment ago, essentially reflects purely private sector behaviour. That is a factor that the Opposition frequently tend to ignore. The contrast with the deficits over which the Labour Government presided could scarcely be more stark. Under Labour, a balance of payments deficit meant a balance of payments crisis. Today, that is certainly not the case.

Mr. Smith: I must ask the Chief Secretary to put the record right and to agree that the comment I have just read out is an accurate quote fron the *Hansard* record of our proceedings. It is there on the record, from yesterday's discussions. The right hon. Gentleman has been attempting to paint my remarks with a complete fabrication of reality.

Mr. Major: I do not doubt that the partial quotation that the hon. Gentleman gave reflected a portion of his speech. If he wishes to redefine his speech and say that that is what he meant, the House will observe that. I stick by the fact that the impression given by the whole of the hon. Gentleman's remarks yesterday was precisely that which I have described, and I do not renege from that in the slightest.

Mr. Morgan: Try facts for a change.

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), screaming like a banshee from a sedentary position, suggests that I should try facts for a change. Judging from the hon. Gentleman's record, he would not recognise a fact if it jumped up and gripped him by the windpipe.

The Budget's aim was not to boost demand, but to improve supply side performance. Tax reform is not the sole route to that objective. We have removed a whole battery of the constraints and regulations that acted as barriers to growth. We have at every opportunity extended competition and flexibility. We have allowed managers to manage, given trade unions back to their members, and minimised Government intervention in the affairs of industry and of the industrialists who create wealth and jobs. Through the manifest success of privatisation, we have dramatically extended ownership and removed a substantial section of British industry from state control. The result can be seen in industry's improved performance.

Tax reform has played a vital part in improving the economy's performance, and that performance is the overriding test by which those reforms stand to be judged. The record is overwhelming, and the Opposition know it. We are now entering the eighth successive year of sustained growth averaging 3 per cent.—a performance not equalled for half a century. We are at the top of the European growth league, after two decades at the bottom. Inflation is back to the levels of the 1950s and 1960s, and, in manufacturing industry, productivity has risen by more than 5 per cent. per year—faster than in any other major industrialised country. That is a remarkable turnaround for our country.

Far from that being the short-lived "boomlet" beloved of Opposition spokesmen, who believe that stop follows go, as night follows day—they proved it when they were in government—the outlook is for higher investment and continued growth. The latest CBI survey continues a run of surveys confirming, yet again, industry's strength and the high level of confidence about business prospects generally. This year, investment intentions have strengthened substantially, with the DTI's June survey predicting that manufacturing investment will rise by 16 per cent. in the present financial year.

The economy's strength has created the conditions for the longest period of falling unemployment since the war. Among other things, that has confounded the prediction of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who, in October 1986, wrote in "Friday Agenda" in *The Guardian*:

> "The Government simply cannot reduce unemployment by present economic policies".

That is what he wrote. Perhaps people believed him then, but they know better now. Even the hon. Gentleman can see that unemployment is falling in every region of the country and that some of the largest falls are among the long-term unemployed. If the hon. Gentleman catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, he may care to comment on that article, on why he was wrong, on how his perspective has changed, and on what he now proposes to do to revise the Opposition's policies, so that they may follow those which are proving so successful for the Government at present.

Only this morning, figures were released showing another significant fall of nearly 40,000 in unemployment, in June. That is the 23rd successive monthly fall. The figures also show another significant rise in the number of jobs, which is up by more than 600,000 over the past year. Since 1983, the British economy has shown a greater capacity to create jobs than any other European country. Unemployment is not falling because of some irresponsible fiscal stimulus; it is falling precisely because we have created conditions in which businesses can expand and employ more people.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The Government are fiddling the figures.

Mr. Major: The hon. Lady says that we are fiddling the figures. There have been 23 successive months of falling unemployment and an extra 600,000 jobs, yet she sits there and accuses us of fiddling the figures. Where has she been for the past 23 months, that she has not seen the changes?

During that same period, living standards rose at all levels of earnings. Since 1979, real take-home pay for the family man on average earnings has increased by 27·5 per cent. Between 1974 and 1979 the increase was less than 1 per cent. That is a comparison that even the Opposition may wish to ponder for a moment. For the man on half average earnings, the increase was 21·5 per cent. with us, and only 4 per cent. during the period of the last Labour Government. That is no coincidence.

Those are the results of Britain's transformation into a high-performance enterprise economy, whether the Opposition like it or not. Because they do not like it, they pretend not to notice that transformation. The electors do, as successive general election results have shown. The Bill's measures are designed to carry that transformation further forward, to consolidate and build on the achievements of the past few years.

The difference between the Government and the Opposition is that our proposals rest on a clear philosophy of reform and on a record of success that is plain for all to see. The Opposition suffer from a credibility gap and a policy gap: they have no credibility and they have no policy. In particular, they have no policy for the future, but a record of past government that they—and most of the people who lived through it—would rather forget.

Nowhere was that more clearly illustrated than in the Opposition's attitude to the Bill's most important clauses —those dealing with income tax changes. The Opposition voted against the higher tax cuts. We expected that, for it was consistent with their philosophy. However, after much agonising, and with few of their normal fanfares, the Opposition slipped quietly into the Division Lobby to vote against the basic rate reduction for 24 million taxpayers.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): We did not keep quiet about it.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman says that the Opposition did not keep quiet about it. Even those masters of the press release who sit on the Opposition Front Bench failed to issue one on their decision to vote against our cut in the marginal tax rate for 24 million taxpayers. Where was the article in "Friday Agenda" in *The Guardian*, justifying the Opposition's vote against a cut in the basic rate? At least they were consistent, because they voted against the basic rate cuts last year, too. Very probably, they will do so in respect of any future basic rate cuts that

we may achieve, They cannot hide the fact that they are the high tax party, however many press releases they choose to forgo.

The changes in income tax are the essence of the Bill. They will produce one of the simplest personal tax structures in the world, fulfilling our pledge of a 25p basic rate, and reverse for good the absurd structure of nine higher rates and surcharges on investment income on top—the system which we inherited in 1979. The changes allow people to keep more of their own money—almost £5 a week for the man on average earnings—and thus help further to improve living standards. Another advantage in cutting taxes is that it also reduces substantially the value of tax breaks and perks and removes the need to waste time and effort in tax planning.

Opposition Members have described the Budget as one for the super-rich. No doubt they believe that, given that they have said it repeatedly. No doubt the hon. Member for Wrexham goes to sleep at night muttering that particular fact—[HON. MEMBERS: "He never sleeps."] Those of us who served on the Committee can well believe that the hon. Gentleman never sleeps.

The Opposition have said that we have done nothing for the poor, but, even after this year's Budget changes, the burden of income tax and national insurance has shifted markedly away from the very poorest toward the best off. The hon. Member for Dumfermline, East knows that—perhaps better than anyone else in the House—because the figures that illustrate that were compiled in response to a parliamentary question that he asked.

Those figures show that the bottom 20 per cent. of income taxpayers have seen real reductions in their average liability since 1978-79. The liability for the lowest 10 per cent. is down by 19 per cent. The top 10 per cent., however, are now paying 26 per cent. more than they were in 1978-79, despite the reduction in the top income tax rates from 83 per cent. to 60 per cent. and now to 40 per cent. In some eyes the old regime may have appeared to share the burden of tax more fairly. I understand that, but, because so few people actually paid tax at those absurdly high rates, the burden was less fairly shared than it is now. The reality is that Labour's income tax fairness was a mirage—our income tax reductions are real and they are there for all taxpayers.

As I have said before, the overriding logic and justification for the reforms is not to point up the ineffectiveness of the Opposition—enjoyable and necessary though that may be—but to strengthen the supply performance of the economy. The Chancellor made that absolutely clear in the Budget debate when he said that the changes are not a reward, but a challenge to British business. That is his fundamental argument, with which I entirely agree. I believe that business also agrees with it. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce said:

"We wanted incentives. We have got them."

The message is also understood abroad—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the CBI?"] I am intrigued that hon. Members should mention the CBI. I remind them that after the Budget the CBI said:

"This is the Budget that we have been waiting for. It will provide greater incentives for all in British business."

That was the CBI's stated position after the Budget.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the northern division of the CBI thought that the Budget was most damaging for jobs in the north and that it was especially critical of the extension of the business expansion scheme to housing in London?

Mr. Major: I was quoting the views of the national CBI, but I hope that its northern branch and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) will also observe the greatly improving employment prospects in the north, the north-west and all the other regions of the United Kingdom, where there has been a significant improvement in the past 23 months. I hope that that gives pleasure to all hon. Members.

Although the income tax changes were undoubtedly the most important, the Finance Bill introduced other considerable changes which will create a more just and, in my judgment, a more efficient tax system. Lower income tax rates have enabled us to achieve a radical reform of the taxation of capital gains, aligning rates with those on income and thus reducing the incentive to convert income into gains, or to pursue speculative gains to avoid higher rate tax. That measure, at least, was welcomed by Opposition Members, although, as usual, despite their welcome, they failed to recognise that that desirable change was possible only in parallel with the changes to income tax that they rejected out of hand.

The Bill also brings to an end the injustice of taxing pre-1982 gains, which owed much to the excessive inflation of Labour's years in office. Inheritance tax has been radically simplified, with a further increase in the threshold and a single rate of 40 per cent. Outside the North sea sector, the Bill will leave no tax rate above 40 per cent. The Bill abolishes capital duty altogether, the fifth tax removed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I trust, in due course, that he may be able to improve on that record.

The Bill brings about a radical improvement in the structure of personal taxation, giving married women full independence and privacy in their tax affairs—a reform long overdue. It has been widely welcomed in the House and outside. The ending of the anachronism of aggregation will be welcomed by all married women, and a large number of married pensioners will also be better off.

Other measures in the Bill end the absurd and anomalous tax penalties on marriage, which had no place in any sane or satisfactory tax system. Taken together, the reforms provide a fair deal to married couples and to married women in particular; and, as importantly, they are reforms which can be implemented speedily. Married women have been waiting nearly 180 years for equity in the tax system. It is right they should not be asked to wait much longer, and with this Finance Bill my right hon. Friend has ensured that they will not.

On top of the reforms, which in themselves add up to a substantial catalogue of change in areas previously found too difficult to tackle, the Bill contains a whole raft of measures designed to remove anomalies, reduce the scope for abuse and generally simplify the tax system. Ending relief for home improvement loans and hence focusing mortgage interest relief on its true purpose of promoting owner-occupation, taking forestry out of the tax system and tackling the under-taxation of company cars have all made their differing contributions to making the tax system fairer between individual taxpayers.

I have sought to make it clear that the Bill is primarily about improving supply performance. Better labour mobility is a vital element in that. The business expansion scheme already has a clear record of success. By extending

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it to the private rented sector we are giving a boost to housing deregulation, which is vital to achieve that objective. Deregulation is the key to extending real housing choice to the many people who cannot or do not want to be owner-occupiers, or at present have no choice other than a local authority house or a place on a council waiting list in an area without jobs.

The clause on this matter has provoked the Opposition as no other, for I fear that they are concerned at any measure that may break the local authority monopoly on rented housing. That may precipitate the end of their municipal fiefdoms, for surely they are coming to an end. Any contribution that this measure can make to creating a genuine private-rented sector in this country will bring positive economic and social benefits far outweighing the cost in revenue forgone.

The measures that I have outlined amount to a fundamental reform of the tax system and, not surprisingly, they have been unchanged in Committee. However, there are a few significant amendments, which I should mention to the House.

A principal theme of the Bill is that, as tax rates come down to sensible levels, it is as important as ever to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of tax. In Committee we have bolstered the company migration rules to ensure a capital gains tax charge when a company ceases to be United Kingdom resident by reason of a double taxation convention, plugged the loophole whereby restrictive convenants can be used as a tax-avoidance device, and prevented the use of trusts to avoid the higher tax rate on capital gains.

We have balanced those tightening-up measures by making a number of relaxations, most significantly on capital gains tax. Provisions were tabled on Report to give some benefit from rebasing in cases where, between 1982 and 1988, assets were acquired when holdover or rollover relief was claimed. We have enabled elections to be made for gains on certain pre-1982 assets to be computed by reference to 1982 values irrespective of acquisition cost. Those amendments were inspired by suggestions from Committee members and we were happy to accept them. The second will be a welcome simplification for those who make an election because it will remove the need to keep pre-1982 records. The company residence rules have been rationalised in various respects. In particular, certain United Kingdom incorporated companies that were non-resident at Budget day have been excluded from the ambit of the new regime.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) persuaded us that it was right to extend the special £5 million BES ceiling for ship chartering companies to those which operate their own ships. I was also pleased that we could make a worthwhile relaxation in the tax rules for seafarers which should ease the cost pressures on United Kingdom operators and allay fears about the availability of British-crewed ships for defence purposes.

One of the most remarkable features of these reforms is that they have been introduced against a backdrop of the soundest public finances that we have seen in decades. Important as tackling the supply side rigidities is and remains, our overriding priority remains the continued suppression and reduction of inflation. We give others incentives to take risks for the benefit of the country's future; we do not propose to take risks which would not benefit the country's future.

Perhaps one mark of my right hon. Friend's achievement in the Budget which paved the way for this Finance Bill is this. If he were prepared to tolerate the levels of borrowing seen under the Labour Government, we need not have been debating the reduction of basic rate tax from 27p to 25p; we could have been debating the complete abolition of income tax. We prefer to move rather more cautiously. Once the Bill is on the statute book, we can look forward to further tax reductions—to the reduction of income tax to 20p in the pound. But I can give the House the assurance that we will not achieve that objective on the back of a burgeoning Government borrowing requirement now or in future. But achieve it we most assuredly will, and as soon as we prudently can.

Meanwhile, I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to give this momentous Bill its Third Reading.

5.21 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): When we are debating the most controversial financial measures that any Government have introduced since the war, when we are debating a Bill which has been debated more days in Committee than any other Finance Bill of this Parliament and when we are debating a Bill the contents of which are infused with measures which promote selective generosity towards the rich, both sides of the House will agree that we might have expected the presence of at least one Social Democratic and Liberal party spokesman. It is remarkable that the relaunch of that party in the country has been accompanied by its virtual disappearance in the House. But at least that party is consistent. To miss this Third Reading debate is entirely in line with its performance in Committee, where it missed just about every sitting when major measures were being discussed.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Surely the hon. Gentleman understands that it is probably more important to both parties to slug it out to see which comes bottom in today's by-election.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing to another problem that faces the Liberals in their battle against the SDP led by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

I hoped to enjoy the Chief Secretary's speech, which, given the advance publicity of the new role that he might expect in the Government, we might have expected to be statesmanlike and to concentrate on the detail of the tax reform. But his speech seemed to be designed for the Prime Minister to read rather than for his colleagues to hear. I noticed that at least four of his colleagues, including the chairman of the Conservative party, dropped off to sleep for at least some moments during his remarks.

I understand the difficulties that the Chief Secretary faces. He is now working under the watchful eye of the Secretary of State for Energy who has been promoted to head of the Star Chamber and is the Chancellor of the Exchequer in waiting. We know that any spending decision that is popular will be attributed to the Secretary of State for Energy and that any decision which is unpopular, unfortunately, will be blamed on the Chief Secretary.

That is not the only problem facing the Chief Secretary. The cuts that he may impose as Chief Secretary in the next few months he may have to administer in a new role as Secretary of State for Social Services, if we are to believe the report in *The Guardian* on Monday. The reputation of toughness that he builds as Chief Secretary will destroy for ever his chance of gaining a reputation for compassion, if he were to arrive at the Department of Health and Social Security.

Perhaps the Chief Secretary's biggest problem is that he has been named, not least by *The Guardian*, as a favourite of the Prime Minister. He is a central figure at her court—someone who has been feted and no doubt invited to Chequers. But I know that the Chief Secretary is a cautious man and he will be aware of the fate of others who have been similarly feted, not least the Foreign Secretary who, in the Prime Minister's eyes, might as well be in the Foreign Legion as at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), who is not present this afternoon, is having to choose between exile in the House of Commons and a more lucrative exile in Brussels, if that is how the decision goes.

Missing from the speech of the Chief Secretary was a willingness to address himself to the central problems of the Finance Bill. The Budget, which almost all the country regarded as unfair when it was announced in March, is, as we warned, now also seen to be ill-judged. It is unfair because with the top 1 per cent.—no matter what figures the Chief Secretary produces, he cannot deny this—securing 31 per cent. of the Budget's spoils and more than the bottom 70 per cent. of the Budget's handouts, and with the gains to the top 1 per cent. being not just income tax handouts, but exemptions from capital gains tax and inheritance tax, the business expansion scheme and other tax loopholes, this Budget has done more to widen the gap between rich and poor than any Budget at any time since the second world war.

The Budget is also ill-judged and imprudent. When we said to the Chancellor that there was an imbalance between investment and consumption in the economy and a need for greater investment, particularly in the Health Service, for which there was an economic as well as a social case, he was instead determined to pursue a strategy of top-rate tax cuts. When we said to the Chancellor that there was an imbalance between the shires and the suburbs, and the regions, that there was overheating, congestion, pressure on the green belt, escalating house price in the shires and the suburbs but underused resources in the regions, which should benefit from the Budget, he chose a tax-cutting strategy with most benefit going to those already well off in the most prosperous shires and suburbs.

In contrast to the clear advantages that would have been gained from a strategy which involved targeted investment on our public services, instead of top-rate tax cuts, the strategy is backfiring, first, by worsening the credit boom, forcing up interest rates and adding to fears about inflation and, secondly, by creating a situation in which we shall pull in more imports and the balance of payments will worsen.

We are already seeing the effect of that in two areas. The five rises in interest rates which have pushed up industry's costs by £600 million on top of the 11 per cent. rise in electricity prices, which also cost £600 million for a full year, are making it more difficult for industry to compete with our competitors abroad. Secondly, as a result of the five interest rate rises, we are about to experience mortgage rate rises.

Mr. Major: If it is so difficult for industry, why is there an investment boom, the like of which we have not seen for many years?

Mr. Brown: The Chief Secretary would be the first to admit that even if all the CBI's predictions about manufacturing investment were to bear fruit—none has in the past—the rate of manufacturing investment in real terms would still be below the level left by the Labour Government in 1979.

If the Chief Secretary doubts my figures, let him consult the excellent brief produced on these matters by the Library. That shows clearly that even if manufacturing investment rose by the amount that the CBI has stipulated in its investment intentions survey—it wa quoted by the right hon. Gentleman—investment in real terms would still be below the 1979 level. I checked the figures this afternoon with the statisticians in the Library. If the Chief Secretary really believes that the Government have a good record in manufacturing investment, which is still below the level of 1979, he must set low targets for the Government's performance.

The second effect of the Budget, adding to the rising credit boom and the worsening balance of payments, has been the rise in interest rates, which are now forcing up mortgage rates. What people gained in tax cuts from the Budget they are now beginning to lose in price rises and mortgage rises that have followed from it. The tax handout was followed by the mortgage clawback—the clawback perhaps the inevitable and delayed consequence of the handout—with the spending power that the Chancellor appeared to offer in March being reined back in July. The consequence is that that they have wiped out most of the gains for almost every group, with the exception of the top few.

The Budget is backfiring on the Chancellor. In the past, commentators have praised the Chancellor, but now the *Financial Times* is saying that he is skating on thin ice. It is no wonder that the Chancellor has to resort to calling commentators, whom he has praised in the past, teenage scribblers anxious for a quick headline.

Let us examine the impact of the Budget on families. We know that 7 million people on supplementary and other benefits did not benefit from the Budget and, in March and April, many of them experienced social security cuts. About 2 million people thought they were getting a 2p in the pound tax cut, but eventually they discovered that because their tax cut was followed by the withdrawal of housing benefit or family credit they ended up no better off and are facing large price rises as a result of Government decisions.

We know that the average extra bill for people who are paying mortgages is likely to be about £3 to £4 a week—for first-time buyers £4 to £5 a week—if mortgage rates go up by 1 per cent., as the Chancellor appeared to be predicting last week. On top of that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said at Question Time, ordinary families face price rises for electricity of 11 per cent., for water of 10 per cent., for prescriptions of 8 per cent., for rents of 11 per cent., for gas of 6 per cent.—and now there are charges for eye tests and dental check-ups, too. Almost every benefit that

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low-income families might have expected from the Budget has been wiped out by the price and mortgage rises that are on the way.

A home owner in my constituency on an average wage who has just bought a house on a high mortgage faces a large increase in his weekly payments. On top of the price rises that he must pay for electricity and everything else, he finds himself worse off even if he has had a £4 a week tax cut in his pay packet this month.

That is why we calculate that the Budget, which was to give a £6 billion handout, which was claimed to be the Budget for everyone and from which all families were going to benefit, has now, after the social security changes, the mortgage rises, and the freezing of child benefit, left 1 million families more than £4 a week worse off, 3 million families more than £2 a week worse off, and 9 million families will have lost money after the post-Budget clawback in price rises and mortgage increases. Large numbers of families will gain about £1 or £2 after the tax changes, but they will find that price rises in the family budget for electricity and everything else will wipe out that gain.

We started with a Budget that promised a £6 billion annual giveaway. It succeeded, however, in making millions of people worse off as a result of social security changes, price rises and mortgage rises. Interest rates have risen five times in the past month, which has started to damage British industry. These are not the marks of the most successful Chancellor since the war, as Conservative Members might like to think, but of a failed Chancellor who is now seen to be guilty of mistaken policies that are backfiring on the Government and on millions of people in this country.

If the objective was to ease the credit boom, to attack inflation and to help our balance of payments, if, having decided that there was an imbalance between investment and consumption, the aim was to help investment and aid the regions most in need, where there are underused resources, a proper Budget would have been an investment Budget. It would have invested in the Health Service, which was the one issue that almost everyone agreed should have been the Budget's first priority. The Budget should have invested in education and the rest of the public services.

No matter what the Chief Secretary produces this or any other afternoon, as a nation we still invest less as a share of our national income in ourselves than any other industrialised country, with the exception of Belgium. We invest a lower share of the national income in ourselves than countries with which the Chief Secretary would not want to compare us—Spain, Turkey, Greece and Portugal.

I emphasise the scale of underinvestment in British manufacturing industry and public services. If, with all the oil resources that we have enjoyed since 1979, we had invested at the same level as Japan, our assets today would have been £350 billion more than they are. If we had invested at the same level as Germany, they would have been £100 billion more. If we had invested at the same level as the much-criticised last Labour Government, investment over the past nine years would have been £50 billion more. Instead, we have wasted a once-for-all opportunity from North sea oil and the taxation it yields to invest properly in our public services, in education and health, in our infrastructure, in industries and technology, in research and development, and in science and innovation. All those are vital to our future.

One of the results of our failure to invest, apart from the high pound and high interest rates, is our worsening balance of payments deficit, not only in our traditional industries but in high technology industries. The Chancellor had the choice between investing in the Health Service and social services, but his priority, like that of the Conservative party, has always been to give to those who already have, even if that means making millions of people worse off.

Let me tell the Chief Secretary how much he and the Government have given the top 1 per cent. since 1979. The Government looked at the plight of the top 1 per cent. just before Budget day. It was not enough for them that they had reduced top rate taxes by 23 per cent. in the first Budget, that top rate thresholds had been raised, that capital gains exemptions had been given, that capital transfer tax had been abolished, or that tax loopholes had been opened up in so many ways. The cumulative effect of tax cuts since 1979 for people in the top 1 per cent. was to give them an extra £10,000 a year in tax cuts alone, £100,000 in total or £200 a week. That was by way of a gift from the Government, and it was more than most people are paid in a week merely as tax cuts.

But this was not enough for the Government. They looked at the problems of the top 1 per cent. and found that they were earning, on average, £75,000 a year. The Treasury computer showed that they would increase their incomes by 13 per cent., that they would do for themselves everything that they wanted to deny their work forces and that they would still enjoy enormous perks. Having seen all that, the Treasury decided to give this group an extra £10,000 a year, on top of the £100,000 that it had already received since 1979. There has been no evidence since the Budget that this group of people has worked harder. I saw no evidence of cancellations at Henley, Wimbledon or Ascot, or of cancellations of holidays in far-off places so that those people could work harder. There is no evidence that this group is more productive, hard-working or industrious, but there is evidence that they are wealthier as a result of what the Chancellor has done.

We are told that those people need an incentive to work harder. We also hear the argument, produced by the Chief Secretary this afternoon, that tax reductions on unearned income are essential so that people invest. However, we know that the record of investment in our manufacturing industry is very poor—even with the top-rate tax cuts made immediately after the Government came into office in 1979. There is no study to which either the Chancellor or the Financial Secretary—hard though he tries—can point to prove that tax cuts are necessary for incentives.

The need for incentives to make people work harder does not explain why the Government have given £200 million in tax relief to those whose pre-1982 capital gains tax liability has been wiped out. The need to work harder cannot justify the £235 million in tax relief for those who inherit—*[Interruption.]* The Chief Secretary had better keep quiet about the number of hon. Members who are asleep during speeches from the Front Bench. I counted the former Leader of the House, the Conservative Chief Whip and the chairman of the Conservative party, and perhaps the Chief Secretary's PPS will tell us that he was asleep as well.

Mr. Major: As it happens, my hon. Friends were lost in wonder, but it is a matter of fact that the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) were both enjoying a gentle doze while the hon. Gentleman was speaking. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friends deny it. I must say, however, that the Chief Secretary's intervention is on a par with his intervention in a previous debate when he talked about *Woman's Own*. We expect major statements from the right hon. Gentleman, who has been much advertised as the coming star in the Government, but when he rises to speak it is merely to tell us that one or two people in the Chamber are not awake. He will be hoping that the Prime Minister does not read the *Hansard* report of this debate, in case the invitation to Chequers is withdrawn.

The need for incentives does not explain why the self-employed, for example, are able to pay their tax on last year's earnings at rates decided for this year. The Chief Secretary has also been unable to explain why £700 million has been given in tax cuts on the unearned income of the top 1 per cent. who are already extremely rich. Much as he tries, he cannot explain what justification there was in the Chancellor's mind for denying pensioners housing benefit, freezing child benefit and introducing a social fund to replace single payments, all at a cost of £700 million, and then handing that over to the people at the top.

The results are beginning to be seen. I telephoned my social security offices a few days ago to ask what had happened as a result of the implementation of the social fund. The office was able to tell me that while the top 1 per cent. are walking away with an average of £10,000 a year in tax cuts, of the applications made for help from the social fund—to help pay, for example, for heating or for journeys that had to be undertaken—one third, 166, had been turned down in the first two months. They had been turned down because the office had said that they were not priorities, because there was not enough money in the social fund budget to justify the payments or because the applicants would not be able to repay the loans from their meagre supplementary benefits. How can the Chief Secretary justify circumstances in which people are not even given the basic dignity of help with key requirements such as heating, food and clothing, while the top 1 per cent. are given £700 million in tax relief on unearned income?

We were told at the beginning that the Budget was a Budget for all. That was revised, and we were then told that it was a Budget for the meritocracy. Then, when we found that the scientists, engineers, researchers and doctors were not such great beneficiaries, we learned the truth. It is a Budget fuelled by selective generosity towards the very rich. It is motivated not by academic theories such as supply-side economics or trickle-down theory, but by greed dressed up as ideology: greed to reward those who already have a great deal by denying to many millions money that they desperately need.

We know that the Government are prepared to ignore the evidence of the churches and other organisations that tell them about the growing gap between rich and poor and the social polarisation in our communities. We know that they are prepared to ignore the warnings of Conservative Back Benchers who ask for a change of course. We also know that they may try to ignore even their own Cabinet members. The Prime Minister is blind to the warnings of the Foreign Secretary, who spoke at Christmas of the danger that social tensions would be exacerbated, and said that the Government still had a long way to go in tackling them.

The Government may ignore the warnings of the Home Secretary, who has said that there is a danger to social cohesion in our communities as a result of the policies being pursued. They have, of course, ignored the warnings of the former Deputy Prime Minister in another place, who said that a little more compassion was needed. But they cannot continue to ignore the warnings of the general public, who in survey after survey show that they are not the narrow, blindly acquisitive, self-seeking individualists that the Prime Minister and her Ministers would have them be. They see the injustice of great economic inequality. They appreciate the contrast in a Budget and Finance Bill that give £2 billion to the rich and at the same time freeze child benefit, cut housing benefit, introduce charges for eye tests and dental check-ups, and push people into having to pay much higher mortgage rates. They also appreciate the waste, inefficiency and, now, incompetence with which the economy is being managed, so that, with interest rates and mortgage rates rising, the gains from the Budget are already being wiped out.

Because the Budget has backfired on the Chancellor, this is a bad Bill which no number of new, good clauses could make into a better Bill. The House should reject it and everything for which it stands.

5.47 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The impresarios of the debate are to be congratulated. Rather than being scheduled in the narrow terms of a conventional Third Reading, the debate gives us the opportunity for a wider judgment on the economy. I should like to take advantage of that and make two quick preliminary points before turning to the one matter of substance with which I wish to detain the House.

My first point takes account of the fact that economic and Treasury affairs are a seamless robe, never ending. We are having this debate on the self-same day on which I understand that the Cabinet went through its process of determining public expenditure levels and targets for the coming year. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will go forth reinforced by that discussion and armed with his meat cleaver, and purport to be a surgeon.

I should like to give a kindly word of advice about the public expenditure task that my right hon. Friend will be attempting as it relates to the National Health Service. He clearly has a major task in terms of his responsibility for public spending, but he also has a political task: to have a well-ordered sense of priorities, and not to view every spending Minister as potentially on the other side. As has already been said, his welcome and deserved ascent in his ministerial career will put him in charge of great spending responsibilities, and he would therefore be well advised to show a little delicacy, particularly in his approach to the National Health Service.

What I have in mind—this was touched on earlier this afternoon—is what may turn out to be the full cost of the increase in nurses' and related grades' salaries and, above all, the regrading that will be associated with that. It is a matter of some complexity which has meant that, from the outset, there could never be a precise figure, but only an estimate. If that outturn proves to be significantly higher

[Mr. John Biffen]

than the estimate of the review board, and clearly beyond what is within the capacity of the area health authorities to master, it should be treated by him with the generosity which we know he has in private life, and which sound political judgment would also commend. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take those fraternal greetings from a former Chief Secretary, who, I might say, has never quite recovered from the experience, and that he will prove to be a good ally to the National Health Service in the discussions that lie ahead.

The second modest point with which I should like to detain the House for a moment is that reiterated by my right hon. Friend when he said that he was looking forward to an income tax rate of 20p in the pound. That objective is quite heroic and is certainly attainable, but it implies certain suppositions that should be shared with the House. The Treasury is forecasting a modest drop in the rate of economic growth. That does not come as a great surprise. I am assuming, therefore, that we may take as a starting point for the rest of this Parliament a rate of economic growth that is not merely a straight-line projection from the recent past. In other words, growth alone will not necessarily deliver the resources for that kind of tax change.

I am also assuming that there will be a certain political wisdom which will assume that public spending must be judged on its own merits and, in certain directions, will necessitate further increases, although I would be on the side of those seeking to obtain as much general economy as possible. However, I am assuming that there will not be great retrenchment in public spending to enable that change to come about. It is just possible, therefore, that it may come about as a result of a redirection of our tax balance so that it relates more to one's capacity in spending than it does to earning.

As a general proposition that may excite some anxiety, but the anxiety that it properly engenders is whether we will be the arbiters in that, or whether we will find that the value added tax that would lie at the heart of any such switch will be determined, not in this House, but elsewhere. The European Court indicated, over a relatively modest range of activities, what were to be our VAT rates. It is an open debate whether 1992 and the single market require a single pattern of VAT, uniform across the Community, or whether the sovereign nation states will still be given options on VAT and the House of Commons will remain supreme in those fiscal affairs.

I do not travel very hopefully. If the House is anxious to maintain its supremacy in those matters it will have to act with the utmost vigilance and it will, from the very outset, have to have much clearer understandings from the Government than hitherto about their overall views on VAT. That is of particular relevance when one considers the objective of a 20p in the pound rate of income tax. Tax switching will be central to that decision.

I wish to deal now with the one point of substance that I want to raise. It relates to clauses 23 and 24 and the major tax changes referred to by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). I wish to relate those changes, which have certainly added to immediate purchasing power, to the inflationary pressure that could be perceived at the time of the Budget. Iain Macleod used to say that Budgets look very different after 24 hours. That was certainly true with regard to presentation. He said that of Labour Budgets. I am merely trying to be generous to both sides of the House.

Four months have now passed between the Budget and Third Reading this evening. The three specific indicators of an inflationary pressure are worth recalling and putting on record. Bank lending, which, in mid-March, showed an annual increase of 20 per cent., has now increased to 27 per cent. United Kingdom house prices, which showed an annual increase of 16 per cent., have now increased to 19 per cent. The annual earnings increase, which was 8·5 per cent., is at approximately the same level. Although figures for labour shortage cannot easily be identified, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce has just produced a regional survey which shows that the developing labour shortage is, if anything, sharper than it was a few months ago.

Those are statistics. They do not compel a conclusion, but they cannot easily or lightly be disregarded. However, there is one new factor to be added to anxieties about the extent of tightness or overheating in the economy, and that is the trade balance. When we debated the Budget we heard a Treasury forecast of £4,000 million on the current account as the expected deficit. After about five months of the year we know that the figure is already in excess of that, at £4,700 million, and that the figure for May, £1,705 million, is the largest current deficit ever recorded. Some of that may be explained by the restocking of raw materials and capital goods associated with an expanding economy and some of it can obviously be related to very strong demand in the high street. However, I find it extraordinary that the Treasury could come out with a figure of just £4 billion when that figure has now been overtaken on such a massive scale in so short a time.

If we take either of those factors—restocking because of the so-called boom or high-street purchasing—the Treasury was not making the appropriate analysis when it produced that figure. That statistic alone, when added to the others that I have mentioned, gives rise to a wholly legitimate anxiety which is in no way intended to undermine the respect and admiration for many of the major tax reforms that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his team have produced in the Budget and the Finance Bill.

Given those figures of incipient and perceived demand now growing in the economy, it is a matter for judgment whether the tax cuts erred on the side, not merely of generosity, but of wantonness. That question looks a good deal more uncomfortable today than it did four months ago.

5.59 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I noted that when the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) was praising the Chief Secretary, he paused for a moment. It is probable that the Chief Secretary thought that if the Prime Minister read praise of him from that quarter it might impede his so far rapid rise in her favour.

We have said from the time that the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced the Budget that it is one of contrasts. This is not a time of crisis for the United Kingdom generally, but many individuals are facing great personal difficulties. There is the unfairness of tax cuts for those who are at the top end of the income scale and of

benefit cuts for those who are at the bottom of the income scale, or who have no income at all. The Government are happy to tighten the screw on those who have little or nothing, while being generous to those who have done well, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said. Payments are being tightened for those who have to claim benefit, but, in the operation of the business expansion scheme, the Government are happy to enter into open-ended commitments for those who would seek to use tax breaks to provide accommodation for those who are at the bottom end of the income scale.

As I understand it, the Government's primary aim is to ensure that inflation is kept under control. The Government say, rightly, that inflation has dire effects, especially on those—they do not accept this—who will lose as a result of the Budget and the Bill. I am talking about those who will not enjoy the tax breaks that we have been discussing.

The majority regard a house as the provision of a roof over their head rather than an investment, and the position that this majority faces is grave in both the purchasing and rented sectors. It has been said that tax cuts are inflationary, and we know that house prices are escalating. We are told that house prices add about 0·4 per cent. to the retail prices index. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer was discussing inflation this afternoon, we were astonished when he distinguished two sorts of inflation. He said that the inflation of house prices did not really matter—at least, he could not control it—and that the other form of inflation that he could control was the one that mattered. That will come as news to those who buy houses or those who have to rent houses. To those people, the increase in prices is very much part of the inflationary package with which they have to deal.

There is a credit boom. We are told that there is £1 billion more credit this year than last year. However, there are many who are finding it difficult to make ends meet. They have to borrow more and more to ensure that they have a roof over their head, not because they desire to increase their spending or to improve their standard of living, although that is without doubt the motivation in some instances. Yesterday, on Report, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said that he regarded a house as a sterile asset. That is the hon. Gentleman's approach, but most people buy a house because they need it, not because they want to invest in a house as opposed to some other asset.

The plight of the first-time buyer is grave. There are escalating house prices for those who want to buy and escalating rents for those who want to rent, especially in the south-east of England and certain other areas. No tax relief is given to those who seek to rent. Why should not the same relief be given to those who want to buy and to those who want to rent? Sometimes it makes good economic sense to rent, especially at the beginning of a person's working life or when he has retired. Instead, we choose to give blanket mortgage tax relief whatever the individual's circumstances, subject to minor restrictions.

The Nationwide Anglia building society's latest survey shows that a three-bedroomed house in Haringey costs £113,000. The top prices in five London boroughs for a three-bedroomed house are all over £100,000. An equivalent house in Aberdeen would cost £50,000 and in Edinburgh £46,000. In Edinburgh, where I live, there are flats retailing in the new town for over £200,000 that would have cost £20,000 or £30,000 only seven or eight years ago. I read a speculative article in *The Sunday Times* this weekend, that the Government might be considering a form of capital tax on gains made through the sale of houses. There are many who would not understand that proposal. The Government would be taxing an inflationary increase that has been brought about through no fault, in most instances, of the owner of a house.

The Government will have to address themselves to rising house prices. There are many, especially those who are seeking to buy a house of their own for the first time, who are being priced out of the market. I suspect that the majority of hon. Members are living in houses that they have bought and lived in for some time. Alternatively, they are in their third, fourth, fifth or sixth house. We must bear in mind those who are leaving home and seeking accommodation for the first time, whether rented or purchased. Such people are facing an extremely difficult task. It is ridiculous for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to say that house price inflation has nothing to do with the Government and that there is nothing that they can do about it.

The Government could restrict mortgage tax relief to first-time buyers, and give similar relief to those who seek to rent for the first time. The Government could adjust their regional policy to ensure that industrial development is not concentrated in the south-east of England and that inflationary pressures are not built up in the area. The Government, through the Ministry of Defence, are a large employer. They could act to ensure that decentralisation works. Most defence installations are in the north, but most of those who run them seem to need to live in the south. I do not understand why that should be so. Some of the commanding officers and some of the high-ranking civil servants could be told that, while it is handy to visit Harrods every now and again, it is not necessary for the defence of Britain that they should do so.

Increases in interest rates are accompanied by increases in house prices. Interest rates are increasing. This is a mechanism to dampen down the credit that the Government have fuelled by tax cuts. Interest rates have increased on five occasions in the past few weeks. I suppose that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would argue that this is fine tuning. He lambasted my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), the Labour Government's Chancellor of the Exchequer, for regular fine tuning, but that is exactly what he is doing now. It seems to be all right now.

Inflation is being stoked up, and it is hitting those on low incomes about whom the Prime Minister claims to be concerned. These people have been hit extremely hard by Government policies over the past few years. I am talking of those who have no choice, those who cannot afford to choose whether to send their children to a private school or to a state school, those who cannot choose whether to live in one house rather than another, those who have to choose whether to eat or to heat their homes. These are the people who have been hammered by the inflation that the Government are fuelling.

We complain about the Budget and criticise its unfairness, but those who will pay the price of the tax cuts in income forgone and in the inflation that the cuts will create will be acutely aware of the unfairness. It is all very well to help those who have been helped already, but the Government must realise that in the coming months they will have to increase public expenditure to ensure that those at the lower end of the income scale are helped. They

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

must understand also that they will have to take action to ameliorate the inflationary pressures that will hit especially hard those who usually bear the brunt of them.

An obvious consequence of inflationary pressures is debt. Interest charges are crucial to industry, and they are important also to individuals. The amount of indebtedness is increasing. The consumer credit boom means that more and more people are getting into debt. Many of those at the lower end of the income scale incur debt through necessity, not because they wish to obtain credit or to act imprudently.

The Chief Secretary gave us the view from the golf club, as it were, of lush green pastures and everyone doing extremely well. That is the view of the member of the golf club with a gin and tonic in his hand. Contrast that view with the reality of one of my constituents who is unemployed—she is in receipt of income support—and who recently applied for a grant from the social fund after having her first child. She was not offered a grant. Instead, she was offered a loan of £100, which she had to repay at £10 a week. That was somebody who was living on income support. The House must be aware that some people who are convicted in our courts and fined £100 pay such fines at £3 or £4 a week, yet the DHSS asked that young lady to repay her loan of £100 at £10 a week. That is an utter disgrace.

When we hear the Chief Secretary extolling the Budget's virtues, let us remember those who do not know the world that we heard talked about and who are the very people who will suffer from the inflationary pressures that the Government are stoking up. It is all very well for the Government to say that the economy is in good heart and there is nothing to worry about. The fact of the matter is that an increasingly large section of the population has everything to worry and despair about. It is clear that at present the Government do not seem to want to know. Unfortunately, the number of people who are feeling the wrong end of the Government's policies is growing day by day. That is a real tragedy and it is for that, if for no other reason, that the Budget will be remembered.

6.10 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) began his speech by remarking on the absence from our proceedings of any Member of the Social and Liberal Democratic party or the Social Democratic party. That absence is continuing.

At the outset of his remarks the hon. Gentleman also said that this was the most controversial Finance Bill since the war. That opinion does not seem to have been shared by those who served, as I did not, on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill. Indeed, it is a strange truth that the amount of time spent considering the Bill in Committee was the shortest for any Finance Bill since the war.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will freely acknowledge that the Bill was debated for more days than ever before, because the Opposition sought to fight this controversial measure topic by topic.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Press release by press release.

Mr. Brown: Perhaps, as the hon. Gentleman says, press release by press release. It is not the amount of words that were spoken on a topic that is significant, but their effect.

Mr. Gow: My point is legitimate. If this was indeed the most controversial Finance Bill since the war, many would have expected the Opposition to fight it continuously and persistently over a long period. In fact, the total amount of time spent debating the Finance Bill in Committee this year was 62 hours and 30 minutes. On five occasions the Committee rose before 8 o'clock. That total number of hours is inconsistent with the view——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the fact that the majority of Labour Members who were present throughout the proceedings in Committee that considered the Bill are present now opposing the Bill, whereas those Conservative Members who served on the Committee are not present in the Chamber to defend it?

Mr. Gow: That is a different point from the one that I was making. I was making the legitimate comment, in contradistinction to the assertions by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, that in reality only 62 hours and 30 minutes were spent debating the Bill in Committee, despite the Opposition's claim that it is the most controversial since the war. He did not say that it was the most controversial since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister arrived at Downing street. His assertion was that it was the most controversial since the war.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair. At the beginning of the Bill's proceedings we fought hard to obtain an agreement with the Government so that we could conduct our proceedings in such a way that we had a measured political debate rather than a war of attrition. That was our choice. The Opposition's hostility cannot be measured in the crude way that the hon. Gentleman seeks to suggest. If the hon. Gentleman is urging us to return to the old way, I can assure him that my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), and others, will be more than willing to do so. If that is his foolish suggestion, I do not think that he will have the Government's support.

Mr. Gow: One can always tell in this place when an arrow has reached its target.

I leave that preliminary point to deal with two aspects of the wider issue of our economic policy and the Government's policy as reflected in the Finance Bill. I want to consider two aspects of inflation, which was the subject to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) devoted his speech.

I want to look, first, at the phenomenon of rising house prices. They are rising fast in the south-east, but they are probably also rising in almost every other part of the kingdom. That phenomenon has been taking place for some years, but with an acceleration during the past 24 months.

The first point that needs to be made is that rising house prices do not cause inflation. It is inflation, or incipient inflation, that is one possible cause of rising house prices, but there is another possible cause of rising house prices, and that is a definite choice made by the British people between supply and demand and between one area of investment and another.

Ms. Armstrong: Nonsense.

Mr. Gow: Of couse, that arouses great hostility among Opposition Members. They still believe that wet pavements cause rain, and that is not the truth.

I want to develop the point, because there is one sure way in which we can reduce the rate at which house prices rise, and that is to increase the supply of houses. That is the best way in which the Government can act. The Government have no control over the value that the British people wish to place on one capital asset as opposed to another.

Ms. Armstrong: Of course they do.

Mr. Gow: It is not surprising that the hon. Lady is becoming agitated. I am about to explain to her a truth that the Opposition have never understood. Since 1979, precisely because of the policies that have rightly been followed by the Government, there has been an increasing desire among people to own their own homes, and over 2·1 million more people are home owners today than was the case in May 1979. Where there is an increase in demand and an increasing awareness among fellow countrymen of the attainability of home ownership, the increase in demand will be reflected in an increase in prices.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I shall give way to every Opposition Member, whenever he or she seeks to intervene.

Ms. Armstrong: I understand why the hon. Gentleman needs to give way. There are no other Conservative Members here to speak. The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member and I am a new Member. The macho idea that the late hour that one stays up is a measure of one's resistance to a Bill is rather peculiar.

The reality of house prices is that in areas such as mine there are plenty of houses for sale. In bricks and mortar terms they are good houses, but we have a declining population because of the Government's economic policy. More people want to buy houses in the south-east than in the north-east, not because of the supply of houses, but because of economic inequalities and overheating in the south-east and a lack of economic growth in the north-east.

Mr. Gow: I have exciting news for the hon. Lady. Some of the houses which she says are presently empty will shortly become occupied. If there are unoccupied houses in her constituency and house prices in the south-east continue to rise dramatically, a growing number of employers and employees will realise the economic advantages of moving the area of their activities away from the south-east. That will happen.

Mr. Wilshire: It is already happening.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend does not disagree with me.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): We are already seeing clear evidence of that in Manchester and in the north-west of England. Employers and individuals are moving up from the south to where houses are affordable and jobs are available.

Mr. Gow: Of course, and in the case of my hon. Friend's constituency there is the added attraction of having him as its Member of Parliament, which is an advantage not conferred upon the constituency of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong).

Although that is the case, and two of my hon. Friends have asserted that what I have predicted is already occurring, I must tell my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that there is another way—apart from the normal laws of the market—in which we can meet that demand. I still believe that we are too restrictive in our planning controls and that the amount of time taken between making an application for planning permission and the application being granted—especially where the appellant procedures have to be gone through—is too long.

I wish to move on from the question of house prices, which, I repeat, are not a cause for inflation, to a wider issue about inflation. I remind the House of what my right hon. Friend said in his Budget statement:

> "The medium-term financial strategy, now entering its ninth year, which continue to provide the framework for reducing the growth of money GDP, and hence inflation . . . These will be achieved by maintaining firm monetary discipline, buttressed by a prudent fiscal stance."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 997.]

I am in wholehearted agreement with that statement of the Government's objectives and the way in which diminished inflation should be achieved. I find myself in respectful disagreement with my right hon. Friend's decision five months ago to reduce interest rates, and I find myself in respectful agreement with his decision, taken in the last six weeks, to increase interest rates on five separate occasions —each by 0·5 per cent. My right hon. Friend was right to say that this year there will be a repayment of debt. Zero Government borrowing and, a fortiori, a repayment of debt will bring downward pressure on inflation. The other weapon in the hands of the Chancellor is to maintain interest rates at such a level that monetary growth is contained.

When Parliament met in May 1979, the most important danger facing the economy was inflation. Today, it is perceived that that danger is there no longer. I cannot agree with those who are complacent about the prospects for inflation. If it was possible for the Government to reduce inflation from its 1979 level to its present level of 4 per cent., it is most certainly possible for the Government to bring inflation down to zero, which is the declared policy of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. I hope that the Government will give a higher priority to the abatement of inflation and that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will say in his reply that the Government's aim is to have stable prices—that is to say, zero inflation—by the end of this Parliament. Stable prices will be the surest guarantee of fuller employment and of faster economic growth in the long term. The condition both for fuller employment and for accelerating economic growth is stable prices. I hope that my right hon. Friend will recommit the Government to that.

6.26 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I feel tempted to reflect that when all around him have gone he will remain standing as the last free marketeer. Having listened to the hon. Gentleman, many hon. Members will have gained the impression that the British people have been subjected to a great experiment, which has been

[Mr. John Battle]

variously labelled in the past few years—sometimes as monetarism, sometimes as the social market economy and now, perhaps more plainly, as the tax-cutting Budget.

I believe that the Government are inviting the people of this country to worship at the altar of the free market on which stands the idol of the atavistic individual. The latest high priest of this ideology is a young assistant professor of economics at Harvard, Lawrence Lindsey, who is regularly referred to by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was a member of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers in 1983 and 1984. Some of us fear—probably even the Government do—that our economy lives in fear of the debt in the American economy, despite advice from such as Mr. Lindsey. Mr. Lindsey has been proclaimed as one of the gurus of the American supply side economists. He is a strong advocate of tax cuts to encourage the sort of social mobility that the Chief Secretary referred to today. Professor Lindsey argues that cuts in higher tax rates would come through in extra tax revenues to the national economy.

The Chancellor boasted in his Budget speech:

"Throughout my time as Chancellor I have been on the lookout for taxes to abolish."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 1003.]

He then went on to abolish two minor capital taxes on share transactions, which was a little piece of self-indulgence amounting to £100 million. Some of us will note that that was almost as much as the amount by which the Chancellor claimed he could not afford to increase child benefit this year. It is now rumoured that child benefit will be phased out altogether, but the Chancellor still boasts that he will abolish income tax altogether. How does the Budget's approach match the simple Lawrence Lindsey test? On 23 May the Financial Secretary said that if the tax regime for 1988-89 was still the same as that which existed in 1978-79, some £20,000 million more would have been paid this year than under the current Budget's arrangements. In other words, the Budget markedly fails the simple Lawrence Lindsey test.

In a piece written for the *Sunday Times* of 20 March this year, Lindsey said:

"In the estimates I did at the National Bureau of Economic Research, the 'supply-side' effect of the 1981 tax cuts probably added about 2·5 per cent. to America's GNP over the first five years they were in effect. That works out to about 0·5 per cent. per year, nobody's idea of a miracle."

Some, I am sure, would argue that the impact of 0·5 per cent. is so marginal that it could be interpreted as meaning Professor Lindsey does not know what the effects of the policy are. It would, as my hon. Friends have said, perhaps be much better for the Government to have a strategy on interest rates for individuals, companies and industry in order to get real growth in the economy, because Lindsey will prove to be a false prophet followed by a Government casting around for reinforcement of their preconceived ideas.

Of that £20,000 million reduction in tax liabilities, no less than 46 per cent.—that is £9,300 million—is now being enjoyed by the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers. Looked at from another angle, the top 1 per cent. of taxpayers have had their tax liabilities reduced by £22,680 each, whereas the bottom 50 per cent. have had reductions averaging £3·30 each. Some of the lowest income earners—as I know, and as other hon. Members know from their advice surgeries—are paying more in tax now as a result of the operation of this Budget.

Lindsey went on to say:

"Patience may be sorely tried"

by the approach of his strategy.

"Data will no doubt be produced showing that the measured income distribution has become less equal."

Of course it has. Data are emerging daily, through careful interrogation by our parliamentary questions, both of the Budget impact and of the operation of the social security system, which show that, while the very rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. It is clear that for the most part pensioners, in particular, low-wage families and single homeless people are receiving less in social security than they were before 1 April of this year. If the Government had held, for example, to the previous method of pegging the basic pension level at the level of inflation, or the level of average earnings increase, whichever was the higher, a pensioner couple would now be getting £79·90 a week instead of the £69·50 that they receive under the present arrangement. To that has to be added the cuts that have taken place in housing benefit.

I was somewhat surprised to hear Government Members refer in Committee to statutory pension payments as "handouts" to pensioners. It is an insult to pensioners to suggest that they live on handouts, when they have worked all their lives, have paid in to the national insurance system and have a right to a decent income when they retire. Many Conservative Members did not seem to realise that all people receiving housing benefit have to pay 20 per cent. of their housing costs because of the statutory rate contribution that was imposed in April of this year, regardless of ability to pay.

I refer to the Government's admission on 27 May that families in Coventry earning between £60 and £120 a week, with two children, wound up between £5 and nearly £11 a week worse off as a result of this Budget. That was because, although the introduction of the new credit benefit was raising entitlement by some £10 to £13 a week over the previous system, that raising of the family credit was offset by the loss of free school meals and free milk. It amounted to just over £4 a week, and in some families there were cuts of between £15 and £16 a week. Those are not our figures. They were given in replies to questions put to the Minister.

It sometimes strikes us as absolutely astounding that the Prime Minister can come to the House at Question Time and say that everyone is participating in the prosperity of Britain, because we know that people have been pushed to the margins of our society and are not participating in that wealth. Some of the poor are getting much poorer. Claims by the Government, such as we have heard this evening, to have removed restraints to growth and given free rein to competition, and about the success of the privatisation programme, emerge as shibboleths at the altar of the free market. Under this Government's economic policies millions are now being excluded from the wealth that the Chancellor of the Exchequer proclaims.

In practice, the economic policies are fostering what some might describe as a social malignancy, the "loadsamoney" culture, in which the poor are priced out to the margins of our society, while the rich in the city centres get richer and richer. The people of this country, unlike, it seems, the Government, know that economic justice is at the heart of social growth and that people

ought to be at the core of the economy, not an arithmetical equation or the idol of the free market. That is why in the weeks and months to come this Budget will be clearly understood by the people for what it is. That is why the great experiment that has been tried once again in this Budget will, as my hon. Friends have said, eventually blow up in the Government's face.

6.36 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): It is a happy coincidence that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has tried to focus the attention of the House upon worshipping at the altar, because it is the theological overtones that opposition to this Bill has attracted that I want to refer to this evening.

Despite the fact that the Bill has 170 pages packed full of detail, it seems to me that its key issue is the principles that lie behind the tax reductions. These principles, I have no hesitation in saying, are absolutely right, despite all the nonsense that we hear from the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Member throws out the remark that it is nonsense coming from these Benches. Does he include in that the reference to his own Government Ministers' answers to our questions?

Mr. Wilshire: No. I am focusing on the criticism that I have heard here today, the criticism that I have heard before and, particularly, the criticism that has come from outside the House about a splendid Budget and a very splendid Bill.

All the criticism that I have heard, particularly from outside and particularly from the Labour party, is quite unjustified. I have tried to sort it in my mind and have come to the conclusion that the sources of criticism can be put into two groups. The first of these groups is the envious, bitter politicians, and the second is the "holier than thou" clerics. Sadly, as I try to sort out the distinction between these groups it becomes ever more blurred. The joint message that I increasingly hear seems to be something like this: that God has joined the Labour party and all Conservatives are now banished to the everlasting bonfire.

This Third Reading debate seems to me to be the ideal time to reaffirm the philosophy that underpins these proposals. It is not greed, as Opposition Members keep saying. Opposition Members would do the country a favour if they tried to learn these basic principles, because then they might be some good to the country.

The principles seem to me to be these: that wealth must be created before hon. Gentlemen can spend it or redistribute it; that the state cannot create that wealth—all it can do is provide the right climate for individuals to create it for themselves; and that capitalism is the best system yet devised for enabling individuals to create that wealth. This Bill is all about creating that right climate so that all of us may prosper.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is an enormous amount of money available to the Government from their privatisation receipts, oil revenues and so on, that they could spend for the benefit of the country? Why do they refuse to spend it?

Mr. Wilshire: I was referring to the fact that it is individuals who create wealth. I want to discuss what individuals should do with that wealth. They should not simply leave it to the Government to do things on their behalf. If we follow the principles and the Bill is accepted, we will all be better off. That will enable all of us to do more to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

What should we make of the joint criticism that the Bill has received, particularly the criticism from Socialist politicians and trendy clerics? Their approach is politically stupid.

Mr. Darling: Would the hon. Gentleman care to name the trendy clerics he is disparaging?

Mr. Wilshire: That is what I intend to do. I am grateful for being given an opportunity to do that.

The joint approach is politically stupid because Opposition Members and those who support them seem to have failed to learn the lessor from three election defeats. They have not managed to take on board the message of the current opinion polls.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): May I remind the hon. Gentleman that he has not yet mentioned the trendy clerics?

Mr. Wilshire: That is a surprise that I shall spin out for a moment. I want to whet Opposition Members' appetites. *—[Interruption.]* It ill becomes Opposition Members to sleep. They were going to sleep before you arrived, Madam Deputy Speaker, when their Front Bench spokesman was making them nod off. Many of them are awake now because they are jumping up and down.

As I have said, the political lesson that the Opposition have failed to learn from their election defeats is that seeking to blame prosperity for social ills will get them nowhere.

Their theological approach is dangerous. It divides a dwindling Church and ignores chunks of the New Testament. All alert students of the utterances of those who advance theological reasons for rejecting the Bill and for opposing the Government will be aware of the trendy cleric to whom I wish to refer. If they have studied carefully, they will have noticed the recent outbursts from this year's Methodist conference. As a Methodist, I am saddened that our new president—bear in mind that our president occupies John Wesley's chair—has joined the growing band of trendy and misguided clerics who oppose the Bill.

In all conscience, if I describe somebody as "misguided", it is only right that I should justify that remark. I shall attempt to do that by using two quotations. The first is from a little tract given to me when I tackled that cleric on what he had said. It is entitled, "A Methodist view of capitalism in Britain today". It is written by the president, the Rev. Richard G. Jones. It says that capitalism

"has no place for the poor, the weak, the sick, those who cannot work".

I quote that to make clear where the president of the Methodist conference stands as an individual. But where does the Methodist Church stand?

Methodism's distinctive contribution to Christianity is to be found in the first four volumes of John Wesley's sermons. Sermon No. 44, published in 1760, is entitled, "The proper use of money." By happy coincidence, that title could easily be the short title of the Finance (No. 2) Bill. The sermon says:

[Mr. Wilshire]

"The right use of money—a subject largely spoken of, after their manner, by men of the world"—

politicians—

"but not sufficiently considered by those whom God hath chosen out of the world"—

clerics.

"These generally do not consider, as the importance of the subject requires, the use of this excellent talent. Neither do they understand how to employ it to the greatest advantage".

John Wesley goes on to say that the introduction of money

"into the world is one admirable instance of the wise and gracious providence of God. It has, indeed, been the manner of poets, orators and philosophers"—

and, dare I add, the Labour party—

"in almost all ages and nations, to rail at this"——

Mr. Darling: With respect, this sounds like the Monty Python guide to religion and the Budget. Will the hon. Gentleman say whether he is criticising the view taken by the president of the Methodist conference, who said that under the present system there is no place for the poor or the sick? Is he saying that that is wrong?

Mr. Wilshire: The quotation from John Wesley will show that one has to understand what money is and then understand how to use it.

John Wesley went on:

"It has, indeed, been the manner of poets, orators and philosophers, in almost all ages and nations, to rail at this, as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the pest of human society . . . But is not all this"—

railing against money—

"mere empty rant?"

We have heard such rant from Opposition Members.

"Is there any solid reason therein? By no means. For, let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame?. . .The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it . . . It is, therefore, of the highest concern that all those who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent".

Ms. Armstrong: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: I will give way to another Methodist with pleasure.

Ms. Armstrong: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks at last week's edition of *The Methodist Recorder* where he might see another interpretation of John Wesley's sermon. The hon. Gentleman says that he wishes to give the view of the Methodist Church. The view of the Methodist Church was expressed not just by the president but by the conference. There was one dissenter to that. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was at the debate, but the Methodist conference roundly condemned the Budget, not because it talked about money but because of the way in which it distributed and used that money. In that sense, the Methodist conference was totally in support of John Wesley in that money in itself is not evil; it is the way in which one chooses to use it. We and the Methodist conference want to see that used to support and protect the vulnerable first.

Mr. Wilshire *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have only just returned to the Chamber. This is the Third Reading of the Finance (No. 2) Bill and I suspect that what takes place at Methodist conferences may not be wholly relevant.

Mr. Wilshire: I am desperately sorry, Mr. Speaker, that you did not hear what came before. It is relevant. If you will bear with me, I have to make one final point. The creation of wealth is at the heart of the Bill. Only after creating wealth can one discuss what to do with it.

You are right, Mr. Speaker. I will not discuss the Methodist conference but I want to put on record what John Wesley said because it is at the heart of the Bill. He said:

"It is, therefore, of the highest concern, that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent . . . And, perhaps, all the instructions which are necessary for this may be reduced to three plain rules."

The House should take on board those three rules. The first is, "Gain all you can." In other words, it is a good thing to be better off. Secondly, "Save all you can." Despite what we have heard from Opposition Members, investing is encouraged if we take note of that point. Thirdly, "Give all you can." That does not mean encouraging the state to tax people; it means that people should give what they can themselves.

Mr. Worthington: Would the hon. Member quarrel with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who referred to the "unacceptable face of capitalism"? Does the hon. Member think that he was being doctrinally unsound?

Mr. Wilshire: The difficulty is to get in touch with him to agree or disagree with him. When I see him here, it is usually in the opposite Lobby.

Having quoted John Wesley at length, with many interruptions, I conclude by saying that I think he would have approved of the Budget and would have been voting in the Aye Lobby tonight. Therefore, I urge all hon. Members to back the Bill because it will help all of us to make more money. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but the point has to be understood that there is nothing to be ashamed of in making money.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman explain to the House, as he has so far failed to do in his jibes and slurs on the Methodist Church and his criticisms of the Budget, how a person whose income has been reduced as a result of the Budget and the changes in benefit can spend more money? The people have not got the money to spend because his Government have taken it away.

Mr. Wilshire: The Budget is about creating wealth. The Bill will do precisely that and will give opportunities for everyone, despite what Opposition Members say.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the anger among Opposition Members has arisen because they have not yet found out that the policies of the Government have created wealth for a growing majority of the people? That is why Labour Members sit on the Opposition Benches and we sit on the Government Benches. The Bill will continue that process. Opposition Members are angry because they are still getting it wrong.

Mr. Wilshire: I agree completely. I have always found, when I have been heckled, that it is because the hecklers do not like the argument and cannot think of anything else to say. They claim that the Bill is unjust and unfair. It is not. What would be unfair and unjust would be if individuals who benefited from the Bill turned their backs on those who need help. That represents the issues for the trendy clerics.

My final message is : let all of us in this House support the Bill and help to create more wealth. Then let the clerics in God's House teach all of us as individuals how to use the wealth and how to help other people.

6.53 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): In considering the Budget, we should ask ourselves whether it corresponds to the needs that we see in our constituencies. Does it have relevance for the people whom we have the honour to represent? Does it make the choice of priorities that they would make, given the needs that they see around them? In my constituency I have not met anyone who feels that the Budget matches those needs.

Throughout the consideration of the Bill in Committee, we have been acutely conscious of living in one world and of Ministers living in a completely different world. In the world in which many of us have to live, a third of the population of Scotland in my region of Strathclyde are living at or below supplementary benefit level. That proportion is not diminishing; rather it is increasing.

In March 1988, 16·8 per cent. of the people in Strathclyde were unemployed. I am intrigued by the Government's calendar which refers to falling unemployment for the last 23 months. The interesting thing is that it ignores the previous 86 months for which the Government were in control. If we consider unemployment on a fair basis—taking it over the time that the Government have been in control—we note that unemployment in Scotland has gone from 165,000 to 296,000. The unemployment to vacancy ratio is still 20:1.

Since 1979 Strathclyde has lost 200,000 jobs, which is 20 per cent. of all jobs in the region. Strathclyde now employs 3·6 per cent. of the total of British people who are employed; in 1979 it employed 4·4 per cent. There has been a massive proportionate decrease. Since 1979 manufacturing employment in the region has fallen by 47 per cent. When we listen to the Government, it seems that the decline has been reversed, but in the year up to September 1987 a further 11,000 jobs were lost. On present trends the loss of jobs is likely to continue.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, south): Despite the dreary noises, does the hon. Gentleman agree that disposable incomes in Scotland are much higher than in other regions, and are growing rapidly?

Mr. Worthington: I do not agree with that; I shall come to that later.

Large parts of the industrial north and Scotland are projected by the Cambridge Econometrics people to lose 85,000 more jobs by the year 2000. The Budget changes do not help. Poor people have lost money. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Battle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been here throughout the debate, often in the absence of Government Members who obviously were not prepared to defend their Budget. I am now finding it difficult to hear my hon. Friend's remarks because of the noise being made by the hon. Members who have just rushed into the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members not to have private conversations.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker.

The alleged tax cuts and the changes in social security benefit, as well as increases in rents and electricity charges and the 20 per cent. minimum of rates which people have to pay, have affected incomes. In our surgeries we hear a catalogue of woe because of the problems caused by the Government's policies. In addition to all that, from next April people in Scotland will have to pay the poll tax. That means a transfer of resources from the poorer to the richer areas. Also, the uniform business rate is not to be introduced in Scotland until nearer the year 2000 than 1990. Again, in effect, that will lead to a transfer of resources from Scotland.

If one looks around, one has a picture of public squalor. One can see that the roads are inadequately repaired, public buildings are in poor condition and, above all, housing is visibly in disrepair. The reason is not mismanagement by the public sector; the work should be done by the private sector, but it is not being done.

There is a progressive lack of investment in Scotland. Conservative Members pointed out in Committee the growth of the venture capital industry. That is good to see, but, once again, most of that venture capital investment is in the south-east. Sixty per cent. of the growth in venture capital investment has been in the south-east, although it has only 47 per cent. of firms, whereas Scotland has only 6 per cent. of venture capital investment, although it has 12 per cent. of firms. In Scotland, we also have a banking system that is short-sighted about investment. The pattern in Scotland is that lending is done through overdrafts rather than through medium term loans. In the south-east the lending pattern is different.

We have a far from free market in which the Government are stoking up the south-east. It is interesting to note that the M25 was built at a cost of about £980 million, whereas the main road into Scotland, the A74, is not likely to attain motorway status until after the turn of the century.

It is interesting to consider the figures for the London docklands. The budget for the docklands for 1987-88 is £132 million, although the London docklands cover a small area. That budget dwarfs the combined budgets of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. The Budget has a pattern, to which I am sure other Opposition Members will refer. The effect of the Budget is to leave more resources in the south than there are in the north and in Scotland.

We hoped that the Budget would help to resist the trend towards the centralisation of resources in the south-east. Is it the inexorable consequence of Government policies that we shall be living in two nations? Will not people in the north and Scotland have the right to live in the same country as those in the south-east? The Opposition believe that, if we are all members of a United Kingdom, there should be comparable standards throughout. The inevitable consequence of Government policies is that people will be paid less and less in the north and Scotland, and more and more in the south. The standard of services in the north and in Scotland will progressively decline.

The Government must recognise the importance of manufacturing industry. We must have long-term investment. The Government have an antipathy to manufacturing industry that is difficult to understand. In Scotland, 23 per cent. of employment is in manufacturing. We are led to believe that more and more employment will be in the service industry. In two countries, manufacturing industry's share of employment is not 23 per cent., as it is in Scotland, but 29 or 30 per cent. They are not Third

[Mr. Worthington]

world or backward countries; they are Japan and West Germany, which have more jobs in manufacturing industry than we have in Scotland.

We must accept that much of the apparent movement from manufacturing to the service industries is illusory. Jobs that used to be done in-house in manufacturing industry are now being done out of house in the service industries—in banking, marketing and so on. There has been a transfer of jobs from inside jobs to outside firms.

We must realise that manufacturing industry will not play a declining role in future. At the very least its role will remain as it is and it is likely to increase. Service industries' overwhelming purpose is to serve the needs of manufacturing industry. The Government's lack of interest in the needs of Scotland and manufacturing industry—quite apart from the immorality of their taxation policies—is the fundamental weakness of their Budget.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the debate be now adjourned.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Rover Group

7.5 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I think it will be for the convenience of the House if I make a statement about the Rover Group.

Yesterday I informed the House that the European Commission had decided the outline terms governing the state aid for the proposed British Aerospace acquisition of the Government's shareholding in Rover Group. I also explained that BAe had asked for more time to consider the implications of other conditions attached to the Commission's decision.

I should make it clear that the points of difficulty for BAe were not related to the basic financial framework of the deal, which was acceptable in principle to BAe and which has not changed since yesterday. The issue was the commercial flexibility available to BAe in complying with the Commission's decision.

I am, however, glad to report that talks with the Commission this morning have clarified the position in terms satisfactory to the BAe board.

As I informed the House yesterday, the Commission has approved the final terms of the acquisition after certain changes in the structure and scale of the March agreement. In making this judgment, the Commission has recognised the important implications for competition and restructuring in the European vehicles market through the return of Rover Group to the private sector. It has also taken note of the prospects for the development of the company, on the basis of Rover Group's management's plans which BAe has endorsed.

Under the revised arrangements it has been agreed that some residual items of trading debt should remain on the balance sheet. The revised terms also take account of the continuing improvement in Rover Group's financial performance since the talks with BAe were launched. I am sure that the House will have welcomed the improvement in the half-year results that Rover Group announced yesterday. These showed a profit before interest of £28·8 million compared with a loss of £10 million for the same period last year.

On this basis, BAe will still pay £150 million for the Government's shareholding in Rover Group. The precise timing of the payment will follow the clarification of certain tax matters arising out of the change of ownership of the company. The Government, BAe and the Commission have also agreed a new cash injection of £547 million comprising £469 million in recognition of historic debt; and £78 million to support part of Rover Group's investment programme in the assisted areas.

In addition, we have agreed material changes to the tax provisions of the March agreement. There has been no change in the provision that only £500 million of Rover's existing trading losses will be available after it has been acquired by British Aerospace, but we have agreed to remove two other tax restrictions that were in the earlier agreement. They will give the British Aerospace group the same freedom that any other company has under tax law to utilise about £200 million of Rover Group's capital losses and up to about £300 million of disclaimed capital allowances. Estimating the value of those tax benefits is a matter for British Aerospace, although clearly they are very significant.

I pay tribute to the contribution made by Graham Day, his management team and his work force, whose skills and hard work have permitted the return of 18 Rover Group businesses to private ownership since May 1986. They have raised the performance of Rover Group to the point where it can now look forward with confidence at its final return to the disciplines of the market place, as part of one of Europe's major engineering groups.

I am certain that the Rover Group's return to the private sector will prove to be in the best interests of the company, its employees and dealers—as well as of the many thousands of others in its supplying industries whose livelihoods depend upon the Rover Group's health. The deal also means that, subject only to approval at an extraordinary general meeting of British Aerospace, we shall have returned to the private sector the last of the constituent parts of what was British Leyland.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Is it not clear that Ministers have spent the last 27 hours trying not so much to safeguard the British car industry as to salvage what they can from the mess they have created? Is it not equally clear that they have failed miserably in that attempt? Have Ministers so far conceded control over their own policy that to overcome a problem that the Chancellor of the Duchy himself described only yesterday as not being "especially important or material" they have had to return cap in hand to Brussels to beg for concessions?

Is it not a further humiliation that the response to that request was to send Ministers packing with a flea in their ear? Will the Chancellor of the Duchy confirm the Commission's statement today that it has not changed its position in any way?

How is it that an unelected official can tell the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that his terms are non-negotiable? How is it that the Commission can dictate to the British Government on the details of Rover's corporate plan when the House of Commons is kept in the dark? Does that new corporate plan mean, at the EEC's behest, the virtual end of British-controlled car manufacture? What was the point at issue that was supposedly trivial but which caused so much concern to British Aerospace and which was so non-negotiable for the Commission?

How is it that British Aerospace has now accepted £250 million less than Ministers initially offered? As I asked yesterday, why was it left to the EEC to negotiate that reduction in the spending of taxpayers' money? What reliance can be placed on a deal in which British Aerospace manifestly has so little confidence, and which manifestly carries with it so little commitment to the British car industry? If it has taken Professor Roland Smith 27 hours to have his arm twisted, how long will it take him to persuade his institutional shareholders to accept the deal? Is it true that institutional shareholders have already been telephoning to express their objections?

May we be given a guarantee that, if the shareholders throw out the deal, there will be no hawking round of Rover to any buyer—whether British or, more likely, foreign—who can be found, and that we will have no more of these embarrassing nonsenses in the name of an unnecessary and unwelcome privatisation?

Mr. Clarke: I appreciate that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has had to guess to a certain extent about the way in which my right hon. and noble Friend and myself have spent the last 27 hours. Having heard his opening questions, I may say that his guesswork is miles wide of the truth. Over the past 27 hours, we have been clarifying certain of the procedural conditions which the Commission attached to its decision and which were communicated to British Aerospace yesterday morning. The Commission has not changed the nature of its agreement with either the Government or British Aerospace: nobody asked it to do so. As I said yesterday, the British Government were agreed, and we did not return to the Commission asking for any change.

British Aerospace, quite rightly, wished to go over the terms and written conditions it received yesterday and to clarify certain points. In particular, British Aerospace wished to reassure itself that it would retain commercial flexibility in the management of its business. I am glad to say that, as a result of the exchanges between the Commission and British Aerospace, in which the Government played a helpful part, BAe is now satisfied, from the explanations it has received, that it will have the necessary commercial freedom that any responsible management would want in running a business.

That is what caused what I described yesterday—as it has turned out, accurately—as a "last-minute hitch". It did not grow, it has been removed, and with clarification we can now proceed.

Rover Group's management plans have not been changed at any stage in that process. They were not changed by the Commission, and they were not changed by British Aerospace. They have been accepted by British Aerospace. Of course we have not disclosed those plans to the House. We have not disclosed them publicly because there must be commercial confidentiality about the management plans of a business of that kind. To disclose Rover Group's corporate and management plans would be of huge advantage to its foreign and domestic competitors. It would have been quite wrong to reveal them. It was wrong to do so when the group was nationalised, and it would be wrong to do so now that it is to be privatised.

As to changes in the deal, the deal must be looked at as a whole. As I said, its scale and structure have been changed. It is true that the cash injection has been reduced by about £250 million. At the same time, there have been changes made to the tax losses available to British Aerospace. On the other hand, we have removed the ring fencing from the capital losses and the unclaimed capital allowances, so that they can now be used against the business of British Aerospace as a whole. Therefore, the agreement structure has been changed.

Certain factors have mainly influenced that change, apart from the Commission's perfectly legitimate desire to ensure that state aids were not being given to Rover Group on a basis that gave it an unfair competitive advantage over its competitors, which is a policy we support. Inevitably, we entered into discussions with the Commission knowing that it was likely to make changes. It has always done so in the past. It did so in the case of Leyland-DAF last year and in respect of Renault earlier this year. Also—this should be very welcome—Rover Group's own performance and our expectations of the debt at the date of completion were changing as our discussions proceeded, and we have just had its excellent results.

I believe that the agreement is certainly one that we can endorse. It is extremely welcome. The hon. Member for

[Mr. Clarke]

Dagenham spoke about what the shareholders may decide at the extraordinary general meeting. That is the next and last step, but the British Aerospace board will commend the agreement to the company's shareholders, and my guess is that the shareholders will take more notice of the British Aerospace board than they will of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, who have merely been trying to wreck this whole arrangement from the moment that it started.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is an interruption of a very important debate. I ask for single questions.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this excellent news is the result of the Government's good stewardship in looking after Rover Group during the past few years, and of the high standard of the group's present management? The House, if it is sensible, ought to welcome the group's move back into the private sector, particularly into a firm such as British Aerospace, with its wide spread of engineering and high-tech skills. The Rover Group has a real chance of prospering and of doing better and better, as we surely all hope it will do.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. He is right to congratulate the group's management. This is almost a historic occasion. My hon. Friend and I have been Members of the House for the same period. It is an amazing thought that we are on the threshold of seeing Rover Group ceasing to be a politicised company and returning to an ordinary commercial basis, and to having a management planning for its future free from the constraints of the public sector and of vast losses. It is a significant landmark in the recovery of the British economy. It is most symbolic of the way in which the British economy generally is reviving.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): In view of this amazing episode, will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster tell us who is running the country and whether the British Government have any say in it? Is he aware that it looks at though Commissioner Sutherland has much more influence over these matters than he does as a Minister of the Crown? Who elected Commissioner Sutherland, and by what democratic method can we remove him? Are we to assume that the next time the Minister stands at the Dispatch Box to give a statement on British Government industrial policy he will have to say, "But of course, as we are just a county council in the Common Market, this all depends on whether I am overruled by my superiors in Brussels"?

Mr. Clarke: The policy of the European Community is that state aids, to use the European phrase—in other words, subsidies to industry—should be regulated to ensure that member Governments do not start subsidising against each other to preserve loss-making industries and excess capacity. That is not in the long-term interests of the European Community and its economy. The British Government wholly support that aim.

I believe that it is desirable to have a market within the European Community in which the Governments do not subsidise their respective client companies against one another. Where a degree of state aid is justified, it is right that someone should police it. That is what has happened on this occasion. The British Government not only accept that policy, but we do not have any difficulties with the Commission about it, as the satisfactory resolution of this issue has demonstrated.

If we ever, heaven save us, have a Labour Government again, I am glad to say that the policy of the Community would stop them returning to a system of indiscriminate state subsidies to nationalised industries and propping up the fantastic losses that Rover Group began to incur in the days of bad stewardship in the 1970s.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, despite the Opposition's carping attitude, there will be few people in the country who will not heartily welcome the satisfactory outcome of the negotiations? Few people will not join in wishing all possible success to everyone involved—the management and work force of Rover and British Aerospace—and will not thoroughly condemn the stupid, frivolous, irresponsible and superficial attitude of the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend's description of the Opposition as "carping". There have been moments in the confused history of the Opposition's approach to this matter when they brought temporary cheer to those with the interests of Fiat, Volkswagen, Renault and other car companies in mind. I am sure that they have, unintentionally, given considerable encouragement to Rover's rivals. A successful deal is a much better outcome for our company.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Can the Minister give watertight assurances to the House that British Aerospace has accepted and will implement Rover's investment programme? What guarantees and assurances did he seek on future employment within Rover and what were given?

Mr. Clarke: As I said in my statement, British Aerospace has accepted and endorsed Rover's management plans. In common with every other management, British Aerospace retains the right to be flexible in applying those plans, as it must. That was the point that we were discussing. British Aerospace sought clarification to ensure that it was free to respond to market conditions and that it has the same flexibility that any management requires as things evolve. As of now, British Aerospace accepts and endorses the management plan of Rover Group, and when it acquires the business it will proceed on that basis.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that all this kerfuffle over the dashing, once again, of the Opposition's hopes that the deal would fail should not be allowed to obscure the fact that, with improved quality and improved management, and given the tremendous manufacturing cost advantage and the success of this Government's policies, Britain is once more the place to make cars? That is why the deal will succeed.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend; and I am sure that he agrees with me that the last hopes of the Opposition were dashed by the good results of the past six

months. The Opposition would have got the position that they would have preferred only if Rover had plunged back into loss and the deal had been frustrated.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Given the two new tax breaks, can the Minister estimate just how much British Aerospace will be given to take on the Rover Group? Will Rover Group have to pay the Government £150 million, or will the Government deduct that from the money that they will give to British Aerospace?

Mr. Clarke: The tax losses and the unclaimed tax allowances are of value to British Aerospace, but, as I have already said, only the company can calculate that and it can do so only when it has made progress in assessing the capital gains that it will use against the capital losses and it has got the necessary clearance from the Inland Revenue for the tax arrangements that it proposes. Once that has been sorted out, the company will pay £150 million in consideration of the Government's shareholding.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Although I appreciate that Mr. Sutherland was doing the job for which he is empowered, does my right hon. and learned Friend consider that the time has come to decide whether the fact that the commissioners have such power should be brought to the attention of the Council of Ministers?

As we move towards 1992 we must ensure that the restructuring that industry in Europe believes is necessary is carried out more efficiently than it has been in the past several months. Does not my right hon. Friend find it amazing that, given all the union support, no Opposition Members support the proposal?

Mr. Clarke: I frequently encounter Commissioner Sutherland at Council of Ministers meetings and, among other things, we discuss state aids. There is no difference between Commissioner Sutherland and myself about those aids. At the moment I have joined with other Ministers to encourage Mr. Sutherland to take a careful look at the Italian proposals for state aids to their steel industry. We support the commissioner in his declared intention to take a firm view of that matter and to ensure that the Italians comply with the rules.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Despite what the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) has just said, does the Minister agree that Commissioner Sutherland was acting entirely within the rules and entirely within the constraints of the treaty of Rome? Surely his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) demonstrates that, in this respect and in many others, a future House of Commons and a future Labour Government would be politically constrained by that treaty. If, as the Minister has claimed, the Government were aware of the constraints, why did they not produce a deal that could have got through the loops instead of being caught on the barbed wire?

Mr. Clarke: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I am a supporter of Britain's membership of the European Community and a supporter of the economic regime within the Community. I have already said that I am a supporter of the policy of state aids which the Commissioner has applied. I should have thought that the whole point of my statement today was to make it clear that my right hon. and noble Friend has conducted negotiations with the result that we have got through the loops and have complied with Community policy to reach a conclusion that is wholly satisfactory to the Commission, to the British Government and to the board of British Aerospace.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Apart from the commercial flexibility considerations to which my right hon. and learned Friend has alluded, should not any responsible board of directors who have put their name to an offer document and then had the terms of that document revised sit down and work out the profit and cash flow implications of the changes? Is that not the very least that their shareholders and employees would expect of them?

Mr. Clarke: British Aerospace has done that throughout its contemplation of and discussions about the purchase of the Rover Group. It was happy with the financial agreement which emerged and which my right hon. and noble Friend had been discussing with it while discussing the agreement with the Commission.

Yesterday, British Aerospace got written terms from the Commission setting out the procedures that the Commission would follow, but British Aerospace wanted more time to consider them and to receive certain clarifications. It has now got those clarifications and it is going ahead. British Aerospace has told us that it will now commend the deal for its commercial and financial common sense to its shareholders at the extraordinary general meeting.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Was the European Commission right when it referred in its statement yesterday to

"The planned move by Rover from mass car producer to specialist producer"?

If it was, is such a move a matter for celebration by the Conservative party? What employment problems are likely to arise from such a move? What are the implications of it for those in the west midlands engaged in the car accessory business who depend upon the Rover Group for their future survival?

Mr. Clarke: There is a certain amount of semantics involved in this, but Mr. Graham Day has said publicly on a number of occasions that Rover Group is not a volume car producer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—because it represents 3 per cent. of the European car market. Rover's existing management plans have throughout been accepted by British Aerospace and endorsed. That is the basis on which we are starting.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Surely it should not surprise anyone that the party whose mega-merger industrial policy created the lumbering British Leyland giant in the first place, whose economic policies riddled it with inflation and whose labour policies crippled it with strikes should look so glum today and fall back on its anti-EEC instincts in compensation for the fact that this deal will go through?

Mr. Clarke: I shall not seek to rival my hon. Friend's language, but I wholly agree with his sentiments.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the Minister confirm his astounding statement in reply to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that the Government do not know the valuation to be put on the new tax allowances which will be worked out only later by

[Dr. John Reid]

the company? Is it not astounding for the Minister to tell the House that he does not know how much extra taxpayers' money has been ploughed into the deal? Can he tell us the difference between a £250 million subsidy and a £250 million tax allowance? If he can, I promise that nobody on this side of the House will tell the EEC.

Mr. Clarke: We know what is available to Rover Group by way of tax losses which it can use. The trading losses of £500 million remain unchanged and we have capped those. Rover has more trading losses on its books now, and they will be available for use against future Rover Group profits. In the March agreement, the capital losses and unclaimed capital allowances were ring-fenced and could be used only against capital gains in the Rover business. We have removed that ring fence so that they can now be used in British Aerospace as a whole, as lawfully as for any other company. *[Interruption.]* With respect to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who disputes that, it is entirely lawful to do that with capital losses and unclaimed capital allowances. Exactly how much use British Aerospace can make of that will depend on its decisions about capital gains and tax computations. It will need section 768 clearance from the Inland Revenue and then it will know the value and will pay the consideration for the share.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): We all want to see the Rover Group succeed in or out of British Aerospace. Given how crucial to that success the corporate plan and the restructuring to which the Minister referred are, is he not hiding behind his claim of commercial confidentiality? Could he not at least tell us whether it is intended that the numbers employed will increase or decrease? Can he tell us whether part of the Cowley site, as has been widely reported, is scheduled to be sold under the plan? Is it not wholly unacceptable that the workers and communities most affected are being kept in the dark about precisely what this means for jobs and the viability of the industry?

Mr. Clarke: This is an old issue and I am sure that this exchange has taken place in the House many times before. The Government do not disclose the corporate plan or the management plans of the Rover Group because they are commercial and are valuable to competitors. I believe that the House has accepted that and, if not, it should. There is no more reason to disclose the management plans to competitors now than there was when it was a nationalised corporation. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concerns about these matters, which are legitimately shared by many of his constituents. I believe that his constituents and the unions that represent them welcome this deal.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that tonight he and our right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State will be the toast of thousands of working people within the Rover Group factories in Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry who look forward to working with British Aerospace to provide the wealth and fill the jobs, which are increasing month by month and will provide them with a high and successful standard of living? I am sure that they extend their thanks.

Mr. Clarke: We do not normally have toasts on the Floor of the House, but I shall propose one in return to the management and work force of the Rover Group who have done so much to get us to where we are today.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Minister aware that his statement—I notice from a copy that it was the third draft—will not bring any joy to British Aerospace workers or to car workers in the midlands? When he spoke of Rover following the other 18 privatised former Leyland businesses, is he aware that not only have Coventry Climax, Self-Changing Gears and Alvis savagely reduced jobs, but that last week the jewel in his crown, Jaguar, froze all recruitment and started cutting jobs through what it euphemistically calls "natural wastage" because of the decline in the American market and currency changes, both of which I warned the Minister about in the House before?

Will the Chancellor answer the question about yesterday's press release from Commissioner Sutherland's office which speaks of the danger of over-capacity in car production in Europe and states:

> "The planned move by Rover from mass car producer to specialist producer will reduce the danger of aid being used to expand capacity"?

Does not that mean that the sword of Damocles will hang over the jobs at Longbridge, about which Uriah Heep has just spoken, and those at Cowley, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) spoke?

Mr. Clarke: The commissioner was anxious to ensure that none of the 12 Governments used subsidies to expand capacity at a time when, in his judgment, there was surplus capacity. The hon. Gentleman talks about employment in various companies. Employment in manufacturing, as in the service industries, depends on success in the market place and on making products which can sell. That is the case for all the companies that he cited, and it will continue to be the case for British Aerospace, Rover Group and other great firms. The Government's approach to these matters has been hugely successful in creating employment, as this morning's unemployment figures have again confirmed. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in believing that the Government can fix the numbers of people employed in particular plants making particular products. That is an absurd approach to industrial policy.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, when the all-party Select Committee on Trade and Industry looked at the initial nationalisation of British Leyland, the problems of the Rootes Group, the Chrysler rescue operation and others, it always regarded the corporate plan of the companies as essentially commercially confidential and that it would have destroyed the future that the Committee was trying to preserve had they been revealed? Will he stress that the taxation arrangements that he announced today are not making extra deviations from normal tax law, but bringing the provisions more nearly into parallel with normal tax law?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is a senior and experienced Member and I am grateful to him for endorsing my belief about the confidentiality of corporate plans. I do not believe that any Select Committee would ever wish to expose those to the public eye. They never have and never will. Rover Group has suffered greatly from being drawn into the political arena, but fortunately it has never

suffered the blow of seeing its management plans trailed over the Floor of the House of Commons, and I trust that it never will.

My hon. Friend is right that in March we put a ring fence around the capital losses and allowances so that ordinary law did not apply and British Aerospace could not have used them in its business as a whole. We have removed that ring fence so that the ordinary law applies to this new group on the capital tax position, just as it would for any other acquisition.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are in the middle of an important debate. I shall allow questions to continue until a quarter to eight and then we must move on.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Has it not taken the Commission to expose the Government's golden give-away terms, not only in this but in every privatisation, and their fly-boy attitude to public investment? Has it not taken the Commission also to expose the Government's lack of willingness to take on board competition policy in reality and to approach both privatisation issues and industry in general with a determination to serve the public's best interests rather than investors?

Mr. Clarke: We had all this yesterday. I have explained the basis upon which the discussions went on and how the agreement that we have arrived at was reached. If I follow the hon. Gentleman, I take it that he supports the Commission's terms and the agreement that we have entered into. So do I, so do the Government, so does British Aerospace—so there should be nothing between us.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is astonishingly naive of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and some of his hon. Friends not to realise that it would be inconceivable that a major and complex corporate deal of this kind could be put together without a great deal of delicate and cliff-hanging negotiation? Does he agree that their attitude to these matters reflects their most profound inexperience? Does he accept that there will be widespread admiration, not only in the two companies concerned but throughout British industry, for the able way in which he and the Secretary of State have conducted the negotiations on behalf of the Government, and that an expanding and thriving British Aerospace will be a fine monument to their achievements in the future?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend to the extent that I hope that Opposition Members will go over the agreement and how we reached it, so that in the unlikely event of any of them having to deal with the European Commission in matters of this sort they will have a slightly better understanding of how these affairs are conducted than they did in March or yesterday.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that it would strike someone outside this place that what has happened in the course of these 24 hours was that he has been unable to convince people in the Common Market about the straight subsidy? The Common Market almost certainly then told him to cover it up and get in touch with chartered accountants, who would fiddle the tax and provide the same sort of money in that way. Why cannot that be done for taxpayers in Britain so that they can have the ring fence removed from around them and set up tax liabilities against other assets? Is it not significant that this matter is being discussed on the day of the Third Reading of the Finance (No. 2) Bill, when £2 billion is being handed out to top taxpayers—and here the Minister comes along with another big tax fiddle?

Mr. Clarke: I have already explained this. As I said yesterday, we were in complete agreement with the commissioner. The Government did not go back to the Commission and ask to have any of the terms changed. For the Government and the Commission, nothing has changed since yesterday morning. Quite correctly, British Aerospace wanted clarification of a text that it saw only yesterday morning about the procedures and conditions that the Commission was applying. In discussions on that, the Government played an intermediary role. The board is now satisfied, and that is where we are now.

I have tried with some care to explain the tax position. It bears no relation to what the hon. Gentleman said. The company is being governed by the same law and tax rules as apply to any other private company in this country.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his statement. Is he as surprised as I am that, although he has announced a successful conclusion, the Opposition are giving it exactly the same response as if he had succeeded in finding a failure for them? Surely the Opposition realise that competition policy has existed for years. It has been criticised because other countries have not obeyed the rules, as we do. I hope that, in future, subsidies for all nations that belong to the European Parliament will be scrutinised in the Council of Ministers and subjected to the same media exposure as this case has been.

Mr. Clarke: As a Member of the European Parliament and of the House, my hon. Friend has always supported competition policy, and we have consistently taken this view about subsidies in the EEC over the years. We are, as I said yesterday, equally firm in insisting that the Commission applies the same agreed regime to other countries. We are usually amongst the most vehement in requesting the Commission to uphold its duty and make sure that others apply only legitimate state aids to business.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Minister will not have had time to bring himself up to date yet with the Bathgate position, as he promised to do yesterday, but will he say something about the £78 million, which is to

"support part of Rover Group's investment programme in the assisted areas"?

How is the sum of £469 million of historic debt arrived at?

Mr. Clarke: The £78 million is regional selective assistance given on the same criteria as we always apply to regional selective assistance for any other company. The assistance goes towards some of the investment plans of the Rover Group under its management plans. It will help to support and maintain jobs in the west midlands that now have assisted-area status.

Mr. Dalyell: What about Bathgate?

Mr. Clarke: To the best of my knowledge and belief, it has nothing to do with Bathgate. I will write to the hon.

[Mr. Clarke]

Gentleman if there is any mistake about that. It is regional selective assistance for investment in the continuing business of Rover Group.

As for debt, we have agreed to allow the historic trading debts to be removed from the books of the company, except that £100 million-worth of historic debt is now to remain on the books. That has led to a change in the deal since we announced it in March. Apart from that, a vehicle stock provision was made in the books of the company which we previously regarded as debt, but the Commission regards as working capital, so it has been taken out of the original March agreement. There have been other minor changes, but those two were the big ones—£100 million historic debt remaining on the books, and vehicle stock provision, which is no longer to be written off by the Government.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): My right hon. and learned Friend has removed a large element of uncertainty hanging over British Aerospace and Rover Group. Can he reconfirm that these negotiations have in no way affected any negotiations between the Government and British Aerospace on the Airbus programme?

Mr. Clarke: I can. Our arrangements in the Department of Trade and Industry have helped with that. My right hon. and noble Friend conducts all day-to-day business on the Rover Group and I conduct all day-to-day business on Airbus.

I hate to use the expression "Chinese walls", but there are certain Chinese walls between the discussions, and my right hon. and noble Friend and I regularly discuss the position on both fronts. One thing that has emerged all the way through is that there is no connection between this arrangement for Rover Group and the launch aid that the Government have given to Airbus, on which our position is given and perfectly clear.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister confirm that this rather shabby conspiracy has resulted in £2·9 billion-worth of taxpayers' money going to British Aerospace—plus £1 billion in cash and capital allowances? Does he agree that British Aerospace will receive in return £750 million-worth of physical assets for £150 million? Would not most people regard that as barefaced robbery of the taxpayer? Why cannot the taxpayer be given the benefit of this developing company, whose results the Minister has mentioned? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that there will be enormous pressure from the workers and the labour movement to get this company back into public ownership, where it belongs?

Mr. Clarke: What the hon. Gentleman describes as a conspiracy is an agreement to return Rover Group to the private sector where it belongs and where, in our opinion, it will flourish. It is a wholly suitable end to our exchanges tonight, if this be the end of them, that a Labour Member should sound as thought he is urging his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench to renationalise the company——

Mr. Cryer: Yes, I am.

Mr. Clarke: Looking back over the history of the nationalised British Leyland, which has cost the British taxpayer £2·9 billion, I am astonished to see the unreconstructed end of the Labour party still demanding its renationalisation. What I have announced today promises a very much better future for the company, its work force, its dealers and everyone associated with it.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Finance (No. 2) Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

7.48 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead): Throughout our debates on the Budget and on the Finance Bill—including the Committee stage—the Government and their supporters have steadfastly refused to accept the truth of their Budget measures: that they represent huge benefits for the rich and create an almost unbridgeable chasm between rich and poor.

In Committee, Conservative Members claimed that only Labour had criticised the Budget for its handouts to the very rich. That is absolute nonsense. Let me quote one or two of the headlines that greeted the Budget when it was first presented to the House:

"Dramatic gains for the rich."
"An end to old-fashioned egalitarianism."
"A gain for high earners with little to offset it."

Those are from the *Financial Times*.

"Super-rich net big bonus from tax changes."
"Low earners lose out from tax reform."

Those are from *The Guardian*. Virtually throughout our press—which is not normally hostile to the Conservative Government—similar headlines showed us how the Budget was received.

Organisations concerned with the plight of the poorest sections of the country—organisations such as Shelter, Age Concern, the Low Pay Unit and many charities and welfare organisations—expressed their utter dismay at what the Budget contained.

In a rather strange speech, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) enlisted the aid of John Wesley in support of the Budget and the Bill. Apart from thinking that it is a dubious practice to try to enlist the aid of someone who has been dead for a great many years and to quote him as being in favour of a particular Bill or clause when he is not in a position to make his views known, I believe that what the hon. Gentleman said was far from being the view of most Methodists and most Church people in today's society. It was foolish of him to single out a particular cleric when it was clear from the recent Methodist conference that the views of that cleric were supported by nearly all the delegates. A motion passed virtually unanimously condemned the divisive nature of the Government's economic policies. That was not the view of one person alone; it represented a wide spread of opinion.

We must also recognise that the Methodist Church is in the same camp on these issues as the Church of England, and indeed the Roman Catholics, particularly the Catholic bishops, who made very similar statements. They are taking that view not because they have suddenly become party political or because they all want to join a particular political party, but because they see the reality of Government policies in their parishes and in all parts of the country where they have a presence. It is the reality of the poverty that has been created in the Government's period of office that is giving rise to such widespread sentiments of concern.

Some elements of the business community have also criticised the Budget and the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) pointed out in an earlier intervention that the CBI in the northern region had tremendous misgivings about the Budget because of the regional effect of the measures, which, it was felt -particularly in view of the extension of the business expansion scheme to private housing—would benefit the south-east more than the north-east. Moreover, the top earners tend to be concentrated in the south-east, and it was therefore felt that the money coming from tax cuts would circulate in the already prosperous parts of the country rather than in the areas that most need a cash injection.

Several myths have appeared during our discussions in Committee and on the Floor of the House. One is the myth of the low-tax society that the Government claim to be creating. With the shift towards indirect taxation, many people find that they are paying more in tax overall, although the richest are paying up to 40 per cent. less. The head of the Low Pay Unit calculated that today's super-taxpayers were the poor rather than the rich, given the way in which the Budget measures and the allied social security measures have combined.

An article in the *Financial Times* of 4 May contrasts the circumstances of two similar couples:

"Income tax and national insurance for a married couple on 10 times the average earnings and with a part-time working spouse and no children counted for 61·1 per cent. of earnings in 1978-79, compared with 36·9 per cent. in the current financial year. For the same type of household on half the average earnings, the tax burden this year will be higher than in 1979."

That is a disgraceful situation. It is figures like that that the Government cannot avoid when they try to soft-soap us into believing that everyone has benefited substantially from the Budget. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was told in answer to a question that more than 7·5 million households were worse off under the Budget measures and the social security changes combined.

Another myth, propounded yet again by the Chief Secretary this evening, is that the Budget is a Budget for incentives. The only incentive created in this Budget is the incentive to import. The cuts in income tax and the lack of investment in manufacturing industry mean that the likely gainers from the tax cuts will be those producing goods in other countries which will be imported into Britain in ever-increasing numbers. As we know, the recent trade figures bear that out. This is a fear that we have expressed throughout our debates—a fear that we have expressed for a long time, given the Government's economic strategy —and it certainly seems to accord with the present reality.

Looking at our present tax system, we must face many unpleasant facts. It is still possible for someone earning £1 million to pay no tax. The top 1 per cent. will pay £4·7 billion—in other words, an average of £22,680 per taxpayer less this year than under the Labour Government. Yet, at the same time as the rich have received these enormous benefits, pensioners, because of the broken link between pensions, wages and prices, are earning less than they would have been if the link had been maintained. The pensioner married couple would now be earning about £79 instead of £69. Many people have seen their standard of living plummet, as I know from my constituency and from parts of Tyneside where poverty has become visible in a way that it was not 10 years ago.

The Chief Secretary has made great play tonight of the improvement in employment figures. We must realise, however, that under the present Government unemployment was at a record level, and that any improvement that there has been represents an improvement of a dire

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

position. Unemployment is still far higher than when Labour was in office. The Chief Secretary's claims struck a very hollow note with me, because this week in my constituency we have faced the loss of 450 highly qualified technological jobs in Marconi Radar, which has more than wiped out any meagre employment gains in Gateshead in recent months.

I want to make that point very loudly. Conservative Members simply do not realise that substantial redundancies are still taking place in the manufacturing sector—redundancies which, in an area such as the north-east, we can ill afford. These are real jobs, which it will be extremely difficult to replace in anything approaching the near future.

The effects of the Government's measures on the economy as a whole, as well as on specific regions, are also very worrying. The balance of payments has deteriorated dramatically. Some measures have promoted rapid growth in credit, on which we had a good debate yesterday when many valid points were made. The investment that we need for our country and for the future is still in very short supply. Investment is still below the levels of the last Labour Government. It is not just Opposition Members who say that. Organisations such as the Institution of Civil Engineers and British Aggregate Construction Materials Industries consistently claim in evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that public capital investment is the poor relation in the Government's economic strategy.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said that Budgets often look different after 24 hours. The judgment on this Budget was harsh as soon as it was announced, but the judgment should be even harsher now, particularly from those who have had the opportunity of scrutinising its grisly details throughout the long sittings in Committee. It is a disgraceful Bill, and the blatant way in which the wealthy have been showered with benefits shows a deep contempt for society as a whole.

8.1 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) because, however much one may disagree with what she says, she always puts it with a care and persuasiveness that I find rather enviable.

This year, there is one Finance Bill; last year, there were two Finance Bills. What this year lacks in quantity, it makes up for in quality. Last year, with some diffidence, I made my maiden speech on the Third Reading of the second Finance Bill on 20 July.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): It was a very good one.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In that speech I asked for three changes to be considered; first, a change in the taxation of married women, which I regarded as an archaic and insulting antique; secondly, a change in capital gains tax legislation, which was absurdly complicated; and, thirdly, a change in the way in which our tax system relates—or rather, does not—to our benefits system. I am delighted to say that, within less than a year, the Government have changed the taxation of women, they have dealt partly with the taxation of capital gains, and I am sure that they will shortly begin to consider changing the way in which the tax system relates to the benefits system.

The change in married women's taxation is one of the most historic changes of this century, because it begins to treat women as equals. The Government have brought in equality of treatment for women, yet at every step of the way they have been vigorously opposed by Opposition Members, who talk about equality for women, but whenever the scent of equality for women is within their nostrils they run a mile. I am therefore truly grateful to the Government for the change in the taxation of women.

The Government have made a start on the taxation of capital gains. I describe it only as a start, but it is a major start, as it brings the taxation of capital gains closer to the taxation of income by virtually amalgamating the two, although there is still plenty of work to be done. There is much legislation which is now unnecessary, or could at least be simplified, which discourages people from converting capital gains into income, or income into capital gains, to reduce their tax rates. That could perhaps be achieved by abolishing capital gains tax altogether and introducing a new schedule to the Income Tax Acts so that capital gains could be taxed under schedule F. That would necessitate suitable changes to the allowances, and the indexation allowance, which I regard as too complicated to be worth while, might have to be abolished. However, if the Government are serious about abolishing inflation, as I am sure they are, the indexation allowance should become less and less important.

The issue of national insurance is related to the tax and benefit systems and needs consideration. Before the Budget there were rumours that if my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer reduced the higher rates of income tax he would claw back that relief from higher rate taxpayers by increasing the national insurance rates that they would pay. I am delighted that he did not do that, mainly because national insurance is such an abomination. I should like to see it abolished altogether. It is the equivalent of another income tax, but it requires its own bureaucracy. It has the most curious marginal rates of tax, which are sometimes over 100 per cent. It is a con for people who contribute towards their pensions. They contribute towards their pensions in the belief that they are building up a pension fund for themselves in future, when we know that national insurance contributions are spent on today's pensions. If anyone other than the Government tried that sort of thing he would be arrested, and quite rightly too. National insurance no longer has any place in our taxation system. It should be amalgamated with the income tax system, and we would not lose by doing that.

National insurance brings in about £28 billion a year, so it would be the act of a brave man to say that it would cost nothing to abolish it. The Budget is based on the idea that if we reduce taxation we encourage incentives, we encourage people not to go abroad, we encourage tax exiles abroad to come home and we encourage employment prospects. If we reduce taxation, we can increase the tax take. It would cost far less than £28 billion to abolish national insurance. That is not considered in this year's Finance Bill and will probably not be considered in the next year's Bill, and possibly not even in the following year's Bill, but at some time I should like the Government to consider not only the possibility of reducing income tax to 20 per cent., but also the possibility of abolishing national insurance.

8.7 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): When the Government announced the Budget, they boasted—that is something that they are rather good at—that it was the most generous Budget this century. Few people believed it then—even the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* recorded some criticism—and fewer people believe it now. They know that the Government's generosity has been selectively targeted on the rich to an extent unknown in living memory.

It is the rich, not the rest, who make major gains from the capital gains exemptions, who benefit primarily from inheritance tax changes and who enjoy the tax-free gains from the business expansion scheme and other Government tax relief schemes. The poor, and those people on low and modest incomes, saw any tiny gains from the Budget swallowed by gas and electricity prices rises, by rent rises, which were three times the rate of inflation, and by soaring mortgage interest rates.

Many poor people fared even worse than that, including elderly people who have lost housing benefit, handicapped people who have forfeited allowances for heating, laundry and baths, and disabled people who are no longer able to afford diets, let alone home comforts. Those people have viewed the Budget with horror.

My hon. Friends have rightly pointed out many of the inequities that lie within the Budget. There is, however, another element that is a cause for great concern. My constituents and I fear the proliferation of private landlords. People are greatly troubled by the likely effects of the business expansion scheme, details of which are to be found in schedule 4. They are worried that more flats in Marchment will be bought up and let to tenants who have no vested interest in the well-being of the area. They are fearful that unscrupulous methods will be employed to remove current tenants. They are anxious about the Government's failure to impose a social landlords' charter with real safeguards for tenants from landlords who are running establishments that have been set up under the BES.

In Edinburgh and elsewhere we have seen too much use of public money for private landlords. The Conservative-controlled council gave property speculators over £6 million in repair grants. Private property was converted into executive flats for visiting business men. Five years have passed and the flats are still empty. Edinburgh's Labour-controlled council has stopped the grants, but the Government are changing the law and speculative landlords will have a new lease of life. The BES will allow those who enjoy large incomes to offset £15,000 a year or more, and to pay little if any tax on property developments that come within the scheme.

In that way, £40 million of public money this year will go to those investing in housing for rent. Such housing will not be subject to the Rent Acts and there will be no security of tenure for tenants. There will be no obligation on investors to maintain the property for rent at the end of five years. Indeed, there will be an incentive for such investors to get out of it and enjoy capital gains tax exemption from the profit that is made when the property is sold. The BES will give a green light to the Nicholas van Hoogstratens of this world. The *Evening Standard* tells us that thug factors in property development will enable investors to double their money in five years.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury was forced to concede in Committee that nothing in the Budget and nothing in the BES will stop van Hoogstraten from cashing in on the cash bonanza that the BES will open. This is in spite of his criminal record of evicting young families in winter, harassing senior citizens to obtain vacant possession, cutting off gas, electricity and heating supplies and creating explosions to get rid of sitting tenants. Companies, including those which operate under van Hoogstraten, will receive an open-ended subsidy of £200 million over the lifespan of the scheme.

If the Budget was designed to help the homeless and if it was aimed at providing rented housing for the elderly and the handicapped, that money would have been made available to housing associations and local authorities. Instead, the Government have chosen to target it on the undeserving rich. Instead of putting the £200 million to the provision of 5,000 houses for the elderly, the handicapped, the overcrowded and the homeless, Budget money is going to those who clearly have a much higher priority in the mind of the Government—those who have large incomes and who want to make a killing out of the housing misery of thousands of the poorly housed.

This debate takes place after the general public have seen the impact of the Budget on their pay packets. The majority have seen any benefits offset by rises in living costs as a result of the Government's policy. We stand by all the figures that have been quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He argued the case against the Budget so powerfully, piled up the evidence so convincingly, damned the Government with their own figures so forcefully and presented his arguments with such effectiveness that, apart from a limp intervention from the Chief Secretary, no Conservative Member dared to rise during his speech to challenge his figures or the crushing logic of the Labour party's argument.

After nine years of Conservative Government, participant after participant in the debate has voiced concern and alarm at the divided Britain that successive Budgets have brought about. We have the divides of north and south and the rich against the rest. The Government have been warned by the Churches, the charities and even by their own supporters, in addition to the Opposition, of the consequences. The Budget continues the corrosive influence that the Government have sought to impose on our society, an influence that will continue for yet another year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and other Ministers boast that they intend to continue to allow the corrosion to take place and to bring in more measures that will divide Britain to a greater extent than ever before. For these reasons, we reject the logic of this year's Budget and of future Budgets to be introduced by the Government.

8.17 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I do not wish to detain the House overlong, but I do wish to make six brief points. Before I do so, I wish to say how much I enjoyed serving as a member of the Committee that considered the Finance Bill. I found it a worthwhile and interesting experience. Much of the debate in Committee was more constructive than some of the debate to which we have listened tonight. It seemed that there was rather more common ground in Committee than has come across so far this evening.

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

For example, there was common ground on the advantages of fiscal neutrality and on the taxation of women. There was plenty of cross-party agreement on the removal of perks. There was even a glimmer of agreement on the heavy price that countries with high taxation regimes are paying for pursuing that policy.

In that contest, I pay my respects to the Opposition Front-Bench team for its handling of the Bill. I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) is not in his place. I have been busy moving house within his constituency today and I look forward to receiving his letter of welcome.

It would be churlish not to mention the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who enlivened our discussions with his wit and originality—unfortunately, not usually simultaneously. Each and every one of my hon. Friends returned to the Committee with a lighter step after the dinner break when we knew that the hon. Gentleman would be filling the post-prandial slot.

There is no doubt that we have before us a radical Bill. When we come to examine it in future, it will not be the removal of higher rates of tax that will ensure its longevity and create attention. It will be the integration of taxation of capital and income that will achieve that. That is the road down which we have started to progress, and that will be the hallmark by which the Bill is remembered. It is a key change that will have many beneficial effects. Apart from enhancing the drive towards fiscal neutrality, it will powerfully undermine the avoidance industry. It will ensure that lawyers and accountants do something rather more constructive with their time than working out extremely complicated and ingenious schemes for the very rich. It has the great merit of enhancing simplicity. It dismantles various artificial arrangements dictated by the perception of tax advantage rather than that of an open market view.

The pattern of many past Finance Acts has been to tinker with and change existing arrangements, but the Bill is a major departure from that tradition. Many of the ground rules have been changed. Perhaps that will lead to a couple of years during which highly technical measures will be introduced once the Inland Revenue has had a chance to analyse the effects of the Bill, but I hope that the Government will continue down the path that they have set.

The Budget's approach leads logically to the further integration of the taxation of capital and income and the further elimination of the differences in treatment that now apply. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will bear that closely in mind.

The second main quality of the Budget is the abolition of the higher rate of tax. Despite what Opposition Members have said this evening, that move will be seen in future to be entirely right. We have gone through an era of high taxation regimes throughout the world, and it has now ended. It is interesting to listen to what Ministers of the New Zealand and Australian Governments say when they visit Britain. The New Zealand Minister with responsibilities for trade and his colleague the Finance Minister have visited us, and it is interesting to hear what Socialists who are in power have to say about high taxation.

With the coming of 1992 it will be difficult for any one country in Europe, without massively disadvantaging its industry and commerce, to have a high taxation regime if other countries do not choose such a regime. We can no longer ignore the taxation regimes of other countries in Europe. They have a fundamental effect on whether we can attract industry and business, which is critical to our competitiveness.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Did the hon. Gentleman see the report in *The Guardian* on Monday about a study undertaken by Professor David Birch of Massachusetts Institute of Technology of the various states and districts of the United States? He found that those with high tax regimes have fast-growing economies and low unemployment. He explains that by saying that low tax regimes frequently have a lower level of services and infrastructure. I should point out that Professor Birch is not merely an academic passing an opinion, but is an entrepreneur in his own right, having a firm called Cognetics, which now contains information about 12 million businesses across the United States.

Mr. Mitchell: I must confess that I missed that article in *The Guardian* on Monday. Although I have not seen the evidence that the hon. Gentleman cited—I try to avoid many articles written by American economists because I find them so difficult to understand—it flies in the face of most other economic evidence that is published in our great newspapers regularly.

Mr. Battle: If the hon. Gentleman had been in the Chamber earlier he would have heard some Opposition Members referring to the adviser who is often cited by the Chancellor—Lawrence Lindsey—who suggested that by cutting taxes a greater proportion of income would go to the Government of whatever country adopted that strategy. Answers to questions that we have put to the Government have shown that strategy to be false. By adopting a policy of low taxation, the Government will lose money. However, the hon. Gentleman missed the evidence because he was not in the Chamber when it was presented.

Mr. Mitchell: I was fortunate enough to hear much of the hon. Gentleman's speech. However, I do not accept his interpretation of that evidence. We are now all familiar with the effect of that policy. The hon. Gentleman has misinterpreted the parliamentary answer that he was given and has therefore drawn an erroneous conclusion.

I believe that the lowering of the top rates of tax will mean a tremendous increase in revenue for the future. Many now accept that it is fair to pay a top rate of 40 per cent. I have always believed that it is immoral in a free society for the state to take away more than 50 per cent. of what someone earns, and I continue to hold strongly to that view.

My third point relates to the taxation of women. I think all hon. Members agree that this has been a running sore for years and deeply insulting to women. For years we have been saying that something must be done. Now someone has done something, and all hon. Members should give credit to the Government for producing an economy that is sufficiently strong and productive to pay for such an important and long-overdue concession to women.

However, one of the significant side effects of this measure has not been sufficiently well advertised, and that is the downward effect on taxation paid by old folk and women. There are 900,000 women over 65 who will benefit from that one change in the Budget, and 1·5 million married women of all ages will pay less tax. Nearly all of those—1·2 million—have an income of less than £5,000 a year. There are 160,000 elderly couples who will cease to pay tax altogether, and 130,000 elderly men will qualify for age allowance. Those are substantial spin-offs to the benefit of the least well-off in society that result from this important measure.

My fourth point relates to the simplification of taxation of employees' shares in non-approved schemes. I fully understand the Inland Revenue's anxiety that there used to be room for abuse by employees being remunerated for tax reasons, by converting their income into shares. That was clearly wrong, and clearly an abuse, but with the increasing integration of capital gains tax and income tax, could not more of that anti-avoidance legislation be swept away? I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will look carefully at that next year.

It is important to encourage the spread of employee share ownership. We can now do that within a framework where people pay tax regardless of whether it is on income or capital. I hope that we shall continue such charges, which move us more closely towards a share-owning democracy. Anything that encourages employee share ownership, or any other form of share ownership, must be welcome. I was delighted to see in an answer to my question—unfortunately, it was not reached at Question Time today—that, according to the latest Treasury estimates, Britain now has 9 million shareholders—three times as many as in 1979. The Bill simplifies employee share taxation and earns additional praise for that.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman waxes lyrical on the value of share ownership, but one method of share ownership is co-operative share ownership in the co-operative movement. Only yesterday on Report the Opposition moved an amendment to give relief to co-operatives to enable share ownership ventures to prosper. I wonder why the hon. Gentleman did not support that.

Mr. Mitchell: Not for the first time this evening, the hon. Gentleman is taking what I am saying out of context. I do not intend to be drawn down that path. Instead, let me move to my fifth point, which concerns company residence and migration rules.

As we are major exporters of capital overseas, it is important for the Inland Reveue to be able to tax profit earned overseas, but it is equally important to encourage other countries to operate sensible, pragmatic and liberal tax regimes. We must be careful to maintain a balance, which is why I particularly welcome the changes made on Report.

My final point relates to our discussions in Committee on the business expansion scheme. I was substantially reassured by what my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary had to say on that. However, I hope that he will keep in mind two points for the future. First, in order to encourage those businesses that the Government most want to help, particularly in the manufacturing industry, it may be helpful to review the £500,000 limit next year. Not all manufacturing industries are now started in a garage under an arch. Some require extensive capital and the business expansion scheme may have an important role to play in that, which needs to be continually assessed.

Secondly, the business expansion scheme attracts very favourable tax treatment. One receives a tax break on one's way into the scheme and on the way out through not paying any capital gains tax. This is now a mature scheme and we should look carefully at whether we need that sort of web of tax reliefs to sustain it and ensure that it continues to benefit those parts of the economy that we particularly wish to support.

I want to end by enthusiastically commending the Bill. It addresses the needs of our economy. It is a bold and confident measure and as such it is entirely in keeping with the best traditions of this Government. It deserves the support of the House this evening.

8.27 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I enjoyed listening to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), but I was disappointed with his conclusion. I remember when he contested a constituency near mine. He did not win it, and I hoped that he had learnt something of the problems of a divided country with a divided economy which works in one part of the country but at the expense of other parts. That is essentially what we are trying to address.

I am also disappointed that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is not present. I shall not pursue the issues that he raised, but it is naive to believe that giving money to a particular group of people who, whatever Conservative Members were saying earlier, are located in one area to which they are greatly committed, will encourage them to move. Far from leaving the south-east to invest in other parts of the country, they are frightened to leave it. I have discussed that recently with industrialists. Such people feel that if they leave the south-east they will never be able to afford to return. Such problems have been created by the divisions in the economy and by the Government's continuing refusal to deal with them. That is one of the central issues of economic recovery.

It is strange that we were lectured about the changes in unemployment. It is as if the Government simply do not know what is going on. The figures published this morning purport to show a dramatic drop in unemployment, but that has happened in the same week as we have had, I think, 1,500 redundancies forecast for the northern region. A report in *The Guardian*—and, I think, *The Independent*—showed that during the past five years there has not been a growth of jobs in the top half of the country. The way that the Government have changed their method of calculating unemployment figures means that in many areas unemployment appears to be dropping, but hundreds of people in my constituency, who are not yet 60, have been written off the unemployment register, and they, and the Government, have accepted that they will never work again.

The Government cannot get away for ever with saying that we have a booming economy, that things are going well, and that as long as we keep doing what we are doing everything will be all right. When I meet people at weekends in my constituency they do not know whether to laugh or cry. They feel that they have been written off by

[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]

the Government, because what is happening to them is not reflected in the words and sentiments of the Government. That is the essence of what we are talking about today.

Of course, we can talk about who is doing well. There are people in industries and companies in Britain who are doing well, but others are not. We are paying for the prosperity and upward movement that some people are achieving. Such is the unfairness that it is almost as if the Government are telling people that it is all their fault—that, if they are not doing well, it is because they are not entrepreneurial, because they are not behaving in a particular way, and that really anybody who is anybody is doing well. At the same time, the Government have cut and undermined the basic opportunities of many of those people to do anything about their circumstances and they now find it increasingly difficult to hang on, let alone to prosper.

I ask the Government not to dismiss those people. They have as many democratic rights as anyone else. They have the right to be taken seriously and to have their feelings and circumstances taken into account just as much as anybody else. It is irresponsible of Conservative Members to talk as if they and their plight do not exist.

The tragic thing is that the Budget has fuelled the divisions in society. The divisions have become greater during the past 10 years, and the number of people who are living in what is called poverty has increased, as has the number of children. The Government are fuelling problems for the future.

Another division is that between regions. What has the north received from this Budget? It does not have a preponderance of people who are in the top 1 per cent. of earners, although some have obviously gained. If we forget about individual gains and losses and think about the economy and how the regions are doing overall, we find that this Budget has fuelled the economy in the south-east. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) talked about the dangers of an overheated economy in the south-east. The Budget has fuelled that because the preponderance of people who have benefited from the Budget live, work and have their operations in the south-east. The preponderance of people in the north are dependent upon other forms of Government aid—through benefits.

Overall, there has been a cut in Government funding, which will not lead to an economy that can invest, develop and produce a manufacturing and skill base in the northern region. Even if Conservative Members can get away with the argument—which no one has yet managed to do—that giving the richest people additional money will encourage them to invest, the experience of the past few years is that they are not investing in those areas of the economy which desperately need investment. They are not investing in manufacturing, in research and development, in training or in the north—not compared with the amount that is going into the south-east. That leads to all sorts of problems.

In the past, in the House, I have welcomed the principle that women should be taxed independently. I agree with the hon. Member for Gedling that in this day and age we should not expect anyone to disagree with that principle. I do not welcome all the proposals, because, ultimately, they do not give women the independence that they should get. The Bill gives the husband the pickings and the wife the left-overs, and even that happens only if the husband gives his written permission. As I said in Committee, I do not see that as a great step forward. The Chancellor had the opportunity to do a lot more, and he conned us.

We have been urged to bring our taxation system into line with other European countries. For the taxation of women, that may have been a good idea. Other European countries have far more generous child benefit systems. The amount of money that women have lost by the freezing of child benefit is far greater than the Government are allowing them to receive through the independent taxation allowance. Some 85 per cent. of the money going to older women through independent taxation has been lost in housing benefit cuts.

Principles are fine, but they must be built upon with practical measures. The result of the Budget is that most women will lose. Most women are not going to benefit financially from this Budget because other measures have undercut anything that they might have gained financially. Even after all the rhetoric that we had from the Chief Secretary earlier, women will still have to get the written permission of their husbands.

I am very saddened by this Budget. I do not want to live in a society that punishes one group in order to reward another. It is very difficult to get all this right, but to justify a situation in which one group will prosper at the expense of another—not just to do it ideologically, but to justify it—seems to me to be quite absurd.

I hope that the Government will look again at their economic policy. I am interested in people prospering in a country that gives everyone an opportunity to prosper. I know, and the country knows, that this Budget will not make that possible. I shall therefore be voting against it tonight.

8.40 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. In the many hours that we spent in Committee on the Bill, the thing that caused me most disappointment was the lukewarm nature of the welcome given by the Opposition to what I consider to be the most important and long-overdue measure in this Budget—the final recognition of women as having equal financial rights and being equal earners in our society, with the rights which earning men have had for centuries.

The situation that pertained before the Budget went back 180 years, when not only a woman's income but the woman herself was regarded as the property of her husband. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), who I would have expected to welcome the new measure, said that under the new system the husband had the pickings and the wife had the left-overs. She neglected to mention that prior to these changes not only did the wife not even have the left-overs, but the plate belonged to her husband as well.

It is right for us to realise not only the financial but the social importance of independent taxation and what it has done for women. I believe that in years to come, long after we have forgotten to argue about the other fiscal measures in this Budget and the Opposition's argument that somehow it is damaging to give tax concessions to high earners, we shall remember this Budget for its social

impact and what it has done for women. That is why I find the niggardly, grudging welcome from the Opposition so disappointing.

I listened very carefully to discover why the Opposition were not welcoming this great social measure. The reason appeared to be based largely on the fact that it was somehow going to benefit disproportionately the better-off, that being the standard response of the Opposition to any new and imaginative measure. They seemed to imply that there should be a sliding scale of equal rights between the sexes and that the better off one is, the less entitled one is, as a woman, to equal rights. The logic of the Opposition's argument is that this is not to be welcomed because the better-off might be disproportionately benefited. But the well-off woman is just as entitled to her independence and dignity as her less-well-off sister.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Lady assure us that she would apply that to child benefit? When members of her own party suggest that wealthy women ought not to receive child benefit, will she say that they have the right to have that money for their children?

Miss Widdecombe: The sheer inconsistency of the Opposition's reasoning is summed up in that contribution. In discussing the rates of taxes that people pay and the benefits that they receive, one obviously looks, may look, or may decide not to look at income. But what is never negated are the equal social rights of each category. It was the social right to independent taxation, to privacy and to be responsible for the tax on one's own earnings that I was upholding straight across the income scale. That is totally different from saying what we might or might not take into account when assessing entitlement to benefit.

When the Opposition had exhausted that avenue of argument, they said that it was a very good thing as far as it went but it did not go far enough, because of the transferability of allowances. They homed in on that and said that it completely negated everything else that had been done. But we had a very clear explanation and assurance given to us that, if we tried to reach a position in which we could have complete choice and division of allowances without transferability, it would not be until substantially in the future, if at all. Surely it is better to make a very real benefit which has not existed before, and transferability has not existed before. It is nonsense to say that it does not improve the lot of women. Of course it does. It may not improve it down to the last two inches of the road along which we would like to go, but it does improve it along the major part of the road. I believe that the argument that it does not go far enough does not negate the substantial advantages to women.

Ms. Armstrong: Our argument in Committee was that, if the Government had simply turned things round—if, instead of the man having to give his permission, it had been the other way round—that would have been seen by women as a real gesture. We recognise that it will take time to get the whole of this right, but we were looking for something that would demonstrate recognition of the problems that women have. Very often husbands have not declared, and we are fearful that they will continue not to declare, what they are earning, and so on. Had the Government done it the other way round, that would have been a real measure and would have been just as easy to carry out as the one that they are proposing in the Bill.

Miss Widdecombe: In other words, there should be over-correction, according to the hon. Lady. If there cannot be equal choice, choice should be moved to the woman instead of to the man. I believe in equal rights for the two sexes, and the man should have equal rights with the woman. For years men have been responsible for their wives' taxation, including taxation on the income of a wife who may be earning substantially more than her husband. In my view, the hon. Lady's suggestion would be just as iniquitous as the woman not being independently taxed in her own right. I see no point in over-correction. If we cannot get it exactly equal, it may be administratively convenient to stay with the sort of system that we have been having, but with an added right included.

Nobody can deny that that right has been given. Two enormous advantages have been given to women in this Budget. One is the right to independent taxation, and the second is the right to transferability, even though it may not be given in the way that Opposition Members would like.

The Budget has been an enormous boost for the family. The two biggest disincentives to marriage were the lack of independent taxation for women and the inequitable position with regard to mortgage interest tax relief for unmarried couples. Those disincentives have disappeared at a stroke. Therefore, apart from the financial benefits of the Budget, it is socially one of the most important reforming Budgets this century—certainly the most reforming in recent years. The only reason why Opposition Members are not enthusiastic is that they had the same opportunity but they did nothing about it. It ill becomes them to judge us.

8.50 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I shall keep my remarks as brief as possible in order to allow those who served on the Committee to take part in the debate. That is only right after the many hours spent on the Bill in Committee. I understand that it was a record number of hours in the post-war period. Every time I picked up a newspaper and read reports about what was happening in the Committee they tended to be dominated by my hon. Friends. They seemed to occupy centre space, and I congratulate them on that. The Chief Secretary admitted that when he referred to the Opposition as masters of the press release. That suggests rather sour and hurt feelings.

There has been a general shift in perception since the Budget was first given in the House. At that time my right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), described it as a "Budget too far". In the intervening months we have seen a growing public perception that that is so. More and more people are beginning to recognise that in this instance the Opposition have won the argument.

The Chief Secretary referred to the Budget as "monumental". It is monumental, but for the reasons I have just given, not for the reasons about which he was thinking. In the lead-up to the Budget statement it was expected that it would crown Tory rule and anoint the supposed benefits of years of Tory rule in the Exchequer. That was the frenzy of pre-publicity.

When the Budget was unveiled in the House, I remember the excitement of Conservative Back Benchers as each successive tax reduction was announced. Almost

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

immediately, public perception turned sour and began to recognise the unfair and unequal values contained in the Budget. The argument has been slipping away from the Government.

I understand that that would cause some frustration and bewilderment to the Government. After all, they could have expected much greater political kudos from the Budget. How could they have failed? It contains the same old formula of massive tax cuts. They expected popularity as an immediate aftermath.

The Opposition's arguments have rightly focused attention on the inequities in the Budget, as described so clearly by the shadow Chief Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). No matter what the propaganda mounted by the Conservatives, the Budget is now widely seen, certainly in my constituency and probably throughout the country, to be unfair.

The political benefits that the Government expected from the tax cuts, particularly the cut in the basic rate, have been lost because of the profile assumed by the cut in the top rate of tax. That is what people see as unfair. It is particularly unfair when it is compared with the persistent underfunding of the Health Service and the outrageous cuts in social security. Such comparisons have brought home to people the unfairness of the Budget. We see similar unfairness in the smallest details of the Budget. For example, extra money is given to wealthy people who inherit more wealth. That can be compared with the cuts in housing benefit where people who have managed to accumulate savings are being penalised for having done so. The comparison is striking.

It is no wonder that we have seen the Chancellor's reputation dim somewhat over the intervening months. At one time he was the hero of the hour, but now there is talk of resignation and disenchantment and people are asking what he will do now.

Even if the Budget was not popular, the Government might have expected other accolades for it. We have heard some claims tonight. There are claims that it is a radical Budget. In the lead-up to the Budget, the talk was of the virtues of simplicity and neutrality in the tax regime. As people have scrutinised the Budget, they have begun to see how shallow those claims were. The first claim to come under the microscope was that for the independent taxation of women. As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) pointed out, that measure is skin deep when compared to the large claims made for it.

As we look at the Budget in greater detail we see that the claim about its being a move towards a simple and neutral tax regime is shallow. The Budget is far from being neutral or simple. It is biased towards the rich and is loaded with loopholes, exemptions and allowances. As my hon. Friends have pointed out, a millionaire, if he takes advantage of those exemptions and allowances, could get away with paying next to no tax.

The tattered reputation of the Budget as a radical measure has been summed up in a succession of headlines in the financial newspapers. I cite only one. About a month ago, the *Financial Times* talked about the fading zeal for tax reform on the Government side. That was entirely appropriate.

Bit by bit the Chancellor was losing the argument. It was no longer the popular, vote-winning Budget it was first expected to be. When exposed to scrutiny, it was not the radical Budget that it was trumpeted to be. The emperor may not have been entirely without clothes, but he was getting down to his jockstrap—his ability to manage the economy. The idea has been disproved that the Budget represented the fruits of the Chancellor's careful and prudent management of the economy over the years and that it was an example of his financially sound approach to the economy. Just after the Budget, it seemed that the Chancellor was reinforcing his reputation. The iron Chancellor was becoming the quicksilver Chancellor, able to out-guess, out-manoeuvre and out-finesse the financial markets.

Then the pound rose above levels previously thought to be unsustainable. Interest rates began to climb. The CBI began to squeal about the effects of interest rates. In the past few weeks we have seen mounting evidence that we will have a shocking balance of payments deficit at the end of the year. Such a deficit was unforeseen by the Government. They still have not been able to explain it away. Already it is £4·7 billion more than the figure estimated at the time of the Budget and almost twice the figure that was put about by the Government at the end of last year.

Is this the transformation of Britain into the high-performance enterprise economy that the Chief Secretary talked about? The problem is not one of excessive growth. Our growth is lower than that of Japan, the United States or Germany. It is not a question of sucking in imports. The key problem is stagnating exports. The Government's prediction that exports would grow has already been shown to be false. That is the surest sign of the decay of the economy.

On the point made by the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) about benefits accruing from a low tax regime, I refer him to a study of 12 million businesses in the United States by Professor David Birch of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A newspaper article on his study says:

> "American states and districts which have high tax regimes are the ones whose economies are now growing fast, with significant business and job creation. . . Dr. Birch said areas which had low taxes often also had a low level of services and a poor environment."

The hon. Member for Gedling said that that flew in the face of the evidence which he had received. We have been looking for proper studies to bear out the claim that the move towards a low tax regime was designed to stimulate growth. We have not found any such studies. None has been advanced. All the studies that have been cited tend to disprove it.

One of the main boasts of the Government is that they have balanced the books and moved into surplus. The Chief Secretary made that point. But at what cost has that happened? It has been at the cost of a reduction in services, and at the cost of undermining and underinvesting in the infrastructure that is desperately required if the economy is to have a sound future. It has also been at the cost of reduced assistance for the poorest.

One of the first actions of the Government was to cut the earnings link with pensions which the Labour Government had established. A recent study for the stockbrokers Greenwell Montagu has shown that if the earnings link had been retained the Government would be

spending an extra £4 billion on pensions this year. That is more than the £3·6 billion surplus in the PSBR which the Government claim as a benefit of the wise management which has financed the tax cuts. Add to that all the other earnings-related benefits whose links the Government have cut and we find that we are talking about more than £5 billion in this year alone, which is as much as the privatisation receipts.

The Government have been able to balance the books only by shedding their moral commitment to the poorest people. Today the Chief Secretary said of the Budget that it marked a

"move away from a tax regime based on envy".

Indeed it did. But we have moved instead to a system based on short-sightedness and greed.

9.5 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I rise in my customary role as the sweeper-up for the Opposition Back Benches to summarise some of the arguments before the winding-up speeches. This is the first Finance Bill in whose proceedings I have played a part. I shall deal principally with the broad effects on the economy of this and previous Budgets, relative to the claims that have been made for them by those responsible—and it is the Government's right to make such claims because they won the last election and the two before it.

When the Government came to power three elections ago in 1979, they claimed, in the famous Saatchi and Saatchi advertisement, that they would lower unemployment and liberate the economy. What actually happened? Initially, they found themselves playing with mechanisms that they did not understand, and unemployment increased by 250 per cent. They then changed their approach to the economy but said, "Britain needs a bit of a cold shower and a large pool of unemployment to restore management's right to manage."

They now see great virtue in creating jobs and are proud of the fact that unemployment—or at least the total number of registered unemployed—has fallen by 1 million in the past 24 months. It is rather sad for the Government that, now that they think they have good news to announce, no one believes them because of the way in which they fiddled the figures, and it is too late to regret the 19 changes that they made.

If it was right for the first 24 months to apply a dose of nanny's cold shower to restore discipline to the economy and restore the right of management to manage—management was extremely pleased by the introduction of the fear factor into labour relations because it felt that it made for better discipline in factories—why, eight years later, is it such a good idea to create jobs?

The Government now claim that their Budgets and adjustments to the fiscal stance have increased activity in the economy. Do they now claim too, that if they reduced unemployment to what it was in 1979—they said that they would reduce it further—they would be able to run the economy without inflation and with no loss of management's right to manage? Do they claim that they can achieve that as well as more investment and greater commitment to training and greater skilling, or will they have to retain a pool of unemployment to ensure what they see as the overriding virtue—breaking the back of the trade union movement and restoring management's freedom to make its decisions without consulting the work force?

That is the problem that they face. Will increased employment release the inflationary forces that built up in the 1960s and 1970s, and with the oil price increases of 1973 and 1979? That is the great unknown, and it is probably something that the Chancellor does not know, and does not wish to know, as the Budget that he presented to the House some weeks ago is probably his swan song.

In studying the Chancellor's final Budget we seek the answer to two questions. I believe that Conservative Members also will be interested in having answers to them, although they probably think that they know them already. First, is there a supply side miracle? Is the British economy more enterprising than it was before? As the economy returns to one in which there is a respectable level of unemployment—still higher than in 1979—will it be able to perform better? Is the economy more efficient? Following all the tax changes, top rate cuts and the "incentivisation" of high-rate taxpayers, will the British economy perform better? Will there be a reduction in the problems that it used to have, of failure to invest, failure to commit to training by comparison with Japan and Germany, and failure to meet delivery times, as that was not thought to be an important obligation?

Secondly, it is constantly rammed down our throats that although taxes are being cut, the tax take from the well-off has increased as a proportion of total tax revenue. Is it true that every time one lowers taxes the tax take from those for whom one has cut rates is also increased? Is it a reasonable proposition to put before the House that there is a causal relationship between lowering taxes and increasing the proportion of tax take from the top rate taxpayers?

Dealing first with the so-called supply side miracle, Conservative Members have told the House during the debates on the Bill that the fundamental basis of the Chancellor's Budget, and of the previous one, in which he also cut top rates of tax and made other changes in switching from lower income taxes to higher expenditure taxes, was that it "incentivised" the economy and encouraged more people to have a go in industry and to take more risks. The odd little tax haven was also introduced, through the BES and enterprise zones. So, in addition to the "incentivisation" that the Government believe is under way in the economy at large, there is to be even more "incentivisation", creating even more enterprise, in the enterprise zones. Those zones have been adjusted in the Bill so that one can now sell unit trusts or organise through unitisation investments in enterprise zones. The business enterprise schemes are not location-specific, but that is done as well in order to get that extra buzz into the entrepreneurship that one would anyway find in the economy.

When enterprise zones were orginally introduced in 1980 by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the picture was given of little beehives of industry—little Hong Kongs full of small textile firms and exporters run by people with bright ideas who wanted to start off new businesses. However, anyone who has visited an enterprise zone knows that it is incredibly difficult to find any beehives of small industry there. One will not find any labour-intensive businesses in an enterprise zone, but instead DIY super-stores and occasionally some hotels. One will not find any manufacturing industry.

Enterprise zones were supposed to provide areas for super-enterprise within an enterprising economy that

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

would serve as examples to everybody else, but that is not what one finds. Instead, there is a lot of property development, with derelict land being covered with buildings. They are a million miles away from being buildings full of labour-intensive industries or little Hong Kongs. One finds there the same types of low-risk investment of a kind that would undoubtedly take place somewhere else if not in an enterprise zone, but with the addition of a tax haven, in opening a DIY super-store or a similar low-risk investment.

I welcomed BES developments when they were first introduced and thought that they were a good idea. I believed that they would help to stimulate risk-taking in British industry. However, we know that the bulk of BES investments went into old people's homes, which were funded in turn by the DHSS allowances brought in by another section of the Government. Those businesses were created by public sector money and provided a tax haven, and they involved no risk. Conservative Members will have to admit that, and, as a result, some adjustments to BES have been introduced in this year's Budget.

The enterprise economy is certainly not to be found in the tax havens that have been created by the Government in the enterprise zones and under business expansion schemes. In general they have further subsidised low-risk investment that would have taken place anyway. If one travels around an enterprise zone, old people's homes and DIY super-stores are what one will find, because BES money has been spent on such things.

The Bill has gone even further with the BES, so that the purchase of existing residential property or the creation of new residential property will be funded by it. A tax haven society has been created rather than an enterprise society.

In the light of the signals that I am receiving I shall sit down, but I trust that some hope will be restored and that a true enterprise society will be created, if only as a result of a change of Government.

9.15 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Chief Secretary began the debate with characteristic dash and a pretty high standard of parliamentary abuse. He charged that the Labour party was wedded to the orthodoxy of the 1960s. It is unusual for a Conservative spokesman to place us within the 20th century, and I should be grateful to him for that at least. He went on to demonstrate that the Conservative party is wedded to the orthodoxy of the 1860s—the Victorian values in which it takes so much pleasure and in which the Bill is firmly rooted.

As the Chief Secretary went into the details of his speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who has just spoken so well, was prompted to intervene. He drew from the Chief Secretary the reluctant admission that this Budget is not a tax-cutting Budget. Income tax has been reduced, but the overall tax burden remains the same.

The Chief Secretary thought it unusual that the Labour party should vote against a shift from direct to indirect taxation. That shift will be regressive because of the way in which it has been designed to affect the top and lower rates. It will advantage the wealthy, not the poor. The figures have been much quoted in the debate. The wealthiest 1 per cent. of our population will be given an extra £2 billion—no doubt they will be extremely grateful for that—and the poorest 70 per cent. will also be given £2 billion. That will not be perceived as fair, unless the recipient is within the top 1 per cent. bracket.

The Chief Secretary went on to describe the Labour party, as he always does, as the party of high taxation. There is no evidence to support that claim. Under the previous Labour Government the total tax take was about 33 per cent. of gross domestic product. Since 1981 the Conservative Government's tax take, measured in the same way, has been about 38 per cent. and the Chief Secretary has said that it is forecast to remain at that level. Despite everything that it says, the Conservative party is committed to high taxation, but the Labour party, despite everything that the Conservatives say, maintains, in practice, lower overall rates of taxation.

The Chief Secretary believes that giving £2 billion to the wealthiest 1 per cent. will not encourage consumption conspicuously. We already know that, on average, such people are earning £75,000. By definition, they already have substantial levels of discretionary expenditure, yet the Government have given them an extra £2 billion. Surely that must encourage consumption.

The historic evidence base is stark. Last year we imported just over £5 billion-worth of motor cars, excluding parts, £131 million-worth of domestic washing machines, £133 million-worth of household fridges and freezers, £402 million-worth of videos, £265 million-worth of televisions, £286 million-worth of watches and clocks, and £308 million-worth of cameras and accessories. Those facts paint a stark picture.

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman please stop referring to what is being "given" by the Government to those who pay tax? They are not being given anything; they are merely being allowed to retain more of the wealth that they have created.

Mr. Brown: I try to be generous in giving way. Time is limited and I realise that I should not have given way. The hon. Gentleman did not even have the courtesy to attend most of the debate.

As the debate got into its proper swing, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) made a point which dominated the debate when he said that this was a Budget of great contrasts. I got the clear impression that the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) agreed with him. My hon. Friend spoke about regional policy and decentralisation. He may well have seen the recent DHSS report which dealt with the relocation of a substantial part of that Department to Tyneside. It listed all the merits of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the region that surrounds it and then stated that the only reason there could not be a substantial relocation was that senior officials could not take the culture shock of moving to the north. That must be a poor reason for refusing what my hon. Friend calls for.

Ms. Armstrong: May I remind the Government that the Labour Government proposed to relocate the Property Services Agency in Middlesbrough, which would have brought 3,000 jobs north, but the first act of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) when he was Secretary of State for the Environment was to cancel that decision?

Mr. Brown: The north in particular pays a bitter price for the Labour party being in opposition rather than in government—something that is well recognised in the region.

My hon. Friend the member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) also sees this as a Budget of great contrast and, in his usual helpful manner, advised the House how God had joined the Labour party when the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wiltshire) made that unusual attack on our opposition to the Bill. My hon. Friend pointed to motivations such as greed and avarice as the sort likely to disgust the deity and bring him down firmly on our side, where I am sure he has always been.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) spoke of a third of his constituents who live at or below supplementary benefit level and the declining employment base which serves that community. Many Labour Members are confronted with similar circumstances, and it is not surprising that the Budget is met with such hostility from us because there is nothing in it for our constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) underscored this theme, which ran through all the speeches of my hon. Friends. As she was bound to do, she especially mentioned the fact that Monday was a black Monday for Tyneside. Not only did the Minister refuse to place important orders for frigates with Swan Hunter—in spite of its meriting them—but the big enemy of Tyneside, GEC, announced the closure of its Marconi plant in Gateshead, East, with the loss of 450 jobs. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East correctly stated that the Budget would not encourage infrastructure investment or help the unemployed.

Then we discussed one of the Chancellor's great reforming measures—his disaggregation proposals. As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) accurately pointed out, the new right to fill in one's own tax form is not being greeted as the greatest feminist advance of all time by its recipients. The disaggregation proposals remain advantages that apply to rich married men who have unearned income and can trust their wives to transfer the allowances to them. They are the people who will benefit most. As my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) correctly pointed out, the Opposition have won the argument on that and all other points. It is not surprising that many Conservative Members who followed the details in Committee have not turned up to defend the measures enshrined in the Bill in this Third Reading debate. I hope that they have not become so used to remaining silent that they feel obliged to do so even when they are allowed to speak.

The Bill is controversial, yet our proceedings in Committee were not conducted in a stupid war of attrition, as was recommended by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). Nor was the Committee an ill-tempered or childish affair. Incidentally, I thank the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for his references to my sense of humour. We should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), and no doubt the Government will want to thank the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) for his and my hon. Friend's contribution to progress.

I and my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) are grateful to our hon. Friends who served on the Committee—not only to those who have spoken in the debate, although they include my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), for Clydebank and Milngavie, for Durham, North-West, for Gateshead, East, for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson). I also thank my hon. Friends the Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). My hon. Friend the Member for Workington apart, all our Back-Bench Members were drawn from the 1987 intake, and the work that they put into the Bill augurs well for the future of the parliamentary Labour party.

In years to come, when historians of our age study our Committee proceedings on the Finance (No. 2) Bill, perhaps in an attempt to discover why there was no glorious revolution in 1988, or even on 12 July, they will conclude that this legislation emerged in its present form largely as a result of the firm resolve and iron will of one man. I am not referring to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, although we took careful note of his visits to the Committee, presumably and wisely carried out to check up on his fellow Ministers and—if we are to believe the popular press—competitors. If I were in his position I should do the same. I do not mean the Chief Secretary, either. I, unlike his hon. Friends, did not sleep through his speech: I enjoyed it, and I enjoy it every time he makes it.

The Government's hero of the Bill has undoubtedly been the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and to conclude Third Reading without referring to his role would be like discussing Hamlet without the ham. As he reflects on the 90 per cent. of the total Government Front Bench workload that he undertook during the Bill's passage, he will no doubt recall the Government's resistance to the Labour party's attack on the activities of Mr. van Hoogstraten—an attack continued to the end by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South.

My hon. Friend has rightly emphasised the Labour party's fears that the combination of the taxman and Rachman in the business expansion scheme proposals will lead to exploitation, misery and rack renting for private sector tenants. It is not, however, for his predictable resistance to the Labour party that the Financial Secretary will catch the attention of future researchers; nor, I have to say—lest there be any doubt—will it be for his resistance to the parliamentary Liberal party. Let us face it: it could not be.

The first sitting of the Committee began with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) saying:

> "I have a vested interest in ensuring that we make progress as quickly as possible. I am sure that the Bill can be improved without unnecessary waste of time."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, Thursday 12 May 1988; c. 3]

The hon. Gentleman did not hang about to see whether that was the case. He went on to absent himself entirely from the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th sittings, and did not turn up yesterday for the Report stage. He has not turned up for Third Reading either.

The Government—in the person of the Financial Secretary—can be forgiven for writing to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East:

> "You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question about the political parties currently qualifying for the purposes of section 24 Inheritance Tax Act 1984 . . . I am now advised that my reply was not as comprehensive as it should have

[Mr. Brown]

been. The list of political parties currently qualifying for the exemption ought to have included the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party, of course, still exists".

It took the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to confirm that to the rest of us. I hope that I have done the whole House a service by reading it into the record, purely for the avoidance of doubt.

The Financial Secretary will be remembered for a triumph that has not yet been remarked on. Let there be no doubt: the right hon. Gentleman has saved the British taxpayer more than £1 billion. Hon. Members are waiting to hear how he did it. He did it by resisting amendments moved by his hon. Friends—both on and off the Committee—designed to give further tax cuts to the wealthy.

When Opposition Members criticise the Tory Front Bench, we should always make sure that we are not blind to what is going on behind the Tory Front Bench. As we sat through the Committee stage, not a word was said from the Conservative Benches about the plight of the poor and dispossessed and the need for enhanced public expenditure on socially useful items such as hospitals, the nurses' pay award and the frigate-ordering programme for the Royal Navy. The overwhelming majority of Conservative Members were making pleas for tax scams for wealthy or corporate interests.

The main theme of the Bill was grotesquely accentuated, and echoed in a distorted way, by the Conservative Back-Bench Members' amendments. Yet the Bill itself remains as it is—a monument to the ever-widening divisions in our country, economic and geographic. Its passage through the House reflects a triumph of corporate over constituency interests, of property over people.

9.33 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The whole House enjoyed the speech by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), as we enjoyed his speeches in Committee. We frequently wished that he had been in charge of some of the filibustering at the beginning, rather than some of his hon. Friends.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that many of the new Labour Members made excellent speeches. As he says, that bodes well for the future of the Labour party: no doubt there will be an effective Opposition for many years to come.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who does not appear to be present, told us that, somewhat incredibly, he had not quite recovered from the experience of being Chief Secretary, but he went on to give my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) some advice, which I am sure was well taken. He also commented on the current account. He suggested that the forecast for the current account might be used as an indicator for the economy. It might be difficult to do that, given that the average error in the Industry Act forecast for the current account has been about £3 billion in the past 10 years.

My right hon. Friend expressed concern about inflation. He will recognise that the current account reflects the higher rate of growth that our economy has enjoyed in recent years. It reflects the fact that capital goods imports in the past three months, compared with a year earlier, have increased by about 19 per cent., compared with imports of consumer goods, which have increased by about 10 per cent. The current account deficit is being financed by an inflow of capital which shows that the world outside rightly maintains a high level of confidence in our economy.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North expressed concern and some doubts about the Budget. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer could hardly be accused of being imprudent in his Budget because, in the second or third sentence of his Budget speech, he announced that in this year's Budget, he did not have the opportunity to reduce taxation and that the share of GDP taken by taxation would remain broadly the same. He also announced that we would be repaying debt this year and that, as a result, he could balance the Budget for the first time for many years. He held out for the future the prospect of a balanced Budget as the lodestar. Given all those factors, I do not think that he could be accused of anything other than taking a stance of considerable prudence.

Mr. Darling: Is the Financial Secretary saying that the comments made by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) lack substance? I should have thought that he was saying—and he said so in a constructive way—that there were worrying indicators, such as inflationary pressures, balance of payments problems and the trade deficit. Is the Financial Secretary saying that none of those things matter?

Mr. Lamont: I am sure that the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North were intended in a constructive manner. His concerns were about inflation. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asked me to confirm that the containing and further reduction of inflation remain the Government's top priority. That is shown by the five rises in interest rates in the past few weeks, which have been criticised by the Opposition, but which underline our determination to keep inflation down and to get it down further.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) complained about inadequate investment in the economy. I am not sure where he has been, because total investment in the economy is at an all-time high. The hon. Gentleman quoted various figures, saying that, if there had been greater investment in the past, our growth rate now would be even higher. I am not sure how he can be so certain about that, because it depends how that investment was directed, where it was directed and what sort of return it earned. That confirms what we have so often suspected of the Opposition—that they are interested in investment for investment's sake. They seek quantity of investment rather than return on investment. It is return that matters for the economy, not the building of a Socialist ideal of machine tools to manufacture machine tools to manufacture more machine tools. Investment in the economy is high and it is growing.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East suggested that the benefit of the tax cuts that were announced in the Budget might be wiped out by mortgage interest rate increases. It is not correct to say that a 1 per cent. rise in mortgage rates will wipe out the benefit of the tax cuts for a person on average earnings. Interest rates will no doubt

rise and fall in the years to come, but we have reduced tax rates permanently and we shall continue to do so. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury confirmed that in his opening speech this afternoon. The cuts in taxes and in national insurance contributions that we have made since coming to power in 1979 are worth nearly £10 a week for a man on average earnings. That is the extra amount that someone on average earnings would be paying if we had maintained the tax regime that we inherited from the Labour Government.

Mr. Morgan: When the Minister began, he talked about the fiscal stance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and described it as one of the utmost prudence. I took that to mean—I think that he said this—that taxes had not been cut. Will he explain his triumphalism that the Government have reduced taxes? It seems that there is an inconsistency. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that he should get away with having it both ways?

Mr. Lamont: There is no great mystery. Since 1979 we have reduced tax rates and cut the amount of tax that people pay as a proportion of their earnings. The economy has been growing and people have become more prosperous while that has been happening. As I have said, there is no mystery.

There are many important provisions in the Bill. There are provisions that are popular that the Opposition chose to ignore, and that is typical of them. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not mention the far-reaching proposals in the Bill for independent taxation. He neither condemned nor praised them. He said nothing in their favour. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East has moved from one stance to another in his criticisms of independent taxation. First, we were told that independent taxation was something for rich women. Then we were told that it was something for rich families. Finally—the hon. Gentleman confirmed this tonight—we were told that it was for rich men. That gives the game away. It is clear that the Opposition do not believe in independent taxation. If they think that removing the aggregation of a woman's income with that of her husband is of advantage only to men, the spirit of feminism and emancipation that the hon. Gentleman described has hardly reached the bingo clubs and Labour clubs in his constituency that he kept telling us about in Committee.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East told us nothing about what the Bill does to close loopholes and to lessen the perks that are enjoyed by higher-rate taxpayers. We have taken measures to ensure a fairer system for the taxation of company cars. The forestry loophole has been removed. The Opposition urged us to do that before the Budget, and now they choose not to refer to it. We are not blocking a few minor reliefs. The reliefs that have been abolished and the loopholes that have been closed amount to about £800 million, which is about a third of the cost of the reduction of the higher rates of which the Opposition are so critical.

The truth is that the Opposition talk about avoidance and they urge us to do something about it, but we have done more to block loopholes than they ever did in their period of office. Our determination to stamp on avoidance and evasion is also demonstrated by the fact that we now have 3,200 investigators involved in investigative work in the Inland Revenue, compared with 1,600 under the previous Labour Government—twice as many.

This is rightly described as a reforming Budget. The Finance Bill builds on the steps that have been taken in other Finance Bills. We implemented a number of measures on capital gains tax in earlier Finance Bills and Budgets. We introduced indexation to make it a fairer tax, and in this Finance Bill we have carried that forward and rebased capital gains to 1982, which has remedied a major injustice whereby people with long-standing capital gains which were due purely to inflation were being taxed heavily.

One would have thought that Opposition Members would openly welcome the fact that we have now aligned the rates of capital gains and income tax. But, again, we hear not a word from them. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) kept saying that capital gains are of interest only to the super-rich. When I pointed out that at least one third of people who pay capital gains tax pay at the basic rate, he had no reply. Because of that, he should have welcomed the fact that we have introduced a lower rate of capital gains tax of 25p for basic rate payers and a higher rate of 40p for those who are better off and can well afford to pay.

The Finance Bill benefits all the people of Britain. Twenty-three million people will benefit from the 2p basic rate cut, as they have benefited from the 6p cut in previous Finance Bills and Budgets. Three quarters of a million people will be taken out of taxation, which is a sharp contrast to what happened when the Labour party was in government, when the number of taxpayers increased by about 3 million and when the married man's allowance fell by 20 per cent. in real terms.

What do the Opposition now say about thresholds and the basic rate of tax? The Leader of the Opposition tells us

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Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Where is he?

Mr. Lamont: I am coming to where he is.

The Leader of the Opposition says that the 25p people have nothing to fear, apart from the fact that he wants to make them into 27p people. That is all that they have to fear from the Opposition.

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary reaffirmed the point that has been made again and again in these debates —that, although we have cut the top rate of tax for the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers, that has brought in increased revenue. What we may not have pointed out so frequently is that the tax paid by the lowest 10 per cent. of the taxpayers has fallen by 20 per cent., whereas the top 10 per cent. are paying 26 per cent. more in taxation and national insurance contributions compared with when we came to power.

We have heard again and again in these debates about the super-rich. The hon. Member for Wrexham has never stopped talking about them. On Second Reading he mentioned them 12 times. In his speech on clause 93, which lasted 15 minutes, we had a reference to the super-rich every 82 seconds. When we pressed him to define the super-rich, he told us that they were people earning £200,000 or more a year. I have news for him. Those earning £200,000 or more a year are a minuscule number of people. Even if we confiscated all their income over £100,000 and taxed the rest, and distributed that among the total population, it would be worth only 50p a week to each person. I am afraid that there is not much to be

[Mr. Lamont]

gained by squeezing the pips until they squeak, but there is a considerable amount to be lost if we discourage those people, if we drive them abroad, or if we stop them creating new businesses.

We must be clear about the higher rate taxpayers. Two thirds of those on higher rates earn less than £40,000 a year. Of course, £40,000 a year is a good salary. It is what the Leader of the Opposition earns, or perhaps a little more. [HON. MEMBERS: "Earns?"] It is a salary earned by managers, by top entertainers and by surgeons, but they are not the privileged elite. In many cases, those people have helped to create and build up businesses which create employment and increase the wealth of the country.

Opposition Members are still fighting the political battles of the past. They rant against the rich and the privileged, but a recent survey in a big business magazine showed that Britain is a meritocracy, where hard work and ability lead to success and reward. The same survey showed that more than two thirds of the 200 wealthiest people in Britain today are self-made men and women. The truth is not that we have too many rich people, but too few.

As my hon. Friends have said, it is a pity that the right hon. and super-rich Leader of the Opposition cannot be with us today. He is, of course, visiting the front-line states. I am sure that, while he is out there, he will be researching. If so, he will notice that the 39 per cent. top rate of income tax in Namibia, the 45 per cent. top rate in Zimbabwe and the 50 per cent. top rate in Botswana are all lower than the old rate that the Opposition are defending and committed to restoring. No doubt they will say that those are not the countries that they wish to compare us with.

All over the world, countries are cutting taxes and cutting the top rate—New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Australia and Germany. Worldwide there is a trend to cut the top rate, which shows that many countries agree with us that that helps to make economies more competitive. The attitude of the Opposition remains unchanged. It does not matter that we may raise less revenue or make ourselves less competitive; their attitude remains, "No tax cuts please, we're British."

Quite a few years ago, Lord Jay, before he was ennobled, remarked that as long as there is an England, there will always be progressive taxation. Even that has begun to be questioned, and some City analysts have been talking about repaying the national debt and abolishing income tax. That may be going just a little too far—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—but the dramatic reductions in the Bill are a firm step in the right direction.

It has been said that all my hon. Friends regard all taxes as a distortion. My hon. Friends are quite right; taxes are a distortion. We should aim to have a system that raises the necessary money with the minimum of distortion and enables the economy to operate as effectively as possible.

Some Opposition Members recognise that the trend worldwide is to lower marginal rates of tax, but they complain that we are leading the trend, and that we have one of the lowest rates by international standards. That is certainly a contrast with when they were in power, when not only was our basic rate the highest in the world, but so was our top rate. What was the result? Misery, tears and a lamentable performance by the economy.

The criterion by which tax reforms and tax cuts should be judged is simply, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said, whether they improve the performance of the economy. Tax cuts are only one of several supply side reforms and measures that we have undertaken. If they add even 1 per cent. to our growth rate, that will release £4 billion to £5 billion of resources each year, and with that we can improve and build our public services.

One of the mistakes that the Labour Government made was to try to make up for a lack of economic growth by increasing taxation. The more slowly the economy grew, the more they increased taxes. The result was less growth, the stifling of initiative and the stagnation of the economy. We have produced that growth and the British people are beginning to get the benefits. The benefits are flowing through to all the people in this country.

We need only contrast what has happened to people on half average earnings with what happened when the Labour party was in power. Under Labour, a person on half average earnings saw his living standards decline by 1 per cent., whereas while we have been in power a person on half average earnings has seen his earnings go up by nearly 26 per cent. That is the difference between the pseudo-compassion of the Opposition and the practical effects of the tax cuts that we have introduced. The more tax rates have gone down, the more the incomes of those below or near the poverty line have gone up. The benefits of prosperity have been spreading to all the people of this country.

Mr. Battle: The Financial Secretary has referred to half the average wage, which I imagine works out at about £120 a week. Does he admit that very many people who do not earn that much money have lost as a result of this Budget and complications with the social security system?

Mr. Lamont: I certainly do not admit that. The truth is that earnings throughout the economy at all levels of income have been increasing sharply. Those on below average earnings have seen their living standards increase sharply in the last three or four years. What the hon. Gentleman said has no foundation whatsoever in fact.

My right hon. Friend has produced a radical budget. He has produced his own fiscal version of the glorious revolution.

This is a very different country from the one that had to be bailed out by the International Monetary Fund a decade ago. At that time, after decades of decline, we had available to us only a gloomy, uninspiring future for the rest of the century. Now, thanks to our growth rate, which is faster than that of any other European country—we have outpaced Germany in the last few years and Japan this year—Britain has re-emerged as one of the pace-making economies. For the first time in many years there is a new hope, a new optimism and a new confidence in the British economy. I believe that the measures in this Bill, like those in previous Budgets, will contribute to that growth and to that well-deserved confidence.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 179.

Division No. 415] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank

Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Coal Industry

10.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I beg to move,

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 5th July 1988, be approved.

This is a technical, amending order. Its purpose is to make amendments to certain of the redundant mineworkers payments schemes arising from the inter-relationship between the schemes and social security legislation. The redundant mineworkers payments schemes provide for lump sum and weekly payments to mineworkers who became redundant on or before 28 March 1987, when the latest scheme closed to new entrants. Since then British Coal has been responsible for its own redundancy terms.

There are four RMPS schemes still in operation. They are set out in orders made in 1978, 1983, 1984, and 1986, to which amendments are proposed in the present order. The proposed amendments have three purposes. The first concerns the 1986 scheme only and would be brought into effect by article 5(b) and (c) of the present order. It is designed to protect some of the beneficiaries of the 1986 scheme from having their benefit withdrawn in consequence of certain provisions of the Social Security Act 1988.

In drafting the 1986 scheme as part of the restructuring of the coal industry, the Government decided that, to maintain the value of the RMPS terms to potential beneficiaries, those who had made insufficient national insurance contributions in 1984-85 should not be disqualified from or given reduced rates of RMPS benefit. The 1986 scheme provided full RMPS benefits for men who left the industry in the 1986 benefit year ending 3 January 1987. For those men the relevant tax year for assessing their eligibility for social security benefits, and so for RMPS, was 1984-85. Without the provisions of the 1986 scheme, many of them would not have qualified for RMPS benefits as their 1984-85 national insurance contributions would have been insufficient to satisfy the conditions for social security benefits.

The reason for the proposed amendment is that section 6 of the Social Security Act 1988, which comes into effect on 2 October, changes the contribution conditions for social security benefits. One of its effects is that 1984-85 also becomes a relevant tax year for men who left the industry in the 1987 benefit year—that is, between 4 January 1987 and 28 March 1987, when the RMPS scheme closed to new entrants and British Coal took up the new scheme.

Several thousand men took redundancy in that period. Without the amendment now proposed, many of them could lose their entitlement to RMPS. Such a change in the terms on which those men left the industry would clearly be unfair. The amendment will have the effect of maintaining those terms.

The other amendments contained in the order are to the 1978, 1983, 1984 and 1986 schemes. They have two purposes. The first is to eliminate possible overpayments to RMPS beneficiaries who are also in receipt of invalid care allowance. The weekly payments under the RMPS schemes are made to former mineworkers who took redundancy when over 50, or 55 in some schemes. Those payments normally continue up to the age of 65.

To qualify for weekly RMPS payments a person must normally meet the conditions for receipt of unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance. Entitlement to unemployment benefit is normally exhausted after 12 months. An RMPS beneficiary then receives a weekly payment equal to the amount of unemployment benefit he would have received if his entitlement had not been exhausted. That is known as unemployment benefit equivalent, or UBE.

RMPS rules were drafted so that the schemes were integrated with the social security system as far as possible. Where an RMPS beneficiary also receives a social security benefit that affects entitlement to unemployment benefit, UBE is adjusted accordingly, just as unemployment benefit would be if he were still receiving it.

Last year some cases came to light where an RMPS beneficiary was receiving invalid care allowance as well as UBE. There are provisions under social security regulations for dealing with overlapping benefits. Under them, payment of unemployment benefit would extinguish payment of invalid care allowance. That is done by ensuring that when a claimant is eligible for more than one income maintenance benefit at the same time, only an amount equivalent to the higher benefit is paid. Social security legislation, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, does not provide for that to be done in the case of UBE, which is unique to the RMPS scheme. The amendments in the present order are intended to remedy that.

The final purpose of the amendments in this rather technical order—for which I apologise—is to remove a technical defect that has recently come to light in the drafting of the RMPS schemes.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I understood it quite well until the Minister started to describe it.

Mr. Spicer: This debate may not give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity for the rhetoric that we usually hear from the Opposition, but it is important to those who receive these benefits.

The schemes provide that, if any pension received by a beneficiary is in excess of £35 a week, that excess shall be deducted from RMPS weekly payments. But a similar requirement applying to men over the age of 60 is laid down in social security legislation.

It was never intended that such deductions should be made twice from RMPS benefit; nor has that ever been done. Our legal advice is that double deductions are strictly required unless the relevant RMPS regulations are amended, as in the present order. The change is a purely technical one to ensure against double deductions.

I hope that the House will agree that these proposed amendments—which are technical, and perhaps boring to some, but which are important to those affected—are both fair and necessary. I invite the House to approve the order.

10.20 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The Minister has frankly admitted that the order is technical, although he has tried to inform the House as best he can. According to what he has told us, we are still living in the wake of the great strike of 1984-85 and still trying to tidy up its consequences for some miners.

British Coal had to introduce its own redundancy scheme when the Government abandoned theirs. There was some debate when the Government did that, but we live with the present position. The Minister was right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that several thousand men will be affected by the order, and I believe that the House will welcome any amendments that affect them.

The Minister spoke about double deductions, and that made me think about double jeopardy. I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will wish to question the Minister further, given that he has admitted that the order is complicated.

I notice that licensed mines are not covered by the order. The Minister will recall that hon. Friends and I have raised this matter with him in previous debates. If my memory serves me right, I asked about the Blinkbonny miners, who come from my constituency. The Minister told us that those miners were covered only by the state redundancy scheme.

Those who are campaigning for an extension of licensed mines should note that, in this context, such miners are disadvantaged and that the accident rate in those mines is three or four times higher than that in British Coal mines. That is a sobering thought. Although we did not receive any promises from the Minister in the previous debates, I had hoped that the order would provide an opportunity to consider licensed mines.

The Minister has admitted that this is a tidying up order and that some of it is complicated and difficult to understand. How will the new job scheme to which he referred affect the RMPS? I believe that the scheme will begin around the end of September. Miners who opt for retraining in their make up for RMPS may find themselves disfranchised. The Minister is aware that under the RMPS one has to be deemed to be unemployed. Will that act as a deterrent to retraining? Will the Minister lean on such people?

The Minister spoke about being deemed to be unemployed and the UBE after a year's unemployment. It would be of interest to miners if he could clarify what will happen at the end of September or October to miners who opt for retraining. Will they be punished or leant on by the Minister? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) does not understand what I am talking about, but I know that the Minister does. I hope that when the Minister replies he will give some thought to that.

The Minister must be aware, if only as a constituency Member, of the turmoil created by the Government when they changed the social security regulations. I doubt whether any hon. Member has not had a substantial postbag about that. The Minister knows that I am referring to how people have been punished severely by having their housing benefit reduced. This order has a direct link with that.

To some extent the position is anomalous. A concessionaire receives money in lieu of concessionary coal because he or she cannot burn solid fuel at home for various reasons. I do not wish to detain the House by elaborating on those reasons, and I know that the Minister is aware of them. We are dealing mostly with elderly people who served, or whose husbands served, the mining industry well. Because people receive money in lieu of concessionary coal, they are further ensnared by the housing benefit regulation changes.

The House must understand that most of those people have already lost severely under the new regulations. They

[Mr. Alexander Eadie]

now find that because they receive money in lieu of concessionary coal it is deemed to be income and they lose further. Our bureaucracy could be described as having gone mad, because if people can burn concessionary coal in their homes it is disregarded for housing benefit purposes. I see the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) nodding in agreement.

Before the debate some people told me that if I raised this matter tonight the Government, known for their unfeeling attitude, would quickly solve the anomaly by ensnaring both for housing benefit purposes. If the Government were to adopt that cynical solution, it would be a national scandal. In some quarters it would be described as spiteful malevolence towards the elderly. This is important to many elderly people, and I invite the Minister to comment.

The Minister told us how complicated the last aspect —invalid care allowances—was. References to them are strewn all over the instrument. The order seeks to amend section 37 of the Social Security Act 1975. My hon. Friends, if not all hon. Members, would agree that we need further explanation of this. I draw the Minister's attention to paragraph 5(b)(iii), which says:

"the existing paragraph (3) shall be renumbered (4) and in that paragraph for the words from 'shall be reduced' to the end shall be substituted the following words—"

we are coming to the guts of the order—

"'shall, if it has not been reduced by virtue of section (5)1 of the Social Security (No. 2) Act 1980, be reduced, further reduced or extinguished, as the case may be, by the amount by which the weekly total of such benefit exceeds £35.'"

That can hardly be described as a neutral change. The figure of £35 can probably be traced to the Social Security (No. 2) Act 1980. The 1975 Act is being amended. I notice that the Minister is becoming as confused as were the people who helped me to understand the order. However, they helped me to come to grips with it, and we have come to the conclusion that this provision is a minus, not a plus. Will the Minister explain or clarify it?

As the Minister said, several thousand people will benefit from the order, and we certainly do not intend to divide the House on it.

10.33pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): When I telephoned the Department of Energy earlier this week, I was told that one of the reasons for the order was that certain entitlements and benefits were to be extended to men who were on strike in 1984 and who would not otherwise have been entitled to them for that period. Earlier today I had a rather hassled and worried phone call from the Department to say that the order had nothing to do with concessionary coal, knowing, as the caller did, of my interest in that.

The order is known as the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1988, and I shall speak on concessionary coal unless, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you rule me out of order. I have no personal objection to the fact that men who were on strike in 1984 should have certain benefits extended to them. I know a number of men in my constituency who were on strike. They came to see me during the strike and told me frankly why they were on strike. Some were on strike because they felt loyalty to their workmates, some because they felt loyalty to their union and some because they were afraid that they would be in trouble if they were not. Some were on strike because they genuinely felt that that was the best way of preserving jobs in their industry. I have to point out that a number of those who fell into the latter category have rather changed their minds.

The fact is that the strike brought no benefits to anyone. We all ended up as losers. I do not think that it would help the situation, or lessen the bitterness that remains, to try to deprive those who were on strike of a certain number of benefits. I am surprised, however, that the Government want to extend benefits to men who were on strike—with which I have no particular quarrel—while not extending them to the group I have described as the forgotten miners. Those men contributed to coal pools in the 1960s, but were made redundant in 1968, during the massive cuts in the industry that were instituted by the Wilson Government when some 10,000 miners in my constituency lost their jobs. We should remember that not only Conservative Governments close mines; more mines and more jobs have been lost under Labour Governments.

When the men were made redundant, they were specifically told by the Government and their union that they would qualify for concessionary coal. They deserved to qualify. Under the localised schemes that were in operation in the 1960s, they had contributed to coal pools out of their own coal allowances, on the basis that they were building up a stock of coal that would benefit them in the future. But, having received those assurances, after being made redundant they were told that they did not qualify after all.

I consider it fundamentally unjust that, when people have contributed to a fund on the basis that they will benefit from it in their old age, they should be told when they have been made redundant or have retired that they do not qualify after all. The reason that those men did not qualify was that the system was changed in the late 1960s so that only certain people benefited from concessionary coal. The localised coal pools were ended, and it was all merged into a massive National Coal Board pool. Unfortunately, during that structural changeover the beneficiaries were also changed, and many of the men who were made redundant lost out.

Over the past three or four years, I have pressed the matter with my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy. I have been told that, although the Government are very sympathetic to the plight of the forgotten miners, they are not allowed to do anything because Governments do not act retrospectively. The trouble is that in 1971 the Government did decide to act retrospectively. They extended concessionary coal benefits to certain classes, but unfortunately left out the mass of miners who were made redundant in the 1960s.

This is a glaring injustice. I do not blame the current Government for it; it is largely the responsibility of the Government who were in power in the 1960s, and of the National Union of Mineworkers, which I do not think looked after its people very well in this instance. I feel, however, that subsequent Governments have had a responsibility——

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I am about to finish. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make his points later.

Governments of all hues should have examined the matter and made the relatively small provision that would have been needed to allow the forgotten miners to draw on the concessionary coal benefit to which, after all, they had contributed during their working days. I mean this as a criticism not of the present Government, but of all Governments since the 1960s who have not taken the plight of those forgotten miners into account.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): My hon. Friend and I have worked together over the past three or four years trying to persuade the Government to deal with the plight of the forgotten miners. Their plight is historical; for most of them the problem arose under the Labour Government. Does my right hon. Friend feel that if the time is right to act—perhaps together with a union such as the Union of Democratic Mineworkers—the matter should be incorporated in the next round of wage negotiations?

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I pay tribute to the work that he has done and the support that he has given to the cause over the past three years. I am also grateful for the fact that he has promoted me to being a right hon. Gentleman. I may eventually have the privilege of being a member of the Privy Council, but I urge my hon. Friend not to hold his breath in waiting for that event.

Mr. Illsley *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: I gave way to my hon. Friend because I know that he does not intend to speak later whereas many Opposition Members intend to do so.

I have spoken to the UDM and I have urged it to make provision for the forgotten miners when it has its wage negotiation rounds and it has been sympathetic to that. I ask the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), who does not appear to be able to keep his mouth shut from his sedentary position and who has consistently said that the Government have done nothing, what the Labour Government did in the 1970s when his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) wrote copious letters to the Department of Energy, urging it to do something.

[Mr. Oppenheim]

Let us remember that it is not only this Government who have refused to help the forgotten miners. His Government were more directly involved in the closing of mines in the 1960s and consistently refused to listen to the hon. Member for Bolsover when he urged the Department to make concessionary coal available to those men in the 1970s.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is well aware of the problem. I have made several representations to the Department and have always been listened to courteously and sympathetically, so I shall not detain the House any longer. I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend will carefully consider the plight of the few remaining forgotten miners of the 1960s, who still suffer from the injustice and the anomaly. I hope that, during the substantial shake-up that the coal industry will experience over the next few years, my hon. Friend will take the opportunity to make restitution to the forgotten miners.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask you to ensure that we have successive speeches by Labour Members, in view of the fact that the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), although he presented a just case, strayed widely and made some irrelevant comments, particularly in respect of privatisation, and in view of the lengthy intervention by his hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), although the hon. Gentleman refused to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley).

10.43 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I do not intend to speak for very long. I welcome the fact that the order protects those people who did not pay the full benefits during 1984-85. I understand that the Minister has brought forward the order because of the recent changes in social security legislation and agrees that the position needs to be made clear in that regard. I hope that he will consider one particular problem in the new social security legislation as it affects those in receipt of benefits under the redundant mineworkers' pension scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) mentioned the problem, which is not to be found in all coal mining areas, regarding unemployment benefit credits and whether people are qualified to receive them. In April, an ex-miner, who has been retired for some years under the present scheme, was stopped 12 months' payment of unemployment benefit because he had not qualified for the benefit under the new Act. Under the availability for work test, claimants have to answer several questions that are posed by the Department. If they fail satisfactorily to answer any one of them, their unemployment benefit is stopped.

In April, the ex-miner to whom I have referred was 59 years of age. The letter from the Department explained why his unemployment benefit credit had been stopped, and part of the letter stated:

"You have placed restrictions on the nature and conditions of employment which you are prepared to accept."

The availability for work test does not seem to be relevant to ex-miners who have retired under the redundancy scheme. I understand that there are quite a few cases of this sort in Leicestershire, and perhaps the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) will draw attention to them.

The Department allows a claimant a reasonable time, following his unemployment, to find the type of work that he wants, but he is expected to "broaden his horizons." The man in question began work in the mines when he was 15 years of age. In effect, he was retired from work. We all know that there are no vacancies in the industry for miners. Under the new restart scheme, he was told in February that he must apply for work elsewhere and "broaden his horizons." I believe that he was 57 years of age when he left the industry under the terms of the redundancy scheme. He thought that he was finished for ever, as it were. His horizons were probably no broader than the jobs that he had had during all his years in the industry. He then found that his benefit was stopped.

In June, the Department wrote to him, saying that, as he had reached the age of 60, he would no longer have to sign on as unemployed or to pass the availability for work test. It was deemed that he was no longer available for work under the regulations, which have been changed since the scheme was introduced. He was told that he had no longer to sign on although his benefit had been stopped. I understand that his case is being examined sympathetically.

This procedure is causing problems in certain areas. I ask the Minister to urge his counterpart in the Department of Employment to send guidelines to those regional offices where there are those who come within the redundancy scheme who are likely to fall foul of the availability for work test. Many of them were retired when they were over 50 years of age, and they are now approaching 60. It is unfair that those men should encounter problems because they fail to respond to a questionnaire or to a question asked by a local official. Those who finished their working life under the 1977 Act, who are recognised as being special, are not likely to be looking for work or broadening their horizons at 59 years of age.

10.49 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said about the Minister. He asked him to take into account that he is a Member of Parliament with his own constituency problems. I realise that the Minister has not been in his post all that long, but he constantly reminds us that he visited a pit in Easington where he stood as a candidate about 10 years ago. That is the kind of coal mining experience that he has.

Bearing in mind what the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) said, there is one point that I must take up immediately. I notice that the hon. Gentleman has gone.

Mr. Ashby: He has gone for only a second. He will be back.

Mr. Haynes: I am not asking the hon. Gentleman to tell me where the hon. Member for Amber Valley is.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman was.

Mr. Haynes: I am not asking the hon. Gentleman at all. If I were to ask such a question, I would ask Mr. Deputy

Speaker. What I am saying is that the hon. Member for Amber Valley is not present now. He is as two-faced as hell——

Mr. Ashby: Withdraw.

Mr. Haynes: That is not unparliamentary. If it were, I would have been pulled up by now.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Withdraw.

Mr. Haynes: Why does not the hon. Gentleman keep his mouth shut?

Mr. Ashby: Why does not the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) say what he said to my hon. Friend's face?

Mr. Haynes: I am only referring to the fact that the hon. Member for Amber Valley is not here, so that that appears in *Hansard*, otherwise it would appear as though he attended throughout the debate. That is all I am doing, and I have done it.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a serious debate. Will you bring the House to order so that we can hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his assistance, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is perfectly capable of looking after himself.

Mr. Ashby: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it proper to call an hon. Member as two-faced as hell when he is not in the Chamber? Is that parliamentary language?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Strong language is in order. I have heard nothing unparliamentary so far.

Mr. Haynes: I respect you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker is there to protect a Member when he gets in difficulties from a barracker. The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) thinks that he is in a flaming court. He is in the Chamber and he should listen to what is being said.

The young fellow from Amber Valley was talking about my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) not long ago. I remember a press report in the hon. Gentleman's locality. He had seriously condemned my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. Yet tonight he is talking the other way. That is what I mean when I say that he is two-faced. The same problem arises on concessionary fuel, so I have proven my point that the hon. Gentleman is two-faced. I felt that I had to make the point in the interests of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No. The hon. Gentleman can sit down.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Haynes: No. If the hon. Gentleman is lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he can make his own speech. I want the Minister to hear what I have to say, so if the hon. Gentleman will sit down I can get on with my speech.

The young chappie, the hon. Member for Amber Valley, has not lived for very long on this planet. He does not know a great deal about the mining industry and the National Coal Board scheme. Beneficiaries who should be receiving coal have been seriously affected, as my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian said, because of the cutbacks in housing benefits. My hon. Friend said that some people are losing out because of cash in lieu and the change in the social security benefits. Widows in my constituency are seriously disabled and are entitled to concessionary fuel, but because they applied for cash in lieu, and received that cash from British Coal, they are now being told that they will lose more than that amount from their housing benefits.

I should like the Minister to examine this matter because I have seen at the Dispatch Box the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Social Services and other Ministers responsible for social security full of compassion when speaking about disabled people, yet those widows are being treated in that way.

That little lad, who is not here now, should have a lesson on the National Coal Board scheme, because it really started with the question of private ownership of the mining industry and the allocation of concessionary fuel. After nationalisation, NCB schemes were introduced in the various areas, and some areas were better off than others.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: Let me finish my point. The amount received depended upon the amount of coal produced in the area. As Nottinghamshire was a high production area, it had a decent return. There was unfairness right across the coalfields—even Derbyshire was having a rough deal—and the men——

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He spends more time in court than in the House and he now wants me to give way.

Mr. Ashby: That is right.

Mr. Haynes: The membership in the industry decided, on a vote—a democratic method—to have a National Coal Board scheme. It was not as though the board or the union decided; the men decided to have the scheme. At the time that they took on the scheme they thought that everyone would have a fair deal.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): My hon. Friend is educating Conservative Members; I will educate them a little more. I worked on the national scheme for British Coal—or the National Coal Board as it was then—and negotiated with the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman failed the miners.

Mr. Haynes: No. I will educate the hon. Gentleman further. At the time that the board introduced that scheme, its aim was for 250 million tonnes a year. The board and the coal industry were expanding.

Mr. Ashby: Why did not the hon. Gentleman look after them?

Mr. Haynes: I am satisfied with what my hon. Friend said, because he has had experience on the administration side of the concessionary coal scheme.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman was on the management side.

Mr. Haynes: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would close his mouth. I happen to have had 35 years' experience underground and was a recipient of concessionary fuel, and, like every other man in the industry, I made my contribution when we had a National Coal Board scheme.

The Government are conning the mining industry about redundancy. The people who have left the industry have had a raw deal, and the people who leave the industry through redundancy in the future will be even worse off. We have an organisation called British Coal Enterprise, whose chairman is Merrick Spanton. He used to be the director of the north Nottinghamshire area of the NCB. The east midlands group of mining Members summoned him upstairs to a Committee Room to discuss redundancies and redundancy pay. British Coal Enterprise was set up to provide work.

I remember my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover challenging the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box on the subject, because the Secretary of State said that British Coal Enterprise had created 40,000 jobs. When we summoned Merrick Spanton, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover chaired the meeting, and he gave Merrick Spanton a rough ride. As a result, it became clear that his organisation had not created 40,000 jobs. He said upstairs that there was potential for 40,000 jobs. We got an untruth from the Dispatch Box and the truth upstairs.

People who are made redundant are encouraged to go to exhibitions and seminars with a view to getting a job outside the industry. Retraining, they call it. The Government are all for it. After they have read all the literature and gone to the seminars, however, when they apply to go on a training scheme, they are told, "Sorry. You have to be assured of a job somewhere before you can go on the training scheme." These people are being conned into taking redundancy. The Government are preparing the way for privatisation. That means further pit closures. They are encouraging people to take redundancy and leave their jobs.

I know chappies in my constituency who have accepted redundancy at 30—and they cannot get another job. They are being conned. They are told that they can get another job outside mining after retraining, but the Government have moved the goalposts and when they apply to go on a training scheme they are told that they must have a guaranteed job to go to.

I have had people come to me in my constituency because the scheme is a fraud. It is the Government's way of reducing manpower and closing pits. They will keep open only those which are making a profit—some make substantial profits—so that the pockets of a few rich people can be filled, once again. That is the Government's policy with other industries as well. I felt that I had to make the point that the scheme is a con trick. I hope that the Minister will give us some sensible answers.

11.3 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I do not intend to delay the House as I know others wish to speak on behalf of their constituents.

Nobody would want to oppose the order—the Minister said that he hoped it was fair—but I wish that we had similar schemes to help tin miners in my part of the country. They have suffered similar problems. Coal miners have had a better deal from the Government.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the apparent contradictions and problems with retraining and the difficulties for those who have taken cash in lieu of concessionary fuel.

I hope that the Minister will also remember the words of the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) who, in 1984, as Under-Secretary of State for Energy, described the change in orders at that time as being designed to create in a humane and civilised way an effective and viable industry that is capable of offering secure employment in the longer term. Most of that does not seem to have happened. There have been too many job losses, and too many people hit by the Government's policies.

I hope that the House will bear in mind that schemes such as this are no substitute for real jobs for people in the industry. They offer nothing to up and coming generations who will have to search for work in areas where unemployment at present is 30 per cent. higher than elsewhere in the country.

We note that for those who are unemployed and those who have accepted redundancy the various schemes to help them to get back to work are not always quite what they appear to be. The contradictions between RMPS and retraining have been highlighted. Perhaps the Minister will forgive me if I raise another particular case in this connection.

At the moment an exhibition, organised by British Coal, is taking place at Carcroft colliery, Doncaster. Ex-mineworkers are to be offered jobs, but there are two apparent catches. The first is that only ex-mineworkers who were made redundant in the last year are eligible. The second is that the jobs being offered have not been created, which was the original brief. I understand that the agency involved has phoned all the local companies and got the pick of vacancies for ex-mineworkers, leaving other unemployed members of the local community and those mineworkers who have been unemployed for over a year no opportunity to apply.

If that is the case—I hope that the Minister, if he cannot comment tonight, will let me have his comments on another occasion—it would seem that this is simply trading jobs: offering them to some at the expense of others, and excluding some to the benefit of others. Again, that does not seem to be an adequate response to the difficulties of people in those communities. I know it is not strictly on the point being debated, but this is an opportunity to raise it and I hope that the Minister will respond.

Nobody will divide the House on the order. I am sure that there will be no difficulty in getting it agreed to. But I say again to the House that this is not the answer to the problems; it is simply a way of mitigating the worst of the problems for a relatively small number.

11.7 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I welcome the order brought in this evening. I only wish that the Government had gone slightly further in the changes.

My constituency was a coal-mining constituency until all the pits were closed. However, I still have many

constituents who travel out of the area to the east coast pits. But, more important, many ex-miners, either retired or made redundant, live in my constituency. Even more important, perhaps, there are many miners' widows residing in the constituency.

A major problem has arisen in Durham, and I think throughout the rest of the country where there are redundant or retired miners, because of the major change in the housing benefit system regarding concessionary coal payments. Local authorities can no longer ignore the payment of cash coal allowances for housing benefit purposes in order to create an equitable situation between tenants who receive coal and those who receive a cash payment in lieu of coal. In the past this decision had been left to the discretion of each local authority, but after April this year it changed.

Durham, I am proud to say, is a caring Labour local authority, and it has exercised this discretion in favour of its ex-miner tenants. But Durham city council can no longer ignore this payment, because of the new regulations, and reluctantly it has to assess the cash payment in lieu of coal for housing benefit purposes.

Cash payments in lieu of coal allowances are paid in different amounts, depending upon the size of the property, and invariably they are made only to those people who, through no fault of their own, must live in houses that have not got solid fuel heating. For example, people may move into bungalows with gas-fired heating because they can no longer cope with a solid fuel open or closed fire.

There is an obvious unfairness in the system of assessment for housing benefit because tenants, regardless of whether they receive fuel or cash, must heat their homes. The dogged insistence that all cash received must be assessed for housing benefit purposes means that while the present taper operates, people receiving coal allowances in cash have their rents increased by about 85 per cent. of the cash payment in lieu of coal.

Consider what has happened in my constituency. I am sure that these examples hold good in many areas where there are miners or widows of miners. I know of two widows, one aged 76 and the other 86, who, prior to the changes in April, were paying £9 a week rent. Now their rent is £16. Another widow aged 81 has seen her rent increase from £11·90 pre-April to £19·99 today. These people have no savings, and their income is basically £44 a week pension, £36 a month NCB pension and a coal allowance in cash of £4·50 a week. Therefore, they have about £57 a week on which to live. The Government are asking them to pay, on average, £8 a week more in rent because they receive cash to the value of £4·50 a week. That is unfair, unjust and uncaring. How on earth can one try to explain to anybody, let alone an 80-year-old widow, the unfairness of that? The husbands of these widows spent a lifetime in the pits. The least we should do is to recognise their sacrifice.

The Minister, in a letter some months ago, told me:

"The disregard of concessionary coal recognises . . . the strength of the tradition in coal working areas that coal be given to colliery staff".

Be it coal or cash, the payment is made for exactly the same reason—to recognise

"the strength of the tradition in coal working areas".

If local authorities wish to exercise discretion in this matter by continuing to ignore the cash in lieu of coal in assessing housing benefit, they should be allowed to do that, remembering that they do so at their own cost.

The Government will say that transitional help is on the way. Indeed, we have been assured that in some cases this will occur within the coming three months. But that is not good enough. Old people affected by these changes are worried to death and are finding it difficult to survive the huge increases in rent that they are having to pay. For those living on £57 a week, paying an extra £8 a week makes life unbearable. Many old folk in my constituency —I am sure the same applies in many other areas—are becoming desperate.

I appeal to the Minister to make representations to his colleagues in Government to examine this anomaly and to return to the pre-April situation of cash in lieu of the coal allowance.

11.14 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I wish to clarify a few points that were made by the hon. Members for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). Had the hon. Member for Amber Valley heeded the remarks that were being made by some of my hon. Friends while he was speaking, he might have discovered that there was considerable sympathy on these Benches for his argument. We, too, have constituents who were made redundant between 1968 and 1971 and who receive very small sums of cash and no concessionary fuel. The hon. Member for Amber Valley did not realise that the National Union of Mineworkers, neither then nor since, had any input into any redundant mineworkers payment scheme brought in by the Government. There have never been negotiations with the NUM on any schemes. The schemes have simply been implemented.

The hon. Member should also remember that between 1968 and 1971 the NUM included as a constituent organisation the Nottinghamshire branch. He said that perhaps the Union of Democratic Mineworkers could negotiate retrospective coal allowances for the men who were made redundant then. He should realise that they were part of the union that he is accusing of having failed them. It would be good if the Minister were to announce that retrospective coal allowances could be given to the men who were made redundant between 1968 and 1971. At that time most of them were aged at least 60, so there are few of them still around and the cost to British Coal or to the Government would be small.

Another fact that the hon. Member for Amber Valley should know is that over the last few years British Coal has been attempting to buy out concessionary fuel allowances for mineworkers. Even since the strike British Coal has been considering ways in which it could give cash payments to redundant mineworkers to relieve itself of the responsibility of giving concessionary fuel.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley should note the point made by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). In 1968 the NUM tried to persuade men being made redundant not to accept the terms on offer because they did not include concessionary fuel. Since then we have always canvassed strongly against any mineworker accepting redundancy terms which did not protect his fuel rights. But, as has been pointed out, even then the scheme was voluntary and the men accepted it.

11.17 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Some of the issues which have been raised have been cleared up by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), who has been employed by the NUM to look after some of the areas. He made the point that there was no national agreement at the time these people were made redundant between 1968 and 1971. There were local schemes based mainly on the private ownership before nationalisation. When nationalisation took place, the coal schemes were carried over under the legislation. It meant that there were large variations between coalfields.

Neither Lancashire nor Durham had the kind of coal schemes that we had in Nottinghamshire. In the area of Derbyshire which was affected by the closure programme in the middle 1960s a significant number of men were involved. Michael McGuire, who was the Member for Ince, used to raise these matters in the early 1970s, as I did. We pleaded with successive Governments to do something. We are not making a party political point. There is only a handful of men left in each of the coalfields. It is time justice was done.

Mr. Eadie: It is a question of trying to put the record straight on the general evolution of concessionary coal. It is more than 50 years ago that I started as a boy in the mining industry. I can remember when we got public ownership and formed the one national union. We never had a National Union of Mineworkers before. Some areas did not have concessionary coal at all and the only concession that the miners had was that they were allowed to go to the bins in the pit and pick what they could from the pit. There was no concessionary coal.

Incidentally, compared with other areas Nottingham did not have a good record on concessionary coal, although arrangements varied from pit to pit. I simply wanted to set concessionary coal in its historical context. It was born as a consequence of the creation of the National Union of Mineworkers and of the negotiations between the NUM and the National Coal Board. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will agree that the NUM negotiated very successfully; the miners did not have an industrial strike between 1926 and 1972.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is right. As I said earlier, the arrangements were based on those under private ownership and prior to nationalisation; they were carried over. It was not until we got a national agreement that we were able to sort out the matter. I remember how in Derbyshire the miners could allocate only about two or three tonnes per annum to the widows because with the number of people out of work there were many more beneficiaries than miners contributing.

As hon. Members on both sides have said, we are talking about only a few hundred people in the whole British coalfield; it is no more than that. Many of them are widows and all of them are more than 80 years of age. It is high time that somebody did something about the problem. If the Minister could take that message back to the Government, he would be doing a service, and it would not cost a great deal. People leaving the mining industry, having worked in it for only 20 years and sometimes less, get concessionary coal. It is a justified complaint, which could be dealt with at very little cost.

I want to amplify the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) about money in lieu of concessionary coal. I hope that the Minister will pass on to his hon. Friends in the appropriate Department our view that it is unjust that, while some miners' widows burn coal and thereby receive payment in kind, others living in the same street, who have had to move to bungalows with gas-fired heating because they can no longer lift buckets of coal, end up losing £7 a week. It cannot be fair that those people should be penalised in their rent. The transitional payment will not help. The transitional payment agreed in the House and arising from the housing benefit and income support changes will not affect those who have lost roughly £7 a week—those who get money in lieu of concessionary coal. It is wrong that those getting the coal should not be penalised whereas those who get the money are affected in the amount of rent that they pay. That matter wants looking into.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) talked about British Coal Enterprise. I have said before —it ought to be said over and over again—that British Coal Enterprise is claiming credit for jobs that it has not created. It is claiming jobs that have been created by the special development agencies in Scotland and elsewhere and by local authorities. It claims to have created jobs whereas workshops have simply been transferred from the public sector, the National Coal Board, straight to private enterprise. It says that that is a part of the many thousands of jobs that it has created. There are no two ways about it: £30 million has been expended by British Coal Enterprise and if local authorities spent £30 million in junketing they would certainly be surcharged for the money that they had spent without creating the jobs that they claimed to have created.

I hope that the Minister will deal with the two questions that we have raised about elderly people and concessionary coal. It will not be before time.

11.24 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I wish to say a few words about cash in lieu of coal affecting housing benefit. I still have in my constituency a caring local authority—Newark and Sherwood—which, like that mentioned by the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), disregarded cash in lieu of coal until the law was changed. I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that Labour-controlled Ashfield district council stopped that practice two years ago. That ought to be known, bearing in mind that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said that it was stopped on 11 April, which is not true.

It is unfair to include cash in lieu of coal in calculating a claimant's income. During the war, one was drafted either into the Army or into the coal industry. The only income that is disregarded today is the war widow's pension. If one member of a family went into the coal industry, his widow's cash in lieu is not disregarded, whereas the widow's pension of another member who joined the services and was subsequently killed is disregarded. That is grossly unfair, given that both were effectively drafted.

I know that my hon. Friend cannot do anything, but hon. Members representing mining constituencies raised that anomaly in the House two years ago, pointing out how it would affect their constituents. In view of what has been said, perhaps my hon. Friend will convey our views to the appropriate Department.

11.26 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I add my voice to those of hon. Members who have spoken about cash in lieu of coal. It is disgraceful when—as may have been the case in the example given earlier—auditors tell councillors, "If you don't start treating coal as an emolument, you will be surcharged." That is what happened to my authority. They kept the scheme going right up to the hilt until they were threatened by a surcharge and other fearful consequences. It is time that the Government recognised that that situation exists and put it right. Cash in lieu of coal is just that, and it should not be taken into the calculation for housing benefit.

I shall refer briefly to the coal agreement. It is true that some received coal and some did not. At first, I received 15 tonnes a year whereas somebody down the road received only 12 tonnes. Some widows received coal and some did not, as did miners who were injured in the pits. In the 1960s, the National Union of Mineworkers, quite rightly, recognised that there should be a levelling off. My allowance of 15 tonnes fell to 12 tonnes, then to 10 tonnes and after that to 8 tonnes. That was a voluntary scheme by members of the union and those who worked in the coal industry, under which there was equalisation across the board.

At the time of that agreement, nobody worried about redundancies, because they were unheard of. The only concern at that time was the demand for an increase from 200 million tonnes of coal a year to 250 million tonnes. That was the era of Lord Robens. When men were made redundant, the agreement under which that was done did not take into account what was really happening.

In some cases, the men were misled. I could never prove that. If that could have been proved, matters would have been different. However, from my own investigations my belief is that those men were misled. They would not have left the industry had they known that they were going to lose their coal. There are very few of them left. It would not hurt British Coal to establish how many of them would come back into benefit and how much that would cost. British Coal has a moral obligation to put right something that went seriously wrong.

11.29 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: This has been a thoughtful and thought-provoking debate. The temperature rose a bit when the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) spoke, but that is not unusual.

It has been recognised that the RMPS, which the order puts on a fairer basis, is a generous one. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), who kindly informed me that he would be unable to stay for the entire debate, said that he would give his right arm, or his shirt, if the mining interests that he represents could benefit from such a scheme. I am sure that those representing other industries would like similar arrangements. The House has given welcome recognition to the fact that the RMPS is generous. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) said that some might consider that the RMPS and the order were excessively generous, and spoke about back payment for the 1960s.

The major element of the order ensures that the terms on which people left the industry, as part of the restructuring process, are honoured. There is nothing particularly generous about that. Some time ago it was agreed that there should be generous redundancy terms in the interests of making the coal industry efficient. The order ensures that those obligations are honoured.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) asked why licensed mines do not fall under the terms of the RMPS. The RMPS was available to licensed mines under the statute, but the RMPS finished in March 1987. Current redundancies in British Coal are eligible for restructuring grant, which is not available for licensed mines. The restructuring grant which the Government are generously giving to British Coal is part of our strategy of making British Coal more efficient and better able to pay its way than in the past. That policy is paying off and this year, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, British Coal is planning to break even. The restructuring grant will have played a part in that success.

The hon. Member for Midlothian also asked about section 37 of the Social Security Act 1985. It is a complicated issue, and he asked a complicated question, but I believe he thought that section 37 and article 5(6)(iii) of the order were a minus, not a plus. The main thing that we are trying to avoid is double deductions. We have social legislation and RMPS-related legislation, and unless the amending order is passed double deductions will be made. I trust that I have understood the hon. Gentleman, but if not, I shall write to him.

The main theme of Opposition speeches—my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) also mentioned it—has been that of concessionary coal and cash in lieu. I accept the request of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and others, and will raise the matter again with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I listened to the strong feelings expressed on both sides about the inequity, but I cannot give any further assurances, because this is not ultimately my responsibility. I shall, however, convey the ably put coherent points on that.

Retraining affects younger people on the whole, although the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) mentioned an older person. I should like to hear of specific cases where retraining has been deterred.

Mr. Barron: It was not retraining, but the restart scheme, under which people unemployed for more than six months have to go to a local office to fill in a questionnaire, that I was talking about.

Mr. Spicer: I shall certainly make that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, as that matter comes under employment legislation and is not for my Department.

Mr. Haynes: I can certainly give the Minister two examples, one of which relates to a 41-year-old.

Mr. Spicer: The RMPS and redundancy schemes now relate to younger people than they did originally. I am interested to hear of specific cases, which I shall look into if the hon. Gentleman will send them to me. I should like to see the details of the problem and see whether anything can be done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley has been assiduous and persistent about the various schemes not applying to those who left in the 1960s. Several hon. Members have said that there were numerous local

[Mr. Spicer]

schemes and agreements at that time, and many anomalies. The purpose of bringing everything together in the 1970s was to deal with those anomalies.

Whenever new benefits are introduced, no matter what the legislation, the problem is always where to draw the line. We had to ask ourselves whether we could, at an acceptable cost, delve into history and track down the few people who had been made redundant under these terms, whether it would be equitable if we missed some out, and whether the exercise was feasible. Despite the great efforts of my hon. Friend and others, our conclusion is that the line has been drawn for some time now and——

Mr. Ashby: I understand my hon. Friend's position and that a line must be drawn, but will he undertake to look again at that line and see whether it can be redrawn in a different position to deal with this anomaly and unfairness?

Mr. Spicer: I shall look again at the argument, but it would be administratively costly and there would be the difficulty of tracking people down. I suspect that that will be difficult, but I shall consider the argument again. Sometimes such an argument can be stated too blandly, but I shall re-examine this one to see whether it stands the test of analysis. I am advised, however, that it would be extremely difficult to ensure fairness, given the great complexity and diversity of the previous arrangements.

I think that I have covered most of the points that have been raised. If not, I shall be happy to write to hon. Members. The Government believe that the RMPS is fair. Indeed, some might think it over-fair. I hope the House will agree that the matter needed to be put on a sound footing to enable people being made redundant from the industry to receive the benefits to which they were told they were entitled. That is what the order does. I am grateful for the support expressed for it on both sides of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 5th July 1988, be approved.

Armed Forces (Discipline)

11.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 17th June 1988, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to continue in force for a further year the Army and Air Force Acts 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957, which together provide the basis for the disciplinary arrangements in the three services. The concept of annual parliamentary approval for the special legal position of service men and women is a long-established one in British constitutional practice. Indeed, it stems ultimately from the 1689 Bill of Rights, which prohibited the raising or maintenance of a standing army in the realm in time of peace without the consent of Parliament. Every fifth year the opportunity is taken to review in depth the needs of the service disciplinary systems and an Armed Forces Bill is presented proposing such amendments to those systems as are considered necessary. As hon. Members will recall, the last such Act was passed in 1986.

The legal position of service personnel is in some respects unique. They are subject to service discipline as well as to the ordinary law of the land, and their individual rights as citizens must be respected within the constraints necessarily imposed by service discipline.

I want to take this opportunity to bring the House up to date briefly on some areas in which this balance has had to be considered. In its report, the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1986 suggested that accused persons in the Army and Royal Air Force should be allowed the assistance of an accused's friend at summary proceedings, in the same way as in the Royal Navy. In the light of that recommendation, we have set in hand a wider review of summary proceedings, including proposals for providing assistance to the accused. The outcome will be included in our proposals for the next Armed Forces Bill.

A fair and equitable system of discipline is essential to good morale in the services, which in turn helps us to recruit and train good quality personnel. The current manning position in the armed forces is broadly satisfactory. There are shortages in certain specialist areas, mainly those in which there are national shortages, but those shortfalls are not significant enough to prevent the services from carrying out their operational roles. The House will be aware of the difficulties that we face because of demographic trends and increased competition from other sectors of an expanding economy. In common with some of our NATO allies, we are considering ways of meeting these challenges. Never has it been more important for our armed forces to offer the right conditions of service to their members.

It is right, therefore, that recent allegations of bullying in the armed forces should have attracted the concern that they have. Since January 1986, 45 such allegations have been substantiated and resulted in disciplinary action. Bullying has no place in the armed forces. The serious view that we take has been reflected both in the sentences awarded to those found responsible and in the comprehensive package of measures being implemented, which I am confident will help to deal with the problem.

Let me deal finally with a subject that graphically illustrates the fact that—for good or ill—the services are part of society. The Ministry of Defence recognised the seriousness of AIDS at an early stage, and it has taken a full part in the AIDS education campaign. Service units going abroad are briefed on AIDS as well as other health hazards, and individuals considering themselves at risk are encouraged to undergo voluntary screening. In short, AIDS policy for the armed services is consistent with that adopted nationally.

Let me draw the attention of the House to a pamphlet that we have recently produced called "The Armed Forces: Your Rights and Responsibilities." It sets out in straightforward language the rights and responsibilities of service men and women. A copy will be given to all new recruits to the armed forces and will, I hope, help them to understand the services' disciplinary system. I shall place a copy in the Library, and if any hon. Member is interested in receiving a copy I shall be pleased to send him a copy directly. It is a brand-new leaflet, and it covers rights in regard to injustice or ill-treatment, equal opportunity of employment in the armed forces, voting and injury on duty. In regard to responsibilities it deals with the service discipline Acts, drug abuse and alcohol abuse. I hope that it will be of interest, use and benefit not only to recruits but to their parents.

The service disciplinary system that will be continued by the order plays an essential part in maintaining the extremely high standards displayed by the services, both in peace time and in fighting roles. I am pleased to take this opportunity to pay wholehearted tribute to the skill and dedication of our armed forces, and I invite the House to approve the order.

11.46 pm

Mr. Sean Hughes (Knowsley, South): In view of the hour, I shall not venture down the road of historical reference with which the Minister opened his remarks, much though I might be inclined to do so. We experienced the niceties of the 1688 debate recently, and, although as a Catholic I may have my own views about just how glorious that revolution was, I shall refrain from exploring the subject tonight.

Let me say in my immediate response to the Minister that he should perhaps consider making the leaflet for recruits available to all service personnel rather than merely to recruits. Let me also say that Opposition Members hope that an indication at least of the contents of the Armed Services Bill will be available in time for the estimates debate in the autumn.

In the past, our debates have concerned themselves with the generalities of discipline and morale in the armed forces rather than merely with the technicalities of the Acts whose continuation is the subject of the order. Hon. Members have concerned themselves with what an hon. Member referred to last year as the niggles that we all hear whenever we visit a unit. I believe that that is right. Morale and discipline are composed of the minutiae of life in the services, and it is therefore incumbent on us to discuss them.

I join the Minister in his praise for the men and women who serve in our armed forces. It is easy to praise them at times of national crisis, and to forget that in the humdrum preparation for crisis they forgo much of the personal freedom which we as civilians enjoy and exercise. It was right that the Select Committee of 1976 refused to give up the annual affirmative orders when such a proposal was considered.

As the Minister pointed out, one aspect of life in the armed forces that has been of concern to hon. Members is that of bullying. Nothing could more sap morale and diminish discipline than such behaviour. During the Army debate on 26 January, the Minister asserted his belief that the problem of bullying and ill treatment was not widespread. I simply do not know, nor can anyone know, the incidence of bullying in the armed forces. None of us would want to stand accused of either exaggerating or understating the problem. The Minister devoted a considerable part of his speech to the Government's response to some of the bizarre examples of bullying and, to that end, he outlined a programme on which he hoped to make rapid progress. Perhaps he can inform the House tonight whether it is now possible to report any measurable progress on that matter.

There were six items in that programme. I should like to draw the House's attention to two of them. Although Opposition Members welcome the fact that the Government are taking the question of bullying seriously, we remain concerned about the first suggestion—that there should be a more thorough screening at the recruiting and entry stage of young men who, as the Minister put it,

"may not be robust enough to cope with the toughness of military training"—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 257-8.]

As the item under discussion was bullying, that appeared to equate some aspects of bullying with tough military training. It was an unfortunate use of words which I am sure the Minister did not intend to lead to misinterpretation. As this is the first opportunity to put the record right, I hope that the Minister will do so when he replies.

The final proposal in the Minister's six-point plan was a formal ban on harmful initiation ceremonies. Clearly the experience of such degrading ceremonies is hardly conducive to good discipline in the armed forces. Perhaps the Minister can tell us how such a ban has been enforced and whether there has been any measurable effect in the past six months.

One other matter that has given cause for concern of late is that of racism in the armed forces. In an earlier debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) asked soldiers to write to him about individual cases of racism. The Minister replied that that was the wrong advice and that it would be more effective and in the best interests of British soldiers to take up such allegations with their commanding officers. This is an extremely sensitive matter, and I must be honest with the House and say that in the past 12 months only one allegation of racism has been drawn to my attention but, ominously, it was withdrawn on the ground that identifying the individual or regiment might have repercussions and that it would have been impossible to prove motive. I do not try to concoct any theory on that matter. I do not know the extent of the problem. However, I know that hon. Members and journalists have identified the matter as one of real concern and I hope that the Minister will assure the House that he continues to monitor the matter closely.

Another item of concern that has been expressed to me both in conversation and correspondence has been the question of private contractors at barracks, which affects

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morale and discipline. For the record, I should add that the incidents to which I refer concern private contracts at Army institutions, although common sense would suggest that such incidents must be happening generally throughout the services if they are happening in one particular service. The complaints that I have received had not been limited to private soldiers.

I understand that, as a result of privatisation, various contracts are now being awarded on the basis of competitive tendering to cover such services as gardening, cleaning and catering. The substance of the complaints is that the contractors sometimes—I shall not over-egg the pudding by saying often—fail to deliver the full service and, as a result, the commanding officer must order his men to finish off the job.

It has been suggested to me that in some instances the work of the private contractor has been so unsatisfactory that the commanding officer has had to order his men to provide the complete service again. I tabled a question to the Minister earlier in the year and his reply informed me that there have been some such instances but they have been infrequent and confined generally to the early stages of contracts. I think that the problem is greater than that and I hope that the Minister will give it his attention. The use of young soldiers to carry out work that has been contracted out does not lead to good morale or good discipline.

In civilian life, expectation of pension is considered a legitimate aspect of working conditions, and with that goes the question of how we treat the widows of those so employed. If discipline is dependent on morale and not only on punishment, the morale of service men and women cannot but be affected by how we treat the widows of those who have served their country in the past. The Minister replied to a debate on this subject shortly before the Christmas recess. I hope that the Government will be prepared to reconsider their position on war widows' pensions. The problem has been identified in two early-day motions.

I ask the Minister to explain the use of section 24 of the Armed Forces Act 1971 in respect of unauthorised disclosure of information. I apologise for not giving him notice of my question. Section 24 provides the following provision to substitute for section 60 of the Army Act 1955:

"It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section that he did not know and had no reasonable cause to believe that the information disclosed related to a matter upon which information would or might be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy."

Under the proposed reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, the Government have recommended that

"it should not be necessary for the prosecution to adduce evidence of the likely damage to the operation of the security or intelligence services when information relating to security or intelligence has been disclosed by a member or former member of one of those services."

Let me suppose that someone who is serving in one of the military intelligence agencies discloses information about his job that he knows will not be of use to the enemy but will reveal, for instance, that a defence contractor overcharged the agency. He could not be prosecuted under section 24 of the Armed Forces Act 1971. Under the new proposals for the reform of the Official Secrets Act, however, he could be prosecuted and would have no defence in law. The law would then be made to look an ass.

I ask the Minister to tell us whether section 24 will be amended so that it is compatible with the proposals in the White Paper on the Official Secrets Act. I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister will catch your eye and will be able to respond to the issues that I and others have raised during this brief debate.

11.59 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I endorse everything that my hon. Friend the Minister has said in paying tribute to the armed forces in general and to their high standard of discipline.

Discipline rests with the leadership of the officers and with providing the men with the right conditions, and in Windsor there is a difficulty. When the Victoria barracks were demolished, a smart guard continued to go to the castle, and the public admire it. They do not know, however, what the men have to go through. They are bussed from Hounslow, Chelsea or from wherever they can be obtained. They then have to go to Combermere barracks, where they put on their uniforms, which are carried separately. That is extremely difficult. The tunics are very expensive. As everyone knows, the entire uniform is extremely expensive. The uniforms are carried in the bus or on a lorry to the barracks, where two rooms have been provided for the men to change in. They then have to be bussed back to the royal mews. That causes extreme difficulty for the men who have to parade in public. If I were one of those men, I should be extremely worried about whether I could make the change to full dress under those conditions. It is wrong that that should continue.

That situation has existed since 1980. I make no apology for the fact that since 6 June 1980 I have been pressing successive Ministers to do something about it. The last of the Foot Guards left in May. On 26 January, at column 259 of *Hansard*, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces was most sympathetic.

There are two reasons for my request. We need another barrack in London and in Windsor. That is not entirely selfish, because I am led to understand that another barrack is required in the London district. The House may not be aware that Windsor is technically under the London district. It is also a fact that another barrack is required. The inconvenience to the men is important, but there is also the more important point that there is a barrack there that has been lying idle for eight and a half years.

I do not blame any Minister who has had responsibility for the armed forces. Each successive Minister gave me undertakings, and I was told that the barrack would be ready long before now. The empty site has now been cleared. I know that there were demolition difficulties, but they have been dealt with and I look forward to the rebuilding of the barrack.

After all, as I have said in previous debates, we are a garrison town. The castle has to be guarded by Foot Guards, and it is up to us to make sure that the conditions under which those men guard it are as comfortable as possible.

At the same time, we need another barrack in the London district. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the

Minister for what he said in column 259 of *Hansard* on 26 January, and I look forward to working with him for the rebuilding of Victoria barracks at an early date.

12.2 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Sometimes I think that it is Ministers who should be disciplined for the waste of money in many areas of defence expenditure. For example, the Minister's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley), reported to the House that a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) had not been strip-searched, and now it has been reported that she was. The Ministry of Defence has had to pay damages. The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling has still not apologised for misleading the House. Perhaps he should be disciplined by the House if he does not.

Similarly, the Minister who went ahead with Trident in the first place should be disciplined; but other Ministers have misled the House over the figures for the Trident programme. They have not told the House that the Trident programme does not include the capital works, which the Select Committee on Public Accounts has said could add another £1 billion-plus to the cost of the work.

Perhaps we are discussing the wrong kind of discipline and it should be the Ministers who are disciplined. I hope that we shall do that at the next general election, when they will be duly put in their place, which will not be in Government.

I welcome the leaflet announced by the Minister and I shall examine it closely. It seems as though it will be a welcome publication and extremely helpful to the armed forces.

I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) about bullying. I was most concerned when the Minister used that phrase about those who were not robust enough for military training and having to sort them out. It struck me at the time that the Government and their advisers were putting all the blame on the victim instead of on the bully. I hope that the Minister will have second thoughts about that.

I shall be interested to see what the leaflet says about equal opportunities. When I asked the Prime Minister recently about the security services and equal opportunities policy, she said that there was not one—it did not apply to the security services and the armed forces. I do not think that there can be any excuse for not having a proper equal opportunities policy throughout the armed forces. I want to see extensive monitoring and action on it to ensure that it is carried out. There are certainly not very many—certainly not enough—of our black and ethnic minority citizens in senior positions in the armed forces. The implication of the Prime Minister's answer was that they cannot be trusted to hold senior possitions. That is a travesty of the truth, and in many respects it is discrimination against them. It was Prince Charles who first called for the Guards to have a black guardsman. A great deal needs to be done to get proper equal opportunities.

The Minister referred to AIDS in the armed forces, but it is also a serious problem throughout society. There was a television programme recently, mainly concerned with the United States forces in Thailand, which showed that the Thai Government were most irresponsible in relation to visiting troops. That might apply, too, to countries that our troops visit. For example, in some of the African countries as many as 90 per cent. of prostitutes have the HIV virus. If our soldiers frequent such establishments, perhaps in a fit of drunkenness or a deliberate act on their part, they take a grave—grave is the right word in this context—risk.

The Minister should not only promote health education, which is vital, but put pressure on the Governments of the countries which our troops visit to behave responsibly and clean up those areas where AIDS can be spread. That is a serious issue to be dealt with.

The Government should be examining ways of making it easy for those in the armed forces who contract AIDS to acknowledge it, leave the armed forces and receive proper care. They need to be able to do that without fear, without shame and stigma and, especially, without severe financial hardship. If that does not happen, they will stay in the armed forces and try to cover it up and suffer.

I have argued when we have had similar debates before that there should not be a separate law for the military. The death penalty is still applicable in the armed forces. The Acts came into force in 1955 when we still had the death sentence for civilians, so it is understandable that it should have been provided, but we have since got rid of it for civilians and I believe that it should be got rid of for the armed forces. I know that it is not used, but it could be, and it should be taken off the statute book.

It is for the Minister to argue the case for keeping the death sentence, especially when we have had debate after debate, at the end of which the House has decided that it does not want the death penalty for civilians. State murder is regarded as morally unacceptable, and in my view the same view should apply in the armed forces. It is obvious that no such change can be made this year, but I hope that the Minister will at some stage have the courage to abolish the death penalty.

12.11 am

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I want to refer to one case, more in passing than in detail, because there are one or two points of principle which it is important to state now rather than to leave too late.

I refer to the case of the Life Guards Captain Simon Hayward, who was arrested in Sweden more than a year ago on charges of drug trafficking, and who is now serving a period of five years' imprisonment. To determine his future in the Army, I understand that it is necessary under the Queen's Regulations for the authorities to determine whether he has received a fair trial in the foreign country in which he has been sentenced. Only in the light of such inquiries will he be deprived of his commission.

I am absolutely satisfied that the procedures which I understand are taking their normal course will be handled most sympathetically and fairly, but I wish to urge on my hon. Friend the Minister the view that when the processes are completed the Ministry of Defence should completely ignore any possible repercussions on our diplomatic relations with Sweden.

In my view, and, I hope, in the view of all, the prime consideration should not be the expedient of whether a judgment hinders or helps our relations with another country, but whether justice has been done. In that context, I urge my hon. Friend that consideration of "fair" must be on our standards of the term and not those of another country, particularly if the standards, as I have

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learned before, during and since Captain Hayward's trial, have been a matter of question not just by me—that is not important—or by other hon. Members, but in copious correspondence from the very country in which the trial took place. Therefore, I hope that it will be standards not just of natural justice, but of justice of the purest possible kind that will be applied when a decision is reached.

Secondly, I hope that, despite the fact that Captain Hayward has lodged an appeal with the European Court, whatever findings are arrived at here in this country will not necessarily be dependent upon what happens at the European Court of Human Rights, whether it finds in his favour or against him, although it is probable, if the case is considered to be admissible, that the ultimate result will be long delayed, if precedent is followed, and will not be forthcoming until he has served his sentence.

I believe that it is essential that it be recognised that the European Court examines whether an agreed code has been followed by a particular country and does not necessarily address itself to whether the verdict was a fair or an unfair one. We should make this decision on the basis of what we know of the proceedings at trial and appeal. I am quite satisfied in my mind that if the Ministry of Defence addresses itself to that and that alone the outcome will certainly be a fair consideration of Captain Hayward's case.

I do not seek from my hon. Friend either a reply or comment at this stage. I understand that it may be preferable to allow matters to take their course. However, I hope that my words will have some influence in ensuring that it is not diplomatic relations but justice that will eventually prevail in this matter.

12.16 am

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) said something that I think would be echoed by both sides of the House—that high morale is fundamental to good discipline. Similarly, fundamental to high morale is the conviction on the part of serving officers and men that their families are well looked after and are integrated into the local community where they happen to be based. That is particularly important where regiments serve a substantial part of the year overseas.

It is a matter of concern to me, and indeed to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who cannot be here to record his concern in person, that there is a question mark over the future accommodation of 36 Engineer Regiment, which has been based in Maidstone for many years. It is a feature of their service that, as sappers, they spend a substantial period each year abroad, away from their families. They have told me, and I am sure that it it true, that they are very satisfied with the facilities in Maidstone and with the relationship that they enjoy with the town. The town would echo those sentiments. They have said that when they are abroad they are satisfied that their families are integrated into the community, they are happy with the schooling opportunities for their children and they do not wish to break the connection between themselves and Maidstone.

I know that my hon. Friend will not be able tonight to pronounce, one way or the other, on what is to happen to 36 Engineer Regiment, but members of the regiment believe that it is now being seriously considered that they should be moved from Maidstone and based instead on Thorney Island. That is not a proposition that fills either them or the town that they will be leaving with enthusiasm.

I ask the Minister for an assurance that full account will be taken in any decision of the established fact, well recognised in a recent report, that the welfare of families is fundamental to high morale and that that, rather than any consideration of value of site, will be the governing criterion in taking the decision. Otherwise, I fear not only for the morale of the 36 Engineer Regiment, but for recruitment potential and retention, and, in view of the expense of training engineers, retention is extremely important.

12.21 am

Mr. Freeman: This has been a brief, well-informed and constructive debate and I shall endeavour to cover the salient points raised by hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) gave me notice of some of the points that he raised, for which I thank him. He dealt with the leaflet being sent to service personnel. We have 300,000 service men and women. He put forward an interesting idea, which I will consider. The intention at present is to concentrate on recruits, and I feel sure he will agree that initially that is the correct focus. However, I will bear in mind his suggestion of a wider distribution.

The hon. Gentleman questioned me about the Armed Forces Bill. The inclusion of our proposals, following the review of summary proceedings, will not come until the Bill is produced, and that will not be until 1991 because it is a quinquennial review.

The hon. Gentleman asked what progress had been made on the subject of bullying. I refer him, and other hon. Members who have expressed interest in this subject, to the answer I gave on 7 June to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) in which I spelt out precisely what we had done since the announcement I made to the House in January. I referred to the steps that we had taken, and at this hour I will merely refer to that rather than go into the matter in detail.

I have covered the issues of the better medical screening of recruits and how we train and select instructors, the creation of 100 extra posts in the training establishments to provide better supervision of recruits, the creation of 92 extra posts for members of the WRVS, the way in which we are looking again at man management training for officers and NCOs and how the Army has taken steps to ban initiation ceremonies.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South referred to racism. The results of the ethnic monitoring survey for the year to 31 March 1988 will be known towards the end of this year and a summary will be published in the Statement on the Defence Estimates next year.

The hon. Gentleman asked about private contractors. I am aware of his concern on that issue. I believe in this instance that trade unionists, the services and the Ministry of Defence all have a common cause in making sure that service personnel do not assist contractors in the fulfilment of their contractual obligations. Commands will be reminded that such assistance should not be given.

The hon. Gentleman asked about widows' pensions. This is a complicated issue. The so-called anomaly arises because the DHSS provides a war widow's pension to all

whose husbands were injured or who died at any stage of their careers; there is no time limit. Since 1973, when the provisions of the armed forces pension scheme were much improved, war widows generally receive a second, additional, pension from the armed forces contributory scheme, and that creates the so-called anomaly of those who were widowed before 1973. All I can say is that my ministerial colleagues in the DHSS are well aware of the points that he has raised, and both the DHSS and the Ministry of Defence have the matter under constant review. It is a matter of resources, as I am sure he appreciates. We are not ignorant of the problems.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about unauthorised disclosure of information. I am advised that it would be for the prosecuting authorities in the circumstances of the particular case to decide under which statutory provision the proceedings should be instituted against a service man or woman accused of the unlawful disclosure of official information. Perhaps I might study in the *Official Report* the text of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If I have to amplify what I have just said, I will do so in writing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) raised the subject of Victoria barracks. I am happy to repeat the assurance that I gave him in January, I believe, in the Army debate that I would visit Windsor with him on 1 September. I am happy to confirm that I will visit the site with him on 1 September. I hope to make an appropriate announcement.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for his kind remarks about the leaflet. I hope that he still feels the same after he has read it.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to clarify, as did the hon. Member for Knowsley, South, my remarks about toughness and training being robust enough. There is no question of any equation between bullying and toughness in Army training. The two issues are different, but it remains the case that the expectations of young recruits are not always appropriate for joining a disciplined force. It is important for both individuals and the services that recruits should be mentally and physically attuned to the demands of the service which they are joining. I must reiterate that tough training does not and should not involve bullying. I hope that clarifies the position.

The death penalty, which is a very serious issue, was also raised by the hon. Member for Leyton. There are five serious offences involving positive acts of treachery which, under the service Discipline Acts, can carry the death penalty. That penalty is not mandatory for any of the offences, even though they are broadly equivalent to high treason, for which the death penalty is still mandatory. Our policy is that the death penalty should never be applied in peacetime. Nevertheless, we see a clear need to retain the option of the death penalty for this small group of serious offences. That need was accepted in 1986 by the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) referred to the case of Captain Hayward. My hon. Friend knows that the matter is with the chain of command in the Army. He would not expect me to comment on whether Captain Hayward should be asked to resign his commission because it is under review, but my hon. Friend's comments will have been noted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) referred to 36 Engineer Regiment, a very fine regiment with a long and proud history of being based in Maidstone. If my hon. Friend is content, I should be happy to visit the regiment with her, perhaps after the recess, so that I may understand more fully the concerns that she has expressed, which will be appreciated by the regiment.

As I said at the outset, I am grateful for the opportunity to reply to the debate. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 17th June 1988, be approved.

OFFICE COSTS ETC. ALLOWANCES

Resolved,

That, in the opinion of this House, the Resolution of 21st July 1987 (Office Costs etc. Allowances) should have effect in relation to Mr. David Blunkett as if for any year the limit on the office costs allowance was 2.57 times that determined in accordance with the said Resolution, instead of that prescribed in the Resolution of 16th December 1987.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

AGRICULTURE

That the draft Farm Woodland Scheme 1988, which was laid before this House on 4th July 1988, be approved.

INTERNATIONAL IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES

That the draft EUMETSAT (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 28th June 1988, be approved.

That the draft EUTELSAT (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 28th June 1988, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

Bus Transport (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

12.28 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): If one asked anyone to give an impression of London at any time this century, he would be unlikely to omit the friendly image of the red London bus. It is almost as much an emblem of London as Tower bridge or the Palace of Westminster. I raise the subject this evening because the comprehensive London bus service, integrated with the Underground, is under threat and its quality is likely to deteriorate beyond any failings that it has at the moment; I shall deal with those failings later in my speech.

The Government have made it clear, not least through the London Regional Transport strategy document, that they want the separation of bus and Underground—inevitably and mischievously the separation of ticketing schemes such as Travelcard and Capitalcard—and then the fragmentation of London Buses Ltd. into 11 companies ripe for sale or franchise, quite apart from the privatisation of individual routes.

There is no doubt about the path that the Government want LRT to take. Let me illustrate the point. The No. 24 bus route runs past the Palace of Westminster. It is to go out to tender. The company that ran the No. 24 bus route will be split off, sold off and fenced off from the Tube and the ticketing arrangements for the Underground. It seems to me absolutely crazy that all that should be happening in the very heart of London.

The LRT strategic annual review 1988-91 spells out the plan in all its stark madness:

"One of the main objectives of deregulation is to promote competition and thereby increase efficiency of operation and match services more closely to passenger demands. Although tendering of bus services has introduced competition amongst operators in London, LBL is still very dominant. A high level of competition, therefore, is only likely to be achieved if LBL is subdivided into a number of companies which can then compete with each other. Work is well in hand for restructuring LBL as a prelude to the formation of a dozen or so companies"—

it is now to be 11—

"which could be sold to separate owners"—

I emphasise separate owners—

"after deregulation in order to ensure competition."

I do not believe that that is competition. It is transport vandalism on a grand scale. If I want to go from Brixton to Croydon within the area of one fragment company, I do not see how it helps me to know that I can go from Brixton to Tower bridge under the auspices of another fragment company. There is no competition at all.

Still worse, concessionary fares and pensioners' passes —emotive and important issues—services for the disabled such as Dial-a-Ride, common information for tourists and Londoners alike, training and safety standards, ticketing, policing, repairs and recruitment will all become a nightmare. All this havoc will be done for the short-term profit of the new private operators. It will be profit and cost-cutting at the expense of service and to the detriment of London as a commercial, industrial, educational and tourist centre, to which good public transport is indispensible.

London has grown profitable and successful partly because of its public transport services. Every capital city needs a comprehensive and subsidised bus and underground system. That has been borne out by a recent publication by the London advisory planning committee:

"It is clear that the promotion and accommodation of economic growth has very important implications for transport requirements and the degree of congestion in London particularly Central London. Without substantial new management initiatives and rehabilitation programmes in the short term, and major rail investments in the medium term, investor confidence is likely to drop in London's World City role."

That comes from a Government planning committee at the same time as the Government are contemplating the fragmentation of London's bus transport system.

What we need is a better transport system. We need more investment, more new lines, reliable vehicles and fully staffed crews. The pressure on the Underground at the moment is quite intolerable. The lesson is that we need to build on what we have rather than destroying what we have by splitting bus services into 11 units, as LRT proposes, auctioning them off and reducing the service.

Nothing in the splintering will deal with the recruitment crisis facing London buses as a result of wage levels, working conditions and hours, which place busmen at a disadvantage compared with those in other jobs. The new companies will want to drive wages down and demand even more on competition. The explosion in housing costs makes matters even worse. I do not know where a new recruit busman could rent accommodation in my constituency. Accommodation is simply not being provided by local authorities because of cuts in housing investment programmes. I do not know either where he could afford to buy property, given that £60,000 is the minimum price for a flat.

Perhaps I may describe some of the problems in my locality and that of Mr. Speaker, problems that I want to get London Buses Ltd. to tackle rather than giving in to the Government's wishes.

Four months ago, London Buses was almost 1,000 drivers short. In my area of Streatham, there was a shortage of 18 drivers, or 7·4 per cent. of establishment; in Brixton, 12 drivers, or 6·5 per cent.; Stockwell, as many as 41 drivers short, or 13·8 per cent.; Camberwell, 19 drivers; Thornton Heath, 14 drivers; Merton, a high-cost area, 42 drivers, or 14·1 per cent. of establishment; Norwood, 34 drivers, or 16·7 per cent.; and the central London minibus was 23 per cent. short of establishment. Those shortages were despite massive recruitment campaigns and a reduction in both recruitment and training standards.

The staff turnover of London Transport bus drivers is running at about 25 per cent. annually in many garages, reflecting inadequate wages, the stress and strain of driving in London, and the extraordinarily unsocial hours.

The engineering membership of the Transport and General Workers Union suggests that accidents involving buses have more than doubled in the past three years and that lower training standards, with resultant lower driving standards, must be a major factor.

Despite carrying more passengers because of the pressures on London's transport system, the scheduled mileage has been reduced from 166 million miles to 162 million miles, and whereas in 1984-85 94·3 per cent. of the 166 million miles was run, in 1987-88 only 91 per cent. of the 162 million miles was run. As a result, average passenger waiting time increased to 7·4 minutes.

We face the prospect of more passengers paying more money for worse services—and that is even under the

existing system. Plans for the coming year are for further cuts in south London bus services on the ground of "spare capacity". The objective is to achieve average loads of from 56 to 60 passengers per bus during the rush hours, but, to obtain that average, more passengers will have to wait for the third, fourth or even fifth bus before they can board.

In the case of my local services, those affected are the route 159 from Thornton Heath to West Hampstead via Brixton; route 59 from Purley to the city via Croydon and Brixton; route 133 from Streatham to London bridge via Brixton; and route 68 from Croydon to Euston via Norwood. On all those routes, unbelievably, the number of buses per hour is to be reduced at peak times because London Buses says that there is "spare capacity". That means that passengers who have paid in advance for their bus passes or Capitalcards will not enjoy the level of service that existed when they paid for them. It is rather like airline passengers, having paid for a flight to Paris, being told once they have boarded the aircraft that their tickets will take them only to Calais. Those changes can mean only more aggravation and stress for drivers, yet London Buses is to be split into 11 separate companies in 1988-89, ready for privatisation in 1990-91.

That fall in the level of services and cost-cutting is to prepare London Buses for its sale as an economic, profit-making company at the expense of the travelling public. The dangers to the public from staff shortages, inadequate training and cuts in services are clear. A safe and efficient bus service is needed if London is not to come to a halt.

Because of falling public transport standards, more private transport is taking to London's roads, and the problems of illegal parking are well known. Average journey speeds in London are now down to 11 mph, and anyone who travels on or follows behind a one-person operation bus will know the reasons for that. Average road speeds in central London during peak times are about 8 mph—the same as when London's traffic was horse-drawn.

We read in the papers that we shall be able to get from the centre of London to the centre of Paris in two and a half hours. If one travels by bus, I doubt whether one could get from Wembley to Purley in the same time, especially if present trends continue.

If livestock was transported in the dangerous and overcrowded conditions that exist on our underground system and on some of our buses, there would be an outcry and laws would be passed to make such conditions illegal.

I want enough safe and competent bus crews to ensure a safe and adequate transport system which will meet the needs of Londoners, with the emphasis on service. The Minister should call for an end to the senseless dicing and slicing up of the London bus system. The Government should call a halt to LRT's increase in bus fares, which will make the 11 companies easier to sell off. Given the fabulous tax cuts for richer Londoners, what justice is there in a fares rise in the current year of 9 per cent.—twice the rate of inflation—and plans for fares to rise by 17 per cent. in real terms in the next 18 months?

London's united red bus network is the blood in the arteries of London. What the Government are making LRT do is little short of cutting London's lifelines. The Minister should abandon the unfair increase in bus fares that will be borne by the travelling public and the senseless fragmentation of London's bus services and should concentrate upon a socially necessary network of buses around London. That network should be determined by a political process and not simply by a removed and unaccountable LRT.

London-wide through-ticketing should be developed and it should be valid on the Tube and the bus. Free pensioner passes and half fares for children should be continued, with the participation of all London bus operators. Transport for disabled people should be preserved and improved by LRT. Fragmentation would do nothing for them. Comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date, London-wide maps and timetables should be provided by LRT for all services. Subsidy levels should be significantly increased to allow for a socially necessary network to plug the gaps in services that will be left by private, commercial operators.

This is an opportunity for the Minister to make an announcement to show that he cares for London more than he cares for his ideology, which involves splitting up London transport for profit at the expense of service.

12.42 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) for giving me this opportunity to talk about public bus transport in London and to set the record straight on a number of issues on which the hon. Gentleman has been misled or has misled himself.

This is indeed a time of change for London's bus services, and I have strong reason to believe that those changes will be for the better. There are already ample signs that that is so. For many years the story was one of struggle to maintain conventional services in the face of declining patronage—20 per cent. down between 1974 and 1983—and rising unit costs, which increased by 19 per cent. in real terms in the same period. All that has already changed, and the further measures which we and LRT are taking, to which I shall refer tonight, will bring further benefits to London's bus users.

Bus patronage is at its highest for 10 years, at 2,870 million passenger miles last year—18 per cent. up on 1983. Real unit costs have come down by 15 per cent. in the same period. However, a higher proportion of timetabled services are actually being operated—93 per cent. last year, against 82 per cent. in 1979 when the Greater London council was responsible for them. Services are also much more closely matched to demand. Reliability is also much improved. Waiting times have been reduced by over a minute to 7·1 minutes. There are a number of ways in which that has been achieved. LBL's management now adopts a much more professional approach and the passenger is getting the benefit. Long routes have been split up to minimise the effect of traffic delays and so improve reliability, local networks have been created to serve suburban centres, high frequency minibus services have been introduced both by LBL and on tendered services and have proved extremely popular with passengers, and more one-person operated—OPO—buses have been introduced and have proved to be cheaper to run, safer in operation and more reliable.

It is well established that the absence of competition engenders complacency and inefficiency. One policy that has made an outstanding contribution to all those improvements has been the encouragement of competitive tendering for bus routes. It has given the private sector an

[Mr. David Mitchell]

opportunity to participate in the provision of bus services, and LBL the stimulus to become more efficient and provide a better service. Tendered services have proved to be more reliable, not less, on average than those operated directly by LBL, they cost less than before—by about 15 per cent. so far—and they encourage innovation, such as the introduction of midibuses. Many of these routes, as a result, have benefited from an increase in patronage. LRT expects to have put out to tender a quarter of bus routes by March 1989, and there will be more to come. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in congratulating LRT on the extent to which it has put routes out to tendering and the substantial benefits that have come to his constituents and other bus users as a result.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the proposed restructuring of LBL. There is a limit to what can be achieved while London Buses remains a huge, dominant provider of bus services. The next stage in introducing improvements involves a fundamental change in the structure of LBL, which will aim to facilitate more localisation of services and encourage competition and, therefore, efficiency.

LBL recently announced the formation of 11 new management units with devolved responsibility to replace the existing structure of five districts. These new units, each between three and six garages grouped in a logical pattern, will be able to operate more like local bus companies, smaller and closer to their customers than the present monolithic LBL. Each will have separate management, separate accounts and its own targets to meet. They will be encouraged to compete against one another for business, and will be free to produce their own innovations. They will also benefit in due course from a reduction in costs as central administration is reduced.

There is no evidence of any significant economies of scale in bus service operations. There is certainly no reason why London needs to be served by one huge operation the size of LBL—the largest bus company in western Europe. The hon. Gentleman is stuck in the thinking of two decades ago if he thinks that large means good. Small, with all the flexibility that can bring, has been proved in recent years to be of far greater benefit to the users of these services. The success of tendered services, operated by private operators and semi-independent LBL sub-units, suggests that there is no magic in continuing the old monopoly of service provision.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of predictions about what would happen when LBL is restructured, although I believe that he is actually looking further ahead to deregulation in making those charges, and that is not a matter for debate tonight. We have yet to bring forward detailed proposals for deregulation, and when we do the House will be able to discuss them. The restructuring of LBL is an organisational and managerial change that can be only beneficial.

The hon. Gentleman is in error on two particular points. First, he referred to the colour of buses in London. I am not aware that LBL's plans include any change of colour. It has no monopoly on the colour red.

The hon. Gentleman set up a scare that restructuring would lead to fragmentation of routes. When there is adequate demand for a through route, it is likely to be provided. If the hon. Gentleman wants to travel on more than one route, he must either buy a pass or be prepared to buy more than one ticket. What is wrong with that? If he wants to travel on more than one route now, he must buy more than one ticket—if he does not purchase a pass. There will be no change. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will put that scare back in the bag and feel that he can reassure his constituents on that score.

Mr. Fraser: Will the fragmented companies, as I have described them, be compelled to take part in a common pass scheme?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall come to that point. I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxieties. He is also worried about concessionary fares and travel passes, and I shall deal with them first.

The restructuring of LBL will make not one iota of difference to concessionary fares and travel passes. The concessionary fares will still be funded by the boroughs and organised by LRT. The new LBL units will still be under the umbrella of LRT, and their participation in Travelcard and the like will be unaffected by the change.

On the question of deregulation, we have already said that a Londonwide concessionary fare scheme will be protected in law. There is no reason why operators should not participate in multi-operator travel pass schemes.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to safety. Talk of a lack of safety is a complete red herring. The size of a bus company is no guide to its attitude to safety. In 1984 the Department of Transport's vehicle examiners issued prohibition notices—not warnings—on 50 per cent. of a sample of LBL buses on which it had carried out spot checks. I doubt whether there are many other companies in the country, small or medium sized, with such an appalling problem. Fortunately, London Buses has improved considerably in this respect since then. All bus operators must comply with the same stringent rules on vehicle safety, and all PSV drivers must pass the same test and medical requirement. Those requirements will not be affected by restructuring or deregulation.

LRT is responsible for administering or funding a number of services for the disabled, such as Dial-a-Ride, Airbus, Carelink, Taxicard—which is funded by the boroughs—and the Mobility bus. None of those services depend on LBL, and there is no reason why independent operators should be reluctant to take LRT's money for providing them. I am sure the hon. Gentleman would not suggest that they should be. It follows that there is no threat to the services. Restructuring will have no effect on LRT's statutory duty to have due regard for the transport needs of disabled people.

The hon. Gentleman was rightly concerned about the recruitment of bus drivers. Shortages of staff for London buses are unfortunately not new. They have been with us in varying degrees for 30 years. Earlier this year the effective shortage was about 600 drivers, but that was reduced to just over 500—4·6 per cent.—by mid-June. Since the beginning of June a vigorous recruiting campaign by London Buses, promoted by Nigel Mansell, has been successful in generating no fewer than 5,500 inquiries—more than four times the usual level—leading to 3,000 firm job applications. I hope that the hon. Member will join me in congratulating LBL on its initiative in introducing that sort of recruiting campaign.

Almost every aspect of London's bus services has improved considerably in recent years, particularly since

the GLC ceased to be responsible for them and professional operators have been running the system. Patronage is at the highest for 10 years. Costs have been reduced, and, more important, services have improved. Much of that improvement has been brought about by the management of London Buses Ltd. but much has been stimulated by LRT's policy of seeking competitive tendering for certain bus routes and by the prospect of deregulation, which has been such a success elsewhere in the country. It is, I think, casting its shadows before it in the way that is leading to a recognition in LBL, and among all who are involved, that there are more efficient ways of operating services, which provide higher standards for the customer.

The changes taking place in LBL will now give added impetus to a process that has already started, and are designed to bring further improvements in efficiency, reliability and quality of service, at less cost to the taxpayer and ratepayer. In short, I can reassure the hon. Member for Norwood that London's comprehensive bus service is not under threat, and I trust that he will be able to take that reassurance back to his constituents. I am sure that he would not wish to mislead them into fearing that there might be a threat, which does not exist.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 July 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

National Health Service (Funding)

9.37 am

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition in the name of Nicola Dean, a medical student in my constituency. On her own initiative she has gone round the medical schools in this country and collected a substantial petition which draws attention to the growing technological sophistication and expense of hospital care. At this time of the review into the financing of the National Health Service the petitioners wish hon. Members to have regard to the views of the next generation of doctors.

To lie upon the Table.

Hong Kong

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

9.38 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): This debate is important. I am conscious of the fact that the choice of date is not initially convenient for some right hon. and hon. Members, and I am grateful to them for having accommodated the arrangements that emerged. Some hon. Members have travelled a long way to be here, and the House will appreciate that.

The debate is important for two reasons, the first being that our subject is Hong Kong. The territory ranks high in the Government's priorities, and our responsibilities towards it are special. The House will know that it has been a continuously important item on my personal agenda as Foreign Secretary. My most recent visit to Hong Kong was only a few weeks ago, and my noble Friend the Minister of State was there at the beginning of this month. Both of us were struck, as one always is in Hong Kong, by its continuous vitality and bustle. Hong Kong is enjoying a spectacular run of economic growth. Its full employment, low public expenditure and ambitious development projects are an example to East and West alike.

The second reason why this debate is important is that it is taking place at a time when the people of Hong Kong are engaged in a vigorous debate on the draft of the Basic Law—a document that will play a crucial role in giving effect to the provisions of the Sino-British joint declaration, and so in shaping Hong Kong's future.

The two co-signatories of the joint declaration have important obligations to each other under international law. The Chinese Government have the responsibility for drafting the Basic Law—that is entirely a matter for them. The British Government, on the other hand, have a right to assure themselves that the principles embodied in the joint declaration have been faithfully implemented in the Basic Law. That is why it is appropriate that we should have this debate. Both sides, in addition, have a common obligation to the people of Hong Kong. I know that that is something that the House takes very seriously. Already this year we have considered Hong Kong on three occasions. This is the fourth. The territory was also the subject of a debate in another place on 10 June. That sustained level of interest is very welcome. It is also a source of reassurance and encouragement to the people of Hong Kong.

Our first debate on Hong Kong this year focused largely on representative government in the territory. I later made a statement on the White Paper published by the Hong Kong Government on the same issue. The White Paper had its critics, both in the House and in Hong Kong itself, but I believe it is now clear that most people in Hong Kong regard it as a forward-looking document, which has struck the right balance between the need for reform and the need for stability during the critical transitional period.

The White Paper was overwhelmingly endorsed by Hong Kong's Legislative Council. An amendment regretting the decision to introduce direct elections in 1991 and not before was soundly rejected by 42 votes to seven, and Hong Kong is now concentrating on making the White Paper work. It is concentrating too, as I have said,

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

on careful scrutiny of the draft Basic Law. The process of public consultation over Basic Law is being conducted by the Chinese authorities in a thorough and painstaking fashion. That is indeed a welcome sign of the seriousness with which the Chinese take their obligations to the people of Hong Kong. A crucial phase began at the end of April with the publication of a first draft, and it will continue for five months until the end of September.

The way in which this matter is handled will have a major effect on confidence in Hong Kong and on how Hong Kong people view their future. It is a heavy responsibility for the Chinese Government, but one which I have no doubt they recognise and accept. Their whole approach to the drafting exercise has demonstrated that.

First, mainland and Hong Kong members have worked together for over two years in the Basic Law drafting committee to hammer out a text that addresses the interests of all concerned. There have been seven plenary meetings of the committee and innumerable meetings of its sub-committees. Second, there is a considerable breadth of representation of Hong Kong people on that committee. Twenty-three of the 59 members of the committee are Hong Kong people, covering a diverse range of interests. Thirdly, the process of drafting has been remarkably open. There has been a free exchange of views within the committee, and no lack of information about the progress of the draft as that has evolved.

Speaking as someone who has long taken an interest in improving the quality of our own legislative process, I confess that I find myself impressed by the openness of this procedure, which has the great virtue of positively inviting public participation. Indeed, it might go beyond the earliest aspirations of my right hon. and learned Friend the Patronage Secretary, who is sitting beside me. The Chinese authorities have clearly recognised the need to retain the confidence of the people of Hong Kong in the drafting process. We very much welcome this approach.

The same can be said of the present process of public consultation. The Basic Law consultative committee, which comprises some 180 people in Hong Kong, has mounted an extensive publicity campaign to collect views among the Hong Kong public. The Chinese Government have made it clear that they accept that there is still a good deal of room for improvement in the text and that amendments will be made. There is thus scope for all Hong Kong people to make an input into the drafting process and they are, indeed, making their views known.

I hope and believe that the Chinese authorities will take careful account of all views expressed. It is firmly in China's interests to get the Basic Law right, in order to maintain confidence in Hong Kong and secure its future beyond 1997. The Chinese know as well as we do that the success of the arrangements that are being made for Hong Kong's future depend upon what Hong Kong people themselves think of them, so they will certainly want a Basic Law to emerge that can command the confidence and respect of people in Hong Kong and the wider international community.

Her Majesty's Government are, of course, following the public debate in Hong Kong extremely closely. The House will know that a thoughtful and constructive two-day debate has just taken place in the Legislative Council. My officials have had detailed and useful discussions with a delegation of Hong Kong lawyers who are visiting London for this debate, as well as with other groups from the territory. We are in regular touch with the Chinese Government on the matter, and I have discussed Basic Law questions with the Chinese Foreign Minister. Let me take this opportunity to express my warm appreciation of the part played by my former opposite number, Mr. Wu Xueqian, and of wishing him well in this new post as Deputy Prime Minister. I look forward to working equally closely with his successor, Mr. Qian Qichen, whom I was glad to meet in New York just a few weeks ago. That serves to emphasise the extent to which we have a continuous dialogue with the Chinese on several levels.

The House will, I am sure, understand why these discussions need to be conducted in confidence. To conduct this kind of exchange by public proclamation would certainly not help to secure the objectives for Hong Kong to which we all attach so much importance. We are taking care to transmit to the Chinese Government views and concerns expressed by bodies and individuals in Hong Kong and here in the United Kingdom. We ensure that the Chinese Government are made aware of the views expressed in both Houses. I have said here before, and I take the opportunity to say again, that there is no question of us subordinating the interests of Hong Kong to some concept of an Anglo-Chinese relationship that excludes Hong Kong. On the contrary, far and away the most important component of the Anglo-Chinese relationship is our joint commitment to the success of Hong Kong.

Let me turn for a moment to the draft Basic Law. It is a large, comprehensive document, covering virtually all the provisions of the joint declaration. Some of those provisions are included verbatim. It is important to recognise, before looking at some of the remaining areas of difficulty, that most of the text is already very much along the right lines. The main remaining areas of concern in Hong Kong have clearly emerged and are being addressed.

The first of those concerns is autonomy. The question is asked whether the Basic Law will enable the Hong Kong special administrative region to enjoy the high degree of autonomy provided for in the joint declaration. That is an entirely reasonable question to ask, but equally it must be recognised that a high degree of autonomy is not the same as independence. Sovereignty over Hong Kong will rest with China after 1997. It will require the most careful judgment to get the balance right. We believe that the joint declaration, on the whole, got this right. That is why we attach great importance to ensuring that the Basic Law accurately reflects the joint declaration in this respect. A topic that is of particular significance in this context is the relationship between Hong Kong and the National People's Congress in Beijing in legislative and judicial matters, as well as in the interpretation of the Basic Law itself.

The general questions involved here are not unique. They arise whenever there is a need to allocate power and responsibility between a central Government and a non-sovereign entity within the same state, which has a degree, even a high degree, of autonomy. This is a crucial and sensitive area. It will be vital to confidence in Hong Kong to define the relationship in a way that not only reflects the fact of Chinese sovereignty, but properly meets the legitimate requirements and expectations of the special administrative region.

A second part of the draft that needs to be looked at closely is the guarantees of essential rights and freedoms.

There is understandable concern about the extent to which the provisions in the draft designed to protect the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people will work in practice. Once again the important thing must be to ensure that the ultimate result faithfully reflects the provisions of the joint declaration, so that Hong Kong people can be confident that they will continue to enjoy the rights and freedoms that they have today. We hope that the drafters will listen to those concerns and refine the draft accordingly.

Thirdly, there are the provisions on the economy. Many people have expressed reservations about provisions in the draft that appear to bind the future SAR Government to pursuing certain economic or fiscal policies. There would appear to be good reason for that anxiety. As drafted, the provisions seem to encroach on the autonomy in these areas which the future SAR Government are to enjoy.

There is an interesting irony in this last point. Five years ago we were worried that the Chinese might not permit capitalism to survive in Hong Kong after 1997. Now we see problems in a draft Chinese law that would, among other things, oblige Hong Kong to maintain policies that many other capitalist Governments would give their eye teeth to achieve—low taxes and a balanced budget—though I naturally understand that the Labour party may not share that view. The constitutional problem is important, but the irony is worth noting. It reminds us just how far we have come on Hong Kong in five years.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman admit that it was wrong to refer to a balanced budget in the joint declaration? It is causing problems.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that the joint declaration includes a specific reference to a balanced budget in the form in which it appears here. This point was discussed extensively in the recent debate in the Legislative Council and the argument has been put on both sides. I recognise the legitimacy of the concern about this matter of constitutional anxiety, but it is worth drawing attention to the firmly established position of low taxes and a balanced budget as part of the reason for the success of the Hong Kong economy. That is the contrast that one wants to draw.

Finally, there is the political system, on which there are divergent views in Hong Kong. The important thing about the draft is that this diversity of view is plainly reflected in the number of options currently offered. Already, however, there is agreement on the need for a directly elected element in the legislature, and it is significant that every one of the four options in the Basic Law draft includes provision for that.

The aim of the Basic Law drafters must, I think, be very much in line with our aims in the recent White Paper: to preserve those elements of Hong Kong's present system which have always served it well, while responding to people's aspirations for a greater degree of involvement in Government. A particularly important aspect of the future political system is the arrangements for the formation of the first Government after 1 July 1997. We attach importance to achieving arrangements which, while clearly marking the change of sovereignty, as they must, provide for continuity in administration and the legislature across 1997. I have not been able to deal with every matter of concern in the draft Basic Law, and no doubt hon. Members will draw attention to other points. The central point is that these anxieties should all be taken into account and reflected in the revised draft. This debate is intended to help towards that end.

I turn to a separate issue which has been a source of the greatest concern in Hong Kong and to Her Majesty's Government: the problem of the Vietnamese boat people. The House was informed of the decision of the Hong Kong Government, taken with our full support, that from 16 June all arrivals would be screened, on the basis of criteria laid down by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The intention is to distinguish genuine refugees from those whose motives for leaving Vietnam are purely economic.

Hong Kong will continue to preserve access to resettlement for genuine refugees, but the great majority of arrivals, who are leaving Vietnam for economic reasons, will be detained pending their eventual repatriation to Vietnam as soon as satisfactory arrangements for their return have been negotiated. Until then they will be detained, in humane conditions of course, but without access to resettlement opportunities.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): My right hon. and learned Friend has said that there will be satisfactory arrangements for the repatriation of these people. What discussions is he having with the Vietnamese Government and with those who would help with that repatriation to ensure that those who fled Vietnam because of desperate economic straits will not return to a worse situation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: With surgical precision my hon. Friend raises a point so important that it is the subject of my next paragraph.

In our bilateral contacts with the Vietnamese Government we have pressed for action. I took up the matter forcefully when I met the Vietnamese Foreign Minister in New York on 7 June. I am glad to say that the Vietnamese Government have now invited a team of British and Hong Kong officials to visit Hanoi and discuss the return of boat people from Hong Kong. These talks are expected to take place in the coming weeks. We do not know how much headway can be made and how soon, but this is a step in the right directon.

We have spoken, too, to the Chinese Government about this change of policy, and they have expressed full support for it. Other resettlement countries, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, also understand why we have taken this action.

In the meantime, we are studying the impact of the new policy with great care. So far there has been no significant slackening in the rate of arrival of boat people in Hong Kong, but there should be no doubt about the message. There is no future in Hong Kong for economic migrants: they should not put to sea from Vietnam.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I hope that I am not anticipating my right hon. and learned Friend's next paragraph. Would he care to comment on the feeling in Hong Kong that perhaps the Vietnamese refugees are getting a better deal than refugees from mainland China, who are deported on detection?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In view of my hon. Friend's knowledge of the territory, he is right to draw attention to that point as one of the important arguments in support of the change of policy. It is not the only argument, but it is important.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

I should like to mention one other matter of concern in Hong Kong, which was raised with me on my visit and subsequently with my noble Friend the Minister of State. Some hon. Members may also have it in mind. There have been a number of incidents in recent months in which Hong Kong travellers to this country have experienced immigration difficulties at ports of entry to the United Kingdom. There have been claims of discourteous treatment and unfair refusal of entry. These cases have led some in Hong Kong to wonder whether there is an underlying problem of discrimination against such travellers. I can assure the House that there is no foundation for that belief.

These matters must be seen in perspective. The United Kingdom is no different from anywhere else, in that problems can all too easily occur at points of entry control; nor is the Hong Kong traveller, as far as I can tell, especially liable to such trouble. The number of incidents is not large, especially when considered against the very large number of visitors that we receive every year from Hong Kong.

Let me make it plain that we take these complaints seriously, as I am sure the House expects us to do. I am discussing them with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to establish what lessons can be learnt to guard against this sort of thing in the future. We are both determined to see that appropriate action is taken. We are keen to do everything that we can to provide reassurance to Hong Kong about the operation of immigration controls in the United Kingdom.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I thank the Foreign Secretary for his assurance. I am sure he realises that hon. Members are concerned that this sensitive issue is still causing trouble. One wonders what kind of instructions have been given to immigration officials. Clearly, those instructions have not been adequate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand why the hon. Gentleman intervened to emphasise that point. My noble Friend the Minister of State and I discussed it on our visits and it is a point to which, understandably, people in Hong Kong attach importance. It is in that context that I am discussing this very matter with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. We are seeking to establish what further instructions need to be given, because it is an area of great sensitivity, and not just in that context. We all know that, day in day out, for the hundreds of thousands of individual cases that arise, it is extremely difficult to achieve the high standards of care that we all wish.

I turn now to another source of concern—emigration from Hong Kong. In the course of my recent visit to the territory, once again I was able to gauge the extent of the problem for myself. There can be no doubt that it is real, particularly among the professional and middle classes. Even so, the scale should not be overstated. We should remember that Hong Kong has had a tradition of emigration throughout its history. In the early 1970s the numbers emigrating were higher than they have been in the last few years. A key point is that emigrants from Hong Kong have filled the quotas available to them from the main destination countries for the last 30 years. There has recently been a marked increase in emigration opportunities to certain countries.

However, none of that means that we should not squarely face the fact that emigration is causing problems. For that reason the House will welcome the recent decision by the Hong Kong Government to establish the special task force on emigration, which is already at work. The Chinese Government are also very well aware of the significance of this question as a measure of confidence in the future: that, too, is important.

It is, of course essential that people in Hong Kong should be free to come and go as they please. That is a fundamental right, which must be preserved. There is no question of trying to stop people emigrating if they wish to do so. Each one of the three Governments concerned must devote their efforts to maintaining Hong Kong as an attractive place for people to make their lives and to provide for a future to which they can look forward with confidence.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Why is there a crisis over emigration from Hong Kong if the draft Basic Law is acceptable?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that the pattern of my speech, in the general perspective of Hong Kong, will show the hon. Gentleman that there is no crisis, but that there is a broad and widespread understanding of the importance of the achievement in the joint declaration. There is a natural, understandable, sustained interest in seeing that joint declaration translated into Basic Law. It is for that reason that I welcome this debate. I hope that nobody will jump to any kind of conclusion and suggest that there is a crisis.

The joint declaration provides a detailed and comprehensive framework for the future to which the people of Hong Kong will be able to look forward with confidence. It is the Basic Law that must now turn the substance of the joint declaration into reality, in a way that meets the concerns of Hong Kong people.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): I have listened carefully to what my right hon. and learned Friend has said about some of the worries in Hong Kong during the transitional and difficult period. As trade is the lifeblood of Hong Kong, and will presumably remain its lifeblood well after 1997, can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm, although that date is some way ahead, that Hong Kong will continue to have ready access to the United Kingdom market for its exports? Will the SAR Government after 1997 have enough authority to negotiate the continuity of those agreements, which are vital for Hong Kong's future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance of Hong Kong being able to continue to play an independent part in its own economic vitality in those international arrangements. One of the things for which the joint declaration made express provision is that Hong Kong should continue to have the same access, on its own, to those various arrangements. The discussions that have taken place so far with the Chinese through the Joint Liaison Group have secured, for example, continuing separate representation for Hong Kong in the general agreement on tariffs and trade and in the multi-fibre arrangement, and the establishment of

separate air service provisions for Hong Kong. That is an important feature, which was recognised in the joint declaration. It is encouraging to find the extent to which, in concert with the People's Republic of China, we can translate that in this way.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, I shall not give way. I must draw my remarks to a close because, as the number of interventions show, many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

The Chinese Government are the first to acknowledge that the whole process places a heavy responsibility on them. The people of Hong Kong also have a responsibility: a responsibility to themselves and, if I may say so without being patronising, a responsibility—which they have accepted with characteristic verve and energy—to make their own contribution to the Basic Law drafting process.

As I said in a speech that I made during my visit to Hong Kong, I believe that Hong Kong people can have faith in Hong Kong's future, just as financial institutions and multinational companies the world over clearly have, to judge by the booming investment of recent years. The economic facts speak for themselves: booming exports, full employment, indeed a labour shortage; a per capita income of well over United States $8,000, which is more than some countries in western Europe; and economic growth of well over 30 per cent. from 1986 through to 1988.

The British Government, as co-signatories of the joint declaration, will play their full part in securing a stable and prosperous future for Hong Kong and its people. The results so far, nearly four years after the negotiation of the joint declaration, have been very encouraging. On that basis, I commend this approach to the House, which has always demonstrated such firm support for the joint declaration and for Hong Kong.

10.6 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): At the outset of his speech, the Foreign Secretary referred to the fact that the timing of this debate is of considerable inconvenience to several hon. Members. To be here this morning, I had to cancel several long-standing engagements in Manchester. However, there is one engagement that it is simply not possible for me to cancel—that is my constituency advice bureau or surgery later today. If we are talking about representative democracy, that is what it is all about. That being so, I hope that the House will accept my apologies for the fact that I cannot be present for the closing stages of the debate.

Less than nine years are left to elapse before the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China. With the publication of the White Paper on direct elections by the Hong Kong Government earlier this year and its endorsement by the Foreign Secretary, there could be a feeling in Hong Kong and in Britain that there is not much left now for the British Government to do except to supervise the gentle ticking over of the administration in Hong Kong before the transfer of sovereignty on 1 July 1997. There could be a feeling that all the initiatives are now for the Government of China. Of course, the role of the Government of the People's Republic of China is very great, with the draft publication of the Basic Law and the procedures for consultation on and revision of the Basic Law which are now proceeding on their stately way.

This debate is an important opportunity for hon. Members of all parties to make it clear that, until midnight on 30 June 1997, the United Kingdom is still the sovereign power in Hong Kong and that this House of Commons, as the custodian of the joint declaration, which Opposition Members fully support, has the right to interest itself closely in the affairs of Hong Kong. It must be accepted in Hong Kong and, I trust, in Beijing too, which I visited last month and where I had useful discussions on these and other issues, that what we say in this House about the affairs of Hong Kong counts and must be heeded.

The Foreign Secretary referred to a number of important issues that are not directly relevant to the constitutional processes of Hong Kong. I am pleased that he referred to United Kingdom Government policy towards Vietnamese refugees. That problem, which is serious and unsought by Hong Kong, has an effect on it and on many thousands of human lives. The problem is obvious: how to deal with the issue in a way that is just and effective is difficult, but humanity must not get lost along the way. In the end the reason why people are refugees from a country is basic to their reception. The ultimate solution to the problem of Vietnamese refugees going to Hong Kong or anywhere else is the enhancement of human rights in Vietnam. The House should devote its attention to that.

The Foreign Secretary referred to the problems and hurt involved in the administration of immigration procedures. I was not much impressed by what he had to say. Although it is perfectly true that individuals are treated in an upsetting manner when they seek to enter this country from Hong Kong, it is not only people from Hong Kong who are thus treated. This is a general problem of the inconsiderate way in which immigration procedures can be imposed on people from many countries. The Foreign Secretary knows from my contacts with his office that constituents of mine have been extremely harshly treated by these same immigration procedures when trying to come here from Pakistan, for instance. So bland assurances that the problem is being looked into are not good enough.

The Conservative Chief Whip was here a few minutes ago. If any man in the House bears responsibility for the way in which people are being treated at the ports of entry, it was the Chief Whip during his time as Minister of State at the Home Office.

We have the right to make our views known, not only on the issues that the Foreign Secretary discussed but on the Basic Law. It is absolutely clear—no hon. Member will seek to contravert it—that the drafting of the Basic Law and its eventual ratification in 1990 is entirely a matter for the People's Republic of China. It is a domestic matter relating to what will be a domestic law for a special administrative region of the People's Republic. It is proper to pay tribute to the Government of China for the way they are going about drafting and consulting on this Basic Law. An unprecedented exercise in consultation is taking place.

There are two periods of such consultation and two opportunities for revision before ratification in 1990. The right hon. and learned Gentleman quite properly said that that was an admirably open procedure: it is very different from the way in which we go about legislating. The

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

Government will seek to tighten up our procedures in a debate next Friday on the Official Secrets Act. It is enormously to the credit of the People's Republic of China that it is drafting the Basic Law in this way.

It is likely in a debate of this sort in which a number of right hon. and hon. Members who have taken a deep interest over a prolonged period in the affairs of Hong Kong will participate, that there may be comment on the detail of a large number of the 170 articles in the Basic Law. I shall confine my remarks to aspects of the Basic Law that involve continuity with present arrangements in Hong Kong—the through-train concept—or aspects of it that are relevant to the joint declaration, to which the United Kingdom is a party. The Foreign Secretary tiptoed around some of these issues using language that he will have phrased very carefully, and properly so.

I am glad to see that in all the alternatives advanced for the composition of the Legislative Council direct election is to be involved. I am pleased that none of them contains a proposal for fewer than 25 per cent. of elected members and that one goes as high as 50 per cent. These proposals, made by a Government who have never entertained pluralistic elective democracy in their own territory, are encouraging and show up the timidity of the 18 per cent. proposal by our Government for the Legislative Council elections in 1991. It is remarkable that the Chinese Communists are showing themselves to be more democratic than the British Conservatives in the matter of Hong Kong. I hope that when they decide to complete and ratify the Basic Law the Government of the People's Republic of China will opt for the 50 per cent. alternative stated in the Basic Law.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The right hon. Gentleman has just derided the fact that the proposal is to provide for 18 per cent. of members being directly elected in 1991. Is it not true that there will be a further election in 1995, at which time it would be possible to take a further step towards a higher percentage of directly elected members? Would not that be a step towards the sort of percentages he has mentioned for 1997?

Mr. Kaufman: It will be interesting to know what can be done. I suppose that the Government could try to leap ahead of the Chinese and announce a proportion higher than the Chinese Government would by then have decided upon. If so, that would be entirely undiplomatic. If they did not do that and stopped at 25 per cent., that would merely bring forward by two years a decision that had by then been made by the Chinese Government. They might, I suppose, split the difference and make it 25·2 per cent. I am not quite sure what good that would do. Although the hon. Gentleman's point is accurate, it does not get us anywhere.

It is also proper to refer to misgivings about some of the other articles. I would not give too much support to the Foreign Secretary's concern about a Gramm-Rudman amendment in the Basic Law. After all, the United States has had such a basic law to balance its own domestic budget but has never got around to doing it, despite the binding nature of that law. It seems a little anomalous to include a statement on economic policy in an inherently constitutional document. I doubt whether it will trouble people in Hong Kong in the long run. At the same time, I concur with the Foreign Secretary, if this is the implication of his remarks, that it is not necessarily relevant to have such a provision in a basic law and that it is more a matter for domestic legislation.

It is difficult for sympathetic observers to match four of the 170 articles in the Basic Law with the admirable commitments by the Government of the Chinese People's Republic in the joint declaration, to which I am confident the Government of China are determined to adhere. Article 16 empowers the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress to annul Hong Kong law on vague and unspecified grounds, and in non-conformity with the Basic Law. The article is not clear and it has aroused a great deal of concern in Hong Kong. I hope that the Chinese Government will examine it again during this period of revision.

Article 17 refers properly to the overriding powers of the People's Republic of China in respect of defence and foreign affairs which were reserved to the Chinese Government in the joint declaration. It is entirely proper, accepted and understood that that reservation in the joint declaration should be incorporated in the Basic Law. The article then adds overriding powers relating to what it describes as

"laws which give expression to national unity and territorial integrity."

It seems to people in Hong Kong—this is apparent from studying the reports of the debate which took place there yesterday—and to some of us, too, that such vague and unspecific powers could go far beyond the provisions of the joint declaration and could be capable of nullifying the firm and honourable commitments by the Chinese Government in the joint declaration. I hope that during the consultation and revision process the Chinese Government will examine this provision, which is arousing concern.

Article 18 deprives the Hong Kong special administrative region of jurisdiction in defence and foreign affairs cases and of what are described as

"executive acts of the Central People's Government."

A number of observers regard this as a vague provision which could count against the Chinese People's Government's commitments. I am sure that the Chinese Government will be considering this issue during the revision process.

Article 169 gives the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress power to make binding interpretations of the Basic Law in all its aspects, not merely in defence and foreign affairs. There are misgivings about this. It is felt that it could limit judicial independence within the Hong Kong special administrative region.

Article 172 allows the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to throw out any existing Hong Kong law that the Standing Committee declares to be in contravention of the Basic Law. That is a wide power and I trust that it will be re-examined during the consultative and revisionary process.

There is one omission from the Basic Law as it has initially been drafted from what is in the joint declaration, and that is the provision for the Executive in Hong Kong and China to be accountable to the legislature in Hong Kong and China. I am sure that that is omission by error and not by deliberation by the Chinese Government. I trust, too, that that issue will be re-examined when the People's Republic finally decides the text of the Basic Law.

The matters that I have raised in detail are not in any sense criticisms of the Chinese Government. I am entirely confident of their good faith. I am full of admiration for the unprecedented process of consultation that is taking place on the Basic Law. There are two opportunities for revision. There is the opportunity that can be taken following the present consultation process, which continues until the end of the year. There is then the opportunity that can be taken after the second consultation process has come to an end.

As I said to members of the Chinese Government and of the Chinese Congress Party when I was in Beijing last month, these are not merely matters of legislative drafting. The final question is the confidence of the people of Hong Kong that, with the limitations that have been accepted through the joint declaration, their way of life and their way of conducting their economy will be maintained for 50 years from 1997 after the Chinese Government resume sovereignty in Hong Kong. I am sure that confidence is the key to the future of Hong Kong and the relationship of Hong Kong with the parent Government in China.

During my visit to China I met a number of people from Hong Kong, including some while I was on a train journey from Shenzheng to Guangzhou. Again and again they said, "We are concerned not so much with the form of government but with our ability to conduct our lives freely and to conduct our work, business and commerce in the way that we always have." The Chinese Government already have a considerable and creditable record of offering that reassurance, and it is important that they continue to offer it and to enhance it.

The Foreign Secretary referred to emigration, and it was proper for him to put the problem in its context. I have said to representatives of the Chinese Government and senior representatives of the Chinese Communist party that, whatever the past emigration statistics, the statistics over the final years of British sovereignty will be part of the test whether the people of Hong Kong are confident that the joint declaration will be carried out in every particular. People will not have votes to cast in polling stations before 1991, but between now and 1997 they will be able to vote with their feet. I hope that there will be a vote of confidence in the future of Hong Kong.

I have great trust in the motives of the Chinese Government. They are not merely pursuing a policy of one country, two systems in Hong Kong. They are planning to pursue that policy in Macao. They are already pursuing it within their own mainland territory. During my recent visit—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will be able to confirm this, he having returned from his own visit only yesterday—I found that the pursuit of different economic paths is already taking place. Therefore, a different economic system in Hong Kong will fit into this multi-coloured mosaic of Chinese economic development.

I saw a very different form of agricultural development near Shanghai. I suppose that a number of hon. Members have visited the special economic zone at Shenzheng, where there is an extraordinary manifestation of joint partnerships between Communism and capitalism. There is an enormous, growing and vibrant city.

The most remarkable memory that I took away from China was not the splendour of the Great wall or the beauty of the Forbidden city but the enormous Pepsi Cola bottling plant in Shenzheng, which makes available 50,000 cans or bottles of Pepsi Cola every day to the thirsty throats of people throughout south-east Asia, including Hong Kong. The Chinese are already displaying their readiness for a variegated approach to economic and commercial development. They may not yet have pluralistic politics, but then Hong Kong does not have pluralistic politics, and this House, under Governments of both parties, does not have a signal record on the development of representative democracy in Hong Kong. But, although there are not yet pluralistic politics in China, there is a pluralistic economy. Hong Kong China will fit snugly into that.

The Government of the People's Republic knows well that what happens in Hong Kong after 1997 will be watched closely by Taiwan, whose relations with the mainland Government are being enhanced every day. What takes place in Hong Kong will influence Taiwan's decision about whether to return home and when to do so.

I am full of admiration for the generosity and vision of the Chinese Government in conducting this unprecedented experiment. They have the time and opportunity to convince the people of Hong Kong that their future—their present system of government and their present system of economic policy—will be safe when they become part of the People's Republic. I am sure that the People's Republic will take that opportunity. Meanwhile, for the next eight years, 11 months and 15 days the House will continue to exercise those proper responsibilities for Hong Kong.

10.32 am

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I join the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in apologising to the House for the fact that I shall not be able to be here this afternoon to hear the winding-up speeches because I have a constituency duty, but I expect to stay for much of the debate.

It is appropriate that, in the week in which the Legislative Council has been debating the draft Basic Law, we are taking the opportunity to debate Hong Kong. It is perhaps natural that fears have been expressed in Hong Kong, but I believe that the speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary this morning has gone a considerable way to alleviate those fears. Yet confidence is at a low ebb and people fear for the future.

There has been a significant amount of emigration and, according to a briefing that some of us have received from the Hong Kong Institute of Personnel Management, it has, unfortunately, been highest among the most highly skilled people. More than 23 per cent. of those who have emigrated have secondary educational qualifications and more than 35 per cent. are graduates. They are the very people to whom Hong Kong would expect to look for its leaders in the venture that the territory will undertake in a few years. People feel that they will no longer have control over their basic destiny in the future that the draft Basic Law has mapped out for them and that they will have little or no democratic voice in shaping the country's future. Some people fear that this country has been washing its hands of the territory and that it cannot wait until everything is wound down after 1997. I do not believe that those fears will prove to be true, and those are not the views of the British Government about 1997.

The speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will have done much to alleviate those sentiments. However, no one has a cast iron guarantee in political life. Even in this country, whose

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

political system has evolved over centuries into one that is at least no worse than any other in the world, we do not have cast iron guarantees. We must say honestly and openly to those young people who have expressed their anxiety that nothing is absolutely certain under any regime. Their political future and political evolution are not matters that can be guaranteed for ever, but we should, we can and we shall insist that the letter and spirit of the Sino-British declaration should be adhered to in the Basic Law. If they are not adhered to—and there is some evidence to suggest that—we must insist that the Basic Law is effectively amended to entrench civil liberties and to give a clear devolution of power to the Hong Kong special administrative region. Hong Kong was promised that in the declaration and is entitled to expect the Government's support. It is the duty of the House and the Government to support the people of Hong Kong while we have the power to do so.

Any debate about Hong Kong must, as it has today, take into account the problem of refugees. The burden on the territory has been increasing day by day, until there are almost 13,500 Vietnamese refugees. To 15 June the arrival rate was eight times greater than it was in the same period last year and 3,000 people have been there for more than five years.

When this country began to take its share of refugees, a camp was set up in an open prison just outside my constituency and I visited it. I was impressed by the alertness of the people and by their spirit and determination to succeed and I was appalled by the suffering that I learnt they had undergone. The vast majority of them were decent people and I believe that they have settled well—certainly I have heard no complaints, and there are several hundred refugees in my area. I have never visited the camps in the territory—nor the territory itself—but is must be impossible to contemplate the totality of suffering that the 13,500 human beings incarcerated in the camps represent, and in particular the suffering of those who have been there for more than five years.

Britain has, of course, played its part in taking its share of refugees, and I acknowledge that. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has pressed the Vietnamese Government to deal better with the problem and with the conditions in their country, so the number of refugees should decline. If the Vietnamese Government were prepared to change their economic system, they would become more acceptable to the international community and the West would look more favourably on them.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary recognised, there are different types of refugees. Many are not refugees in the strict sense. They were originally civil servants and professional people with a basic command of English, so they settled well. Now those who claim to be refugees, we are told, are farmers, peasants and fishermen and are looking purely for a better way of life. They are not refugees in the normal sense of the word—no one is persecuting them for the kind of people that they are—so from 15 June the Hong Kong Government are to repatriate them unless they can prove that they are genuine refugees. I support that, as does my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

The fact that a finite limit has been put on the number of refugeess gives us an opportunity to begin to clear the backlog, knowing that by taking in more we shall not simply be creating vacancies for more economic refugees to try their luck in another country. I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary that on a one-off basis we should consider taking more, and that we should argue the case for other humane Governments to do likewise. Clearing the backlog is perhaps an unfortunate expression. I do not wish people to think that we are just clearing the books for 1997. It is a moral question and an appalling human question, but I believe that this country can continue to play a leading and honourable part in its solution. I commend that course to my right hon. and learned Friend.

10.41 am

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a brief contribution to this extremely important debate. It is of fundamental importance to the 5½ million people of Hong Kong, but it is also of the greatest importance to the Governments and people of China and of Britain. We have a deep affection and long responsibility for Hong Kong and a loyalty not just to preseent-day Hong Kong but to its future, certainly for the 50 years following the transition. It is important, therefore, that the welcome unanimity of this debate should be acclaimed and proclaimed so that it will be heard not just in Beijing but in Hong Kong. There is understandable apprehension and concern among the people of Hong Kong as to whether this Parliament and country continue to have a commitment to their future. I hope that today's debate will be a major source of reassurance in that respect.

I believe that we do not understand sufficiently well the immense task facing all concerned in achieving the transition to ensure a stable future for Hong Kong and to create, in the words adopted by the Chinese Government, one country with two systems. It is a task of great magnitude, and success in that task will be an achievement of the greatest magnitude.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary pointed out the difficulties that have always existed in the construction of federal constitutions, bringing different territories under one banner of sovereignty. The problems involved in bringing together the states that now comprise the United States of America and the Federal Government of Australia are as nothing compared with the task facing everyone, especially those in Government, concerned with the future of Hong Kong. In those earlier examples there was a common framework of attitude, culture, social values, political structure and, above all, the same basic approach to legal systems. In this case, all those factors are fundamentally different. There are massive differences, which go much further back than the Communist Government in China. For example, there are huge historical differences in attitude to law. Anyone who has studied the matter, even briefly, will appreciate the massive problems involved.

The progress already made by the two Governments, with the co-operation of those responsible in Hong Kong and enshrined in the joint declaration, is therefore truly to be commended, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary just remarked. We should take comfort from what has been achieved, as speeches in the Legislative

Council this week have emphasised. I was especially struck by the contribution of the hon. Lydia Dunn, who clearly also recognised the historical background against which everyone concerned is working.

Having said that, we must recognise that we still have a long way to go up the hill, as shown by the undoubted apprehension and concern in Hong Kong and manifested in the emigration figures. My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the traditional pattern of emigration from Hong Kong, but there is no doubt at all that the current figures are high and give cause for concern. They may affect the very functioning of Hong Kong, and they must be taken as a thermometer of the problem. That special problem is made more difficult by the extraordinary success of Hong Kong.

I have referred to the different cultures involved. There is the ancient and distinctive Chinese culture and civilisation and the British tradition that has been grafted on to the colony. Another factor is the flowering of the unique experiment and experience that Hong Kong represents. We all know of that achievement, which has been created only through the people of Hong Kong and their talents. Hong Kong has no great natural advantage, except perhaps a helpful geographical position. It has been created by the vitality and enterprise of its people, aided by the now rather anachronistic political structure from which it has benefited, certainly since the second world war. That makes it even more difficult to achieve the fusion that we seek.

All those concerned, including the Chinese Government, the British Government, the Legislative Council of Hong Kong and the voluble people of Hong Kong—we all know the loquacity and power with which their representatives put their case—therefore have a responsibility to tread extremely carefully in the months and years ahead. We must all understand that we shall find no Utopian solution which will stand the scrutiny of every constitutional lawyer in the world, but I believe that progress can be made on points, such as articles 16 and 17 of the Basic Law, to which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred. I believe that progress can be made, but only on the basis of good will and imagination.

Two responsibilities lie on the Beijing Government and those in Hong Kong. The Beijing Government must understand that it is confidence that keeps Hong Kong going. It is easy for the rulers in Beijing to understand the figures, to study the trade statistics and to do their analyses and so on, but it is difficult for them to have a fundamental grasp of the sensitivity and chemistry which have contributed to this miracle that is Hong Kong. I hope that they will continue to seek that understanding—and I hope that that does not sound too patronising coming from a British parliamentarian. It is equally difficult for us to understand the world through Beijing eyes. Beijing's view towards Lhasa is difficult to understand. I hope that the greatest attention will be paid towards that factor, which is just as much in their economic, commercial and political interests as it is in ours.

I greatly welcome this consultative process, which is an extraordinary step forward by a Communist Government. Glasnost in Chinese is kaifang. I should be interested to know whether the Chinese are given as much credit for their version of glasnost as the Soviets have been for theirs. That degree of openness on the part of the Chinese Government is greatly welcome, and I hope that, as the Labour party executive is now doing, the Chinese Government will turn out to be a listening Government.

It is up to those who have expressed their concerns, many of which are extremely well founded, not only to criticise and to give voice to their apprehensions, but to make constructive suggestions. We have the huge task of bridging two civilisations, two legal systems and two approaches to constitutional rule. We know what we want to achieve. All the aims were spelt out in the joint declaration: a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong, personal liberty for its residents, and the commercial and economic freedoms which it has been promised. It will not be easy to achieve and it will require the greatest flexibility, sympathy and understanding. I am sure that our Government have an important role to continue to play in that process, and I am delighted that the unanimity that we have seen so far in this House will greatly strengthen them in playing that role.

I have an apology to make to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House. A constituency engagement obliges me not to stay for the whole debate.

10.53 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): This debate is the last occasion on which the House can exercise significant influence on the future of some 5·5 million people in Hong Kong, the majority of whom—father, mother, son and daughter—entrusted themselves to the protection and government of the United Kingdom.

Trust has been the focal word in this debate. Can the People's Republic be trusted to fulfil in spirit as well as in letter the remarkable derogation of power it conceded in return for sovereignty in the joint declaration? Can the United Kingdom be trusted to exercise to the full its still considerable good offices and influence to ensure that the compromise of 1984 is in every particular sustained? We are now beyond the stage of compromise and negotiation. That was before 1984 when the United Kingdom Government faced the fact that the Chinese Government were unwilling to accept continuing British administration in any form and bent their will to seeking a solution which would give the inhabitants of Hong Kong a secure future, which retained the freedoms, lifestyles and opportunities for choice which they already enjoyed. The joint declaration, which was widely welcomed both in Hong Kong and in this House, finally defined that future as "a high degree of autonomy."

That many people in Hong Kong are unconvinced that the draft Basic Law guarantees that promise is evinced by the emigration flow which is calculated to have run at about 100,000 since 1984. We may think that that figure is not so great compared with the whole population of 5·5 million, but it assumes much more worrying significance when it is compared with the approximate 500,000 of Hong Kong's middle class. It is that group which gives Hong Kong its drive, and entrepreneurial and intellectual vigour.

Before I turn to the specific causes for anxiety, I wish to stress that neither on my part nor on the part of those with whom I discussed these matters both here and in Hong Kong, who have submitted memoranda, many of which I am sure have been available to hon. Members on both sides of the House, is there any lack of appreciation or, indeed, admiration for what has already been achieved and for the flexibility shown by the Chinese, operating, as they

[Sir Russell Johnston]

are, against a profoundly different historical and political experience which also creates difficulties in the use and interpretation of language. But those anxieties are real and, in some cases, crucial to working out the concept of one country and two systems.

The Hong Kong Law Society, which I have met, asked Sir William Wade QC of Cambridge to give an opinion on the draft Basic Law. He encapsulates the problem most succinctly and states:

"it seems clear to me from the general tenor of the Declaration . . .that the intention must be that the Hong Kong SAR is to enjoy genuine legal autonomy, with effective judicial protection,. Admittedly Hong Kong will not be part of a federation, but the special arrangements set out in the Joint Declaration represent a unique constitutional amalgam of two wholly disparate legal systems. Autonomy of the political kind, depending merely on convention and international group faith, would be entirely insufficient in the circumstances of the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China. It can operate only where there is an established political and legal framework within which conventions can become established and operate reliably . . .These necessary circumstances are completely absent in the Hong Kong-China situation. Furthermore, the conception of the relationship between law and politics is entirely different in China, where legal remedies against the state are not available, the judiciary play little part in public law, and the rule of law as established in British countries is unknown."

The Minister will be aware that there is general agreement about the articles of the draft Basic Law that create alarm—and I use that word intentionally. Almost all of those articles have already been referred to—16, 17, 18, 38, 169 and 172. I shall deal with them briefly before returning to the political and democratic aspects to which article 171 and annex III are relevant.

Article 16 contains the phrase that the National People's Congress may revoke SAR law. That turns on interpretation, which refers back to what I quoted from Sir William Wade and forward to article 169, which the Chief Justice of Hong Kong, in an extremely interesting speech, described as——

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), but I wonder whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could help the House? You are probably aware that, at this moment, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is making a statement in Belfast to announce the Government's intentions regarding the Northern Ireland electricity industry, namely, that Kilroot phase 2 is to be dual oil-coal fired and that the next power station after that will be lignite fired. That is something that I welcome, because the Labour party and the trade unions of Northern Ireland have been urging it upon the Secretary of State for a long time.

I also understand that the Under-Secretary will make a statement about the Government's proposals to discover ways in which to privatise the Northern Ireland electricity supply and generation industry.

This is the second occasion on which a major statement concerning public investment in Northern Ireland has been made in Belfast without an opportunity for elected Members of this House and Members from Northern Ireland to examine the Minister and to discover the way in which the Government are setting about this problem. The Government have sought to avoid their responsibilities by means of a planted question in the name of the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran). I am sure that his new-found interest in the problems of Northern Ireland will be welcomed by the House.

The Government's action is a flagrant breach of the traditions of this House and shows a contempt for the Members representing Northern Ireland, who have not been given an opportunity to examine the Secretary of State on this matter in the House today. Have you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, received any request from the Northern Ireland Office that it be allowed to make a statement in the middle of this debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am afraid that I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. I know of no such request, and certainly no such request has been made to me. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks have been heard by those on the Treasury Bench.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, it is fortuitous that I am here today in another capacity for another subject, but I have a strong constituency interest in this matter because Kilroot phase 2 will use coal from Barony colliery in my constituency as well as from the opencast mine. I have been pursuing this matter for some months, and there are two matters that concern me. One——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot now pursue the points that he might have made had there been a statement before the House.

Mr. Foulkes: But these matters are of order. The Under-Secretary gave me a personal assurance that, before any statement was made, he would let me know the timing of that statement. I checked with my office half an hour ago and I have received no such information and no such warning from the Under-Secretary. I had an oral question down on 30 June and I have one down for 28 July, which would have allowed a statement to be made in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should raise those matters with the Minister and not with the Chair.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not cavil at the perfectly proper point of order that has been raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), but I think that it is a pity that we have broken the continuity of this debate. That the hon. Gentleman has been forced to raise such a point of order is not a good reflection upon the Government. It is, after all, bad enough to have this debate on a Friday, the inconvenience of which has already been commented upon and is reflected by the attendance in the Chamber.

Mr. Couchman: The hon. Gentleman might care to reflect that, a fortnight ago, I was asked to speak at 10.57 am, but at 11 o'clock there was a statement and that resulted in a 50-minute intervention in my speech. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman should consider himself extraordinarily lucky on this occasion, given that the points of order took up only about three minutes.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's sympathy.

I have already said that article 16 contains the proposition that the National People's Congress may revoke SAR law, which turns on interpretation. That

refers back to my quotation from Sir William Wade and forward to article 169, which the Chief Justice of Hong Kong described in a speech as

"the most crucial article in the whole of the Draft Basic Law. The operation of the Basic Law depends almost entirely on its interpretation."

Let us consider articles 16 and 169. Sir William Wade and Martin Lee suggest some kind of court of final appeal. Sir William believes that it should be chaired internationally, and Martin Lee and the Chief Justice believe that it should be chaired within Hong Kong. In his speech the Chief Justice said of his formulation:

"Regarding the provisions which are within the limits of the autonomy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress will grant full power to the courts of the Region to interpret them when adjudicating cases."

The Chief Justice suggests that that proposition should be embodied in the Basic Law. Those questions go to the root of the matter. The agreement is intended to last for half a century and to entrench for that time a different system in Hong Kong founded on the Basic Law. The united view of the legal profession is that it does not.

Article 17 contains the vague phrase about laws that give expression to national unity and territorial integrity. If that phrase is to be included, its meaning must be defined, otherwise it leaves the way open for the arbitrary imposition of law by the National People's Congress which, as the Chief Justice has said, would be wholly contrary to the spirit of the joint declaration.

Article 18 also causes concern because of a particular vague reference to "executive acts", which in turn curtails the powers of the courts. Perhaps the simplest way to highlight the problems that this would create would be to quote an example given by Martin Lee in his commentary on the Basic Law. The House should give credit to those in Hong Kong who have given time, energy and considerable thought to the consequences of the Basic Law. They have tried to brief and explain the problems to hon. Members. The members of the Legislative Council deserve credit, which includes Martin Lee, but credit is also due to the Bar Association, the Law Society, individual groups such as that of Gladys Li, Emily Lau and Winston Poon and others. They have all spent a great deal of time considering this matter and their efforts are of great value.

Article 18 concerns "executive acts" and Martin Lee has given an example that highlights the problem, namely:

"A law-abiding business man is suddenly arrested in the HKSAR on the ground that the CPG believes him to be a spy. He is being sent to Beijing. In the meantime, his wife goes to a lawyer who immediately applies to the High Court for a writ of Habeas Corpus. But the Court will have to decline jurisdiction if it is satisfied that the matter in question relates to defence affairs, or an executive act of the CPG, and under Article 169, it is up to the Standing Committee of the NPC to interpret this Article. This example shows that all the safeguards of human rights in Chapter 3 . . . could be rendered nugatory."

That is a simple, good example of what is possible.

On the face of it article 38 is admirable and the House will be aware that it deals with United Nations conventions. However, there seems to be a conflict between the joint declaration, which refers to the convenants on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the draft Basic Law's references to the same thing. The joint declaration says that those covenants "shall remain in force". The draft law says that "they shall be implemented". However, in practice, the protection of human rights is now less in Hong Kong than the provisions of the conventions. It seems to many that the proper course would be to incorporate by reference the provisions of the international covenant on civil and political rights into the Basic Law. That would not impinge on Chinese sovereignty in the context of the joint declaration. I cannot see who would be offended if there was that entrenchment of human rights in Hong Kong. It would add considerably to confidence in the colony.

Article 172 gives the National People's Congress rights of annulment, which are enormously sweeping. I cannot see that they can be justified in any way. What I have said already in regard to articles 16, 17 and 169 applies. That section was added late on. There is an argument for reconsideration and possibly deletion.

Finally, on the legal side, there is the issue of language, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney). Two languages are involved—English and Mandarin Chinese. I confess that it took me some time to comprehend that difficulty because on the face of it it seemed to me, as a reasonably informed person, impossible that anything in English could not be translated precisely into Chinese, and vice versa. Those are two great languages and I thought that there should be no problem, but, as the hon. Gentleman properly said, the difficulty stems from two entirely different traditions. Language reflects tradition and cultural mores in a way that we become so used to that we do not notice it. For example, the concept "burden of proof" has no direct translation into Chinese. For the Chinese, the adversarial concepts of the common law to which we are accustomed are alien.

The joint declaration gave English and Chinese equality. I believe that the Basic Law should do likewise and enable cases to be founded on either. I doubt whether the integrity of the common law system can be maintained without an authentic text in English.

Against the background of those core legal concerns, I should like to refer to the political system and democracy, to which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred. I accept what he said about the considerable movement in the Chinese attitude on democracy and acknowledge that. It is an earnest of their good intent and, as the right hon. Gentleman said, the 50 per cent. proposition that is contained in the alternatives contrasts markedly with the 18 per cent. in 1991 proposed by the Hong Kong Government, presumably at our behest, or at least with our advice or acquiescence.

It was a bad mistake not to introduce a directly elected element this year. I shall not rehearse the arguments, which we all know, about who thought what and which opinion poll was valid. If one is to do that, and it is agreed that one will do it, the more quickly it is done the better, because it means that there is a longer time to bed down and for the people of Hong Kong to become used to a system that they are not accustomed to, as has been rightly said. They have been used to freedom and to saying what they like, but they have not been used to electing members on their behalf. My view as a Liberal—[HON. MEMBERS: "A what?"]

Mr. Foulkes: A Democrat.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am a Liberal and shall remain a Liberal. The fact that I am in the Social and Liberal Democrats does not make me stop being a Liberal.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): There were not too many of those at Kensington.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think that we should get on to Kensington at this stage.

My view as a Liberal is that the whole of the Hong Kong legislature should be directly elected. I am not arguing for it to be done at once. If Hong Kong is to have a preserved separate system for half a century, that can be achieved only by a combination of legal protection and entrenchment and democracy. Those two things are the two sides of the coin. One can argue about phasing in and how quickly it is done, but I should be disappointed if the proportion of 50 per cent. was not achieved by 1997.

The grand electoral college has been mentioned. It seems to me to be basically an appointment system, and I suspect such systems wherever I see them. The through-train concept is much more to be preferred. With regard to the first SAR Government, it would be of value to the House if I read out the short comments by the Bar Association, because, again, it sums up the matter clearly and explains the concerns well. The association says:

"The Joint Declaration promises that the legislature of the Hong Kong SAR shall be composed of local inhabitants. 'The legislature of the Hong Kong SAR shall be constituted by elections.'"

That is a quotation from paragraph 1 of annex I to the joint declaration.

The association continues:

"Under the Draft Basic Law, the first SAR Government is not constituted by elections. The distinction between election and appointment is blurred and the meaning of election is distorted."

Part of the explanation for that is language, as the hon. Member for Wycombe said. The quotation continues:

"The word 'election' must be given its conventional meaning in accordance with international political practice, namely, direct election with universal suffrage.

On the formation of the First Government, Beijing appoints a Preparatory Committee, which in turn appoints an Election Committee. The First SAR Legislature is then 'elected' by the Election Committee. This is a . . . appointment exercise . . . and a clear departure from the Joint Declaration."

As the draft Basic Law will be in pretty firm shape by 1990, there is no reason why direct elections cannot be brought forward to 1990 or 1991 and the proportion increased. Despite what the Foreign Secretary said, there has been a tendency for the British to be afraid to ask for too much. I do not think that democracy is too much.

I have not referred to the Vietnamese refugees, not because I do not think that their situation is tragic and important, but because that is not the issue today. The debate today is about our responsibility to the people of Hong Kong and our recognition of their trust in us. It is a trust that I want history to say we fulfilled. We cannot yet be sure of that.

11.18 am

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): I, too, welcome the debate as an opportunity to express our continuing commitment to a stable future for Hong Kong and to trying to make a contribution towards that. I, too, apologise for the fact that I shall have to leave before the end of the debate to attend a constituency surgery in the north of England.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) referred briefly to the Vietnamese refugees. The Hong Kong Government had no alternative to the action that they took in introducing screening. The number of arrivals was rising fast and departures for permanent resettlement were falling. Most of those coming in were economic migrants. Those who qualify under the 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees will still receive asylum, but it is important that arrangements are made with the Vietnamese Government for those who are screened out of Hong Kong to be taken back under fully acceptable conditions that guarantee their right to return to their homes and resume work. I appreciate that that is easier said than done, and I know that our good wishes and encouragement go to those in the British and Hong Kong Governments who are seeking to achieve that.

In the meantime, the international community and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must find a way to solve the international problem of the 16,000 Vietnamese refugees awaiting resettlement in Hong Kong. It cannot be left to Hong Kong. Now that measures have been taken to stem the flow of economic migrants, I appeal again to the Government to redouble their efforts to secure the permanent resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong and, if necessary, adding to our quota in Britain as a catalyst in that process.

Hong Kong is very important to China in two ways: first, as a symbol of national unity; and, secondly, because of its people, their skills and the unique climate of enterprise that they have built. There are other ports on the China coast, but there is not, and never can be, one like Hong Kong. If that climate evaporates, although China will have achieved a measure of national reunification, it will have been at a very high cost. The current brain drain of people who are worried about Hong Kong's future and their children's propects is understandable, but it would be a tragedy if it were eventually to debilitate the genius of Hong Kong. As my right hon. and learned Friend emphasised, the perception of the people of Hong Kong of the Basic Law is crucial to confidence in Hong Kong and, therefore, to Hong Kong's future.

The joint declaration and the maintenance of confidence in the Hong Kong economy represent a massive achievement that few would have dared to predict. The promulgation of the draft Basic Law has been another important step, I join in the tributes that have been paid by both Front-Bench spokesmen to the openness of the consultation procedure, as arranged by the People's Republic of China. I believe that in order to achieve the conditions and confidence necessary for the future stability and prosperity of Hong Kong substantial changes will prove to be necessary in the Basic Law. That is a matter for the People's Republic of China in consultation with the people of Hong Kong. This debate represents an opportunity for those of us who regard ourselves as friends of China and Hong Kong to offer suggestions, in the hope that they may be helpful.

It is tempting to say that to quibble with the fine print of the draft Basic Law is mere legal pettifogging. On the one hand, no country in the world is constrained by its constitution if powerful forces will otherwise. On the other, some countries live happily enough without any formal constitution. We must put our faith for the future in the pragmatism of the parties.

I fear that such an attitude does not quite meet the case in Hong Kong. The future of Hong Kong will depend on the will of the People's Republic of China and the people of Hong Kong to make the experiment of one country and

two systems work. That may from time to time involve sacrificing cherished beliefs and turning a blind eye to unpalatable factors. Such is the nature of a variation in sovereignty. I do not think that the necessary climate of competence to enable Hong Kong to flourish will continue to be a reality unless a number of changes are made to the draft Basic Law. Such change is implicit in the expression "draft" in the title and inherent in the consultation process.

Convention and good faith, international and internal, are obviously essential at every stage of such a unique constitutional amalgam of two wholly disparate legal systems. It must be said that good faith and good will have been present in abundance hitherto, and I have no doubt that they will be in the future. The task of future generations in the special autonomous region will be greatly eased by facing and ironing out as many potential difficulties as possible now and prescribing mechanisms for their resolution in the future.

What can be done to meet the concerns of the people of Hong Kong, which have already been referred to in the debate? Many people in Hong Kong have said that the draft Basic Law is in some ways incompatible with the joint declaration—the first Government of the special autonomous region, the interpretation of the Basic Law, the jurisdiction of the Hong Kong courts, the application of laws made by the Beijing authorities to the SAR, the review of the validity of SAR law and the protection of civil liberties. That the joint declaration may in some respects be incompatible with the constitution of the People's Republic of China is not surprising. After all, article 5 of the Chinese constitution provides expressly that no laws or administrative or local rules may contravene the constitution, which in articles 1 and 6 to 10 enshrine the Socialist nature of the Chinese state.

Article 31 of the constitution authorises the establishment of special administrative regions and the making of laws for them, but is silent on whether such laws or administrative or local rules may contravene the constitution. However, the provision in article 17 of the draft Basic Law—that laws enacted by the National People's Congress or its Standing Committee will not be applied in the Hong Kong special administrative region except in the stipulated cases—fetters the sovereign legislative power of the NPC in a way that may stand the test of time better if an arbitral body is agreed for the resolution of constitutional disputes. It could be, although not necessarily, along the lines suggested by Professor Wade in the paper mentioned by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber.

Questions over which such a body might have jurisdiction could include whether a law passed by the Hong Kong legislature was in conflict with the Basic Law; whether a law passed by the NPC or its Standing Committee was genuinely restricted to matters of defence, sovereign affairs, national unity and territorial integrity; what is the correct interpretation of the disputed provision of the basic law; and whether an amendment of the Basic Law made by the NPC was contrary to the established basic policies as set out in the joint declaration. Those are important questions connected with sovereignty.

Models for such a court or arbitral tribunal are found elsewhere in the world. They point to such a tribunal being composed of three Chinese judges, three Hong Kong judges—not, three British judges, as suggested by Professor Wade—and a president from a third country appointed by agreement from both sides. Such an arrangement might be viewed as a derogation from the powers envisaged by the PRC and the SAR, but might prove a helpful mechanism, certainly in the early period of operating the two systems together.

The joint declaration says much about the division of responsibilities after 1997, but nothing about who will have the last word when the inevitable demarcation disputes arise. It would be helpful, although I concede very difficult, if the Basic Law drafting committee could remedy that defect.

We cannot bind our successors. We would not like it if our predecessors had tried to bind us. The same is true in Hong Kong, but there is a great need to build the foundations as securely as possible.

Our impoverished convention in British politics, when it does not suit us to be wholly explicit, is to make coded references, usually to Disraeli. China has a much richer tradition of short poems. I shall leave the House with a few lines by Wu Ti, the emperor of the Liang dynasty from 464 AD to 549 AD, translated in 1918 by Arthur Waley as "The Liberator—A Political Allegory". It reads:

"In the high trees—many doleful winds:
The ocean waters—lashed into waves.
If the sharp sword be not in your hand,
How can you hope your friends will remain many?
Do you not see that sparrow on the fence?
Seeing the hawk it casts itself into the snare.
The fowler to catch the sparrow is delighted;
The young man to see the sparrow is grieved.
He takes his sword and cuts through the netting:
The yellow sparrow flies away, away.
Away, away, up to the blue sky
And down again to thank the young man."

The sparrow is Hong Kong. The hawk is political failure. The fowler is "I told you so." The snare is resignation. The blue sky is stability and prosperity. The young man is the Basic Law drafting committee.

11.30 am

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I have no special knowledge of Hong Kong. I have never been there. I am not a business person, and I have no shares, so I am not interested in the Hang Seng index. However, I have a sort of gut reaction to what has been going on over Hong Kong. I am certainly opposed to colonies, but I understand that nowadays the term used is dependent territories. That does not seem to be right, because British business people depend more on Hong Kong than Hong Kong depends on Britain. There is something amiss here.

One of my reasons for taking part in the debate is that there is a substantial population of Chinese people from Hong Kong in my constituency and in Haringey in general. There are so many that the local council provided a Chinese community centre and workers to help to ensure that the Chinese community maintains its traditions in Haringey. Earlier in the year I was pleased to join my constituents in the revelry at the time of the Chinese new year.

It is important for me to make a contribution to the debate, not least because my constituents have asked me to make clear some of their concerns about the Basic Law. The Foreign Secretary's contribution seemed a tiny bit complacent. He is trying to make out that all is well and that everything is under control, but my information is that people are very worried. They feel that there is a crisis of confidence in Hong Kong. There is a general feeling that the Government, having signed the joint declaration in

[Mr. Bernie Grant]

1984, are now about to wash their hands of Hong Kong. When the Minister of State winds up the debte, I hope that he will make a strong statement about the United Kingdom's continuing commitment to Hong Kong. The Government must see to it that their promises become a part of the Basic Law.

I should like to make a general point about the draft Basic Law. One difficulty that my constituents have about this document is that it seems to concentrate too much authority in the hands of Beijing and not enough autonomy in Hong Kong. Given that China will appoint the Chief Executive and the officials, there is a possibility that too much control will be exercised by China and that local Hong Kong people will not be as autonomous as they need to be. It is important that the people of Hong Kong play as large a part as possible in all the legislation and in the Government after 1997.

I should like to deal with one or two specific matters, the first of which is legal issues. According to the draft Basic Law, the right of interpretation of the Basic Law will be a matter for the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Its interpretation will bind the courts of Hong Kong, and that presents a difficulty to my constituents. They feel that that will dilute the basic rights of the courts and may take away the independence of the Hong Kong judiciary.

The Government promised that they would allow direct elections for a certain number of representatives in 1988, but they have not done so. They now say that in 1991, 10 people will be directly elected to an assembly of 56. There will also be elections in 1994 and 1995. My constituents feel that at least 25 per cent. of the assembly should have been elected in 1988, with up to 50 per cent. being elected by 1991, and the other half by 1997. They feel that there is a need for that sort of programme to ensure that when Hong Kong is returned to China in 1997 its people have that sort of representative Government up to that date.

The joint declaration said that human rights would be enforceable by law. That does not appear in the draft Basic Law. International human rights covenants should be incorporated in the Basic Law, and rights and freedoms should be enforceable in the Hong Kong courts. Unless that happens there is a danger that basic human rights will be abused after 1997.

I asked the Foreign Secretary about the crisis in emigration, and he said that there was not a crisis. However, I think he will admit that the emigration figures are high. It is important for the Minister, when winding up the debate, to give us more of an explanation about the reason for this emigration. I should like him to comment on the emigration to Britain of Hong Kong residents. My constituents tell me that people are regularly turned back at United Kingdom ports and airports, even when they have return air tickets, and so on. I should like the Minister to explain to the House what is happening, not only about emigration from Hong Kong, but about emigration to Britain generally.

I am worried also about the autonomy of Hong Kong. I was interested when the Foreign Secretary said that the Basic Law accurately reflects the joint declaration in this respect. I do not agree with him. Clause 3 of the joint declaration says:

> "The HKSAR will enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs which are the responsibilities of the Central People's Government."

Article 17, refers among others things, to

> "Laws enacted by the National People's Congress or its Standing Committee, which relate to defence and foreign affairs as well as other laws which give expression to national unity and territorial integrity and which, in accordance with the provisions of this Law, are outside the minutes of the high degree of autonomy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region".

It is clear that the draft Basic Law does not reflect accurately the terms of the joint declaration. There have been additions, and I should like the Minister's explanation of why there is this difference and what he intends to do about it.

My constituents are tremendously worried about the situation, and they have asked for the Minister to consider a referendum on the draft Basic Law in Hong Kong before 1997. I support such a proposal because it is important, if everything is to work well—we are all keen to ensure that—that we get as much a reflection of the feelings and thinking of the ordinary people of Hong Kong as of the officials and others. It is important that United Kingdom parliamentarians go to Hong Kong. Perhaps the Government could organise a visit there for a commission of parliamentarians.

Sir Russell Johnston: If decisions are made on the basis of opinion polls, would it not be better to make them on the basis of an outright vote; for example, the referendum that he suggests?

Mr. Grant: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that point.

The attendance today and the fact that this important debate is being held on a Friday morning speak for themselves. The attendance shows the lack of commitment to, or the lack of interest in, this subject by British parliamentarians. Their interest would be enhanced by a commission to Hong Kong so that British parliamentarians, apart from the Foreign Secretary and his Ministers, would be able to speak direct to the ordinary people and to understand and take on board their feelings that would make us better informed when next we discuss this subject.

11.42 am

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) expressed the concerns of some of his constituents about various aspects of the draft Basic Law. In some respects, my remarks will be very similar to his. However, he made a couple of points with which I disagree. There is a lot of interest in Hong Kong in the House. The attendance today is not what it would have been had we had this debate on another day of the week. However, we have an advantage today in that we have a five-hour debate instead of a three-hour debate, which is what we would have had if we had debated the matter on another day. Therefore, it is my hope that, contrary to what usually happens, everybody who wants to can give his opinion and have the opportunity to take part in the debate.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I can give an example of that interest. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, made it clear to me last

night that had he not been irrevocably committed to a long-standing engagement in his constituency, he would unquestionably have been here wanting to contribute.

Sir Peter Blaker: I am grateful for that example. I know that many of my Conservative colleagues would have been here had they not had long-standing commitments.

Mr. Foulkes: I agree that it is unfortunate that the debate is on a Friday. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned that one of the consequent advantages is that we have five hours for the debate. Is not another consequent advantage that those listening to the debate in Hong Kong are listening to it at a sensible hour instead of in the middle of the night?

Sir Peter Blaker: That is a valid point and must be an advantage. One admires the determination of the people in Hong Kong to listen to our debates about Hong Kong at whatever the hour that they have to. They have shown that they are determined to do so even if they have to listen at 2 o'clock in the morning. That is admirable.

The hon. Member for Tottenham said that the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was complacent. I disagree with him. Perhaps he was listening to a different speech from the one that I heard, but it did not seem to me that my right hon. and learned Friend was complacent. He made it clear that genuine anxieties are felt in the House and in Hong Kong. I have no doubt that he will ensure that the views expressed in today's debate are transmitted to the authorities in China.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that the drafting of the Basic Law is a matter for China, and we would be well advised to bear that point in mind. He paid tribute to the motives of the Chinese authorities in this operation of the preparation of the draft Basic Law, and I echo that. I wish also to support what my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said about the remarkable development, on the part of the authorities in China, of their understanding of a free enterprise system.

I was involved from 1979 to 1981 in the beginning of the negotiations that led ultimately to the joint declaration. That was not true of the then Government of China, who showed little comprehension of the free enterprise system. I do not say that in criticism. It was hardly surprising, for they had only recently emerged from the travails of the cultural revolution. They had not been concentrating on how the system in Hong Kong works. It is amazing how rapidly the Chinese Government have acquired an understanding of the system in Hong Kong. It is a matter of much closer interest to them now than it was 10 years ago, because China has big investments in Hong Kong —we should be pleased about that—and those investments are increasing every day.

I support those who have congratulated the Chinese authorities on the way in which the drafting of the Basic Law has been conducted. Of the 59 members of the drafting committee, 23 are Hong Kong people. All the 180 members of the Basic Law consultative committee are Hong Kong people. We have several phases of consultation to come—this has been the first phase—in what will be a thorough operation. We shall see a second draft next year, and only in 1990 will the final version be presented to the National People's Congress. Mr. Ji Peng Fei, Mr. Lu Ping and Mr. Li Hou, the director and his deputies of the Hong Kong and Macao affairs office in Beijing, have been in Hong Kong for an extended period, consulting with more than 100 organisations in recent weeks.

I hope that there will be an authentic English language version of the Basic Law. My Chinese friends from Hong Kong have pointed out to me one or two errors, as they see them, in translation that affect the articles about which we are most concerned. I am told that article 16 contains a translation error that could be significant. This is an important matter.

In drafting and operating a constitution, what really matters is motivation. The world is littered with examples of "perfect" constitutions. An earlier constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is full of promises on human rights and perfect freedom and on the right of any republic to secede, although I am not sure whether the present constitution contains such references. What counts is not simply what is in the text but the way in which it operates.

China's conduct in the drafting of the Basic Law confirms its sincerity about producing a document that reflects the joint declaration, which promises the Hong Kong people that the way of life which they have enjoyed, and all the freedoms connected with it, will continue.

In saying that motivation matters, I do not intend to imply that it does not matter whether the constitution is as good as possible. Of course that matters. Every effort should be made to iron out problems, resolve anxieties and make the constitution as good as possible. I have no doubt that that will be the intention of the Chinese authorities over the next couple of years.

Some of the problems to which hon. Members have referred are the result of deep conceptual differences between the English and the Chinese approaches to the interpretation of law. The approach in China law is shared by other countries, including France. Other problems arise from understandable attempts to fill in parts where the joint declaration is silent, and his may help to explain the problems associated with articles 16, 17 and 18.

Other concerns relate to articles which have been by members of the drafting committee from Hong Kong. I think that I can safely say that the article calling for a balanced budget resulted from a proposal by a Hong Kong member of the drafting committee rather than one from the Chinese side. I do not believe that it is right to retain that sort of policy statement in a constitution. This matter is bound to receive attention in the coming consultation process. I think that other articles arose from the same source.

Sir Hal Miller: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those economic references were designed to buttress confidence in the idea that the future Administration would promote not only the stability but the prosperity of Hong Kong? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that was the central concern leading to the inclusion of such wording? We would find such wording odd in a constitution, but it was designed to meet a specific requirement as seen by the Hong Kong people.

Sir Peter Blaker: I agree entirely. Moreover, the inclusion of such a point shows the desire of the Chinese side of the drafting committee to do what it can to satisfy the views of the Hong Kong members.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the idea that this reference has

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

probably come about because of the experience in the United States, where states are required to balance their budgets in accordance with law? This is to be reflected in an autonomous state of the Chinese Republic.

Sir Peter Blaker: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, although I am not sure whether one can translate something from the constitution of a state in the United States to the Hong Kong constitution. However, I do not doubt that my hon. Friend's comment is accurate.

What are the matters of concern? There are, first relations between the Central People's Government and the SAR Government, with which chapter two deals. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to article 16, which gives the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress the power to declare invalid any law of Hong Kong which is not in conformity with the Basic Law or with legal proceedings. I hope that this matter will be carefully considered. I bracket article 16 with article 169, which is the most important of all the articles mentioned in the debate. It gives the power of interpretation of the Basic Law to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. However, the third paragraph of article 169 states:

"The courts of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region may interpret the provisions of this Law in adjudicating cases before them."

I have some difficulty in reconciling the two statements —the first, which gives the power of interpretation to the National People's Congress, and the second, which I have quoted. The apparent contradiction must be cleared up.

A more fundamental question is: with what body is the basic power of interpretation to rest? I wonder whether the drafters' intention was that courts in Hong Kong should have the power of interpretation of the Basic Law in adjudicating cases within Hong Kong's autonomy—cases that do not concern defence and foreign affairs. If so, that is not entirely clear from the article. The matter must be clarified.

We must understand that the constitution of China as a whole—not simply Hong Kong—gives the power of interpretation to the National People's Congress. I suspect that people in China would be amazed if they found that the power of interpretation was given to the courts. The people of Hong Kong and Britain have a deep-seated belief that the courts are the right organisations to have the power to interpret the constitution. There is, therefore, a contradiction between two valid principles which have a long history in the two countries mainly involved in this issue.

Suggestions have been made by various people, including Professor Wade. I have another suggestion, which I do not believe has been mentioned. Is it possible for the National People's Congress, as an exercise of its sovereignty—we must recognise that China's sovereignty is an important factor in the minds of its authorities—to delegate to the courts in Hong Kong the power to interpret the Basic Law, either as a whole, which I would prefer, or with some limitations, for example, the power to interpret the Basic Law in so far as it concerns matters other than defence and foreign affairs. I hope that my hon. Friend who is to reply to the debate will pass that point on to my right hon. and learned Friend and that the Government will reflect on it.

Another article causing concern is article 17 which states that the National People's Congress may pass laws giving effect to

"national unity and territorial integrity."

Observers of the earlier stages of the negotiations and those who have read the joint declaration had expected that to be limited to defence and foreign affairs. They have been concerned by the addition of the words that I have just quoted. The question is, what sort of laws do the Chinese authorities have in mind as falling in the category of laws relevant to

"national unity and territorial integrity."

The generality of that expression has caused alarm because people have imagined that it could be used by ill-intentioned people to stretch the jurisdiction of the National People's Congress. Would it not be helpful to consider the possibility of spelling out the sort of laws involved or to have a list of them? It must be possible for constitutional experts in Peking to define them. As I understand it, those laws include, for example, the system for election to the National People's Congress. That is a national matter, not a Hong Kong matter. They also involve questions of territorial waters, air space and the national flag. Could there not be a list of the laws in that category, perhaps in an annex, which could, if necessary, be more easily amended than the provisions of the Basic Law itself?

Article 18 states that the court of Hong Kong will have no jurisdiction over cases involving executive acts of the Chinese People's Government. An example might be the mechanics of running elections for the National People's Congress. I am not sure how much jurisdiction the Hong Kong courts have at the moment over executive acts of the British Government, but perhaps I should not go into that too deeply at present. However, the problem needs careful thought. I do not believe that those words have been included from any sinister motive. I believe that the drafters included them with good intentions. One relevant point when ascertaining the motivation behind the inclusion of those words is that article 13 gives jurisdiction to the courts of Hong Kong over members of the People's Liberation Army serving in Hong Kong. That was not called for by the joint declaration, which is silent on that point. The drafters have gone further than they needed in giving the courts of Hong Kong that jurisdiction. That is another encouraging point.

The other main area of concern is the political machinery—the choice of the Chief Executive and legislature and how that choice is made. Several options are set out. Most involve a substantial degree of indirect election. I believe that that is right because I favour a mixture of direct and indirect elections to the legislature. The reason why some of us have reservations about a 100 per cent. directly elected, one person, one vote system along the lines of Westminster is not sufficiently understood. The reason why I have reservations has nothing to do with the abilities of the people of Hong Kong to run their own system. They are some of the most intelligent, well-educated, energetic and sensible people in the world and are much more able to run a legislature than the people of many independent countries. My anxiety is that if one has a Westminster system, one may have created something in which there is an inevitable tendency towards the creation of parties, and those parties could become the Communist party and the Kuomintang.

Everybody who knows Hong Kong knows that that would not be satisfactory. One should therefore approach that issue with caution.

When we are discussing the grand electoral college and the system of selecting the legislature and the Chief Executive, the problem is that the grand electoral college can be seen as something that could be used as a means of China putting its own placemen into position. I do not think that that is the intention, but it is the anxiety. Therefore, if there is to be a final proposal for a grand electoral college, it is necessary to consider the way in which its own members will be chosen because that seems the key to the problem.

A related area is that of the transitional arrangements. Again, there is a conflict between two valid principles, between China's desire to demonstrate that it is sovereign from 1 July 1997 and the desire of those who are interested in preserving prosperity and stability in Hong Kong for obvious continuity. China wants change because China will be sovereign from that date onwards. Proof of change can be shown by ceremonial, by all sorts of parades, demonstrations, fireworks and goodness knows what else. The holding of an Expo in 1997 in Hong Kong is a good idea. I hope that it can be pursued because it would mark the transition and draw the attention of the world to what will be happening in Hong Kong at that time.

The Chinese authorities seem to want a Chief Executive and legislature which will start afresh from 1 July 1997. I am not entirely clear why that should be so. I would prefer the Chief Executive and legislature to be in position before 1 July 1997 and to continue through that date so that the confidence of the world—because it is not just Hong Kong and this House which will be watching—will be greatly reinforced. Therefore, I hope that the question of how that continuity can be demonstrated publicly will receive further attention.

Several of my hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall not prolong my remarks, although I do have a little more to say. The brain drain is a cause of anxiety, and I share that anxiety. However, we must face the fact that it will be difficult to control. I have been watching the phenomenon for many years. Educated, intelligent managerial and professional people have been leaving Hong Kong in substantial numbers ever since I can remember and those numbers have been dictated not by those wanting to leave but by the willingness of the receiving countries to accept them. The reason why more people have been leaving Hong Kong in the past eight months is that Canada has doubled is quota of arrivals from Hong Kong and the Australians are advertising in the Hong Kong papers for people to go to their country. It is the drag from those countries and the United States that has helped to swell the numbers. However excellent the Basic Law is, we shall not resolve this problem by its perfection——

Mr. Couchman: Is not the worrying thing about the brain drain the fact that it is the managerial class of professional people with transferable skills who are going to Australia and Canada? It is not across-the-board emigration.

Sir Peter Blaker: My hon. Friend is right. I share the anxiety about what is happening but if the brain drain continues at a significant rate, which I fear it will, we should not be too depressed and imagine that it is a consequence of the failure of the draft Basic Law, or of the Governments of the United Kingdom, China or Hong Kong. This problem has been going on ever since I can remember. It has accelerated in recent years because of the willingness of receiving countries to take more people.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of Vietnamese boat people arriving in the past few months. Since I was in Hong Kong in February, their numbers have doubled. Hong Kong has been carrying a heavy burden. The Government of Hong Kong have done a wonderful job providing for these people. The conditions are not ideal because many of them are in closed camps. We cannot be happy about that, but it has been the only sensible policy, bearing in mind that word gets back to Vietnam. If the people in the closed camps were released into ordinary life in Hong Kong, the news would reach Vietnam and, instead of 1,000 people a month arriving from there, the number would multiply by many times. Sad though it is, the policies have been right. That is also true of the new policies of discrimination between economic migrants and people who can properly be classed as refugees. There is clear evidence that in recent months economic migrants have been arriving in substantial numbers.

There are problems with people who are classed as economic migrants. There is the important question whether Vietnam will be prepared to take them back. I am encouraged by what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the talks that we are to have with the Government of Vietnam. If the Vietnamese intend to withdraw their forces from Cambodia—there are signs that that may genuinely be their plan—that will open up possibilities of better relations between western countries, including the United Kingdom, and Vietnam. I hope that that will help us to repatriate economic migrants to Vietnam without fear that they will suffer the consequences.

As for proper refugees, more efforts must be made to encourage the countries of the free world to take numbers of them. That will be easier when the flow of boat people has been stemmed. While the flow continues at the present rate countries will not be keen to take more refugees, but I believe this country could take more once it has been stemmed. It is not well understood that the 468 that we have undertaken to accept in the current two-year period will not result in 468 people arriving. They exist only on a nominal list. If people on the list are taken by another country, or die, their places will not be filled by others. The number that we take will drop. At the very least the Government should consider ensuring that the 468 figure does not drop.

Hong Kong, I believe, has a great and prosperous future. It will retain its free way of life. I believe that China means what it says in the joint declaration and is doing its utmost in the joint liaison group and in the drafting of the Basic Law to observe its undertakings. China has an enormous self-interest in the success of Hong Kong. Forty per cent. of China's imports and exports pass through Hong Kong—a big increase compared with a little while ago. Between 1 million and 2 million jobs in south China depend directly on subcontracting from Hong Kong. China also has a powerful self-interest in Hong Kong setting an example to Taiwan that Taiwan might be happy to follow one day.

I am an optimist about Hong Kong's future. We should ask ourselves not only what China will do for Hong Kong —its intentions are excellent and the answer to that question is favourable—but what Hong Kong will do for

[Sir Peter Blaker]

China. The proliferation of economic zones up and down the coast of China are a good example of China's observing the success of Hong Kong and wanting to take advantage of its example.

China is taking the drafting of the Basic Law seriously. I believe that it genuinely wants comments from Hong Kong's people and others. I hope that the people of Hong Kong will respond; they are not responding adequately now, and I hope that they will be more forthcoming. In any case, China will carefully consider the views that are expressed, and I believe that there will be substantial progress on the points of concern by the time of the second draft.

12.18 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I agreed completely with parts of what the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) said and disagreed with others.

First, I agree that the People's Republic of China is taking the drafting of the Basic Law seriously and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, there has been an unprecedented exercise in openness in the drafting of legislation and of a constitution that will serve Hong Kong for the next 50 years.

The right hon. Member for Blackpool, South was somewhat complacent about the brain drain. I have my worries as we approach 1997 that it may become critical —or even a crisis—and will cause serious concern in Hong Kong, this country and China. The right hon. Gentleman was not correct to say that there was no complacency on the part of the Government in attending to Hong Kong's problems. If he reads the Foreign Secretary's speech, he will find little in it. The Foreign Secretary assured us that there will not be a cosy relationship between the British Government and that of the People's Republic, but that assurance needs demonstration. There are ways of demonstrating it, but the Foreign Secretary was completely silent on them.

Secondly, there is more than one party to the future of Hong Kong. One is the People's Republic of China, which will assume sovereignty over the colony. The United Kingdom Government administer the colony now and will do so until 1997.

Thirdly, we have the Hong Kong Government and the Hong Kong legislature, the members of which are nominated, not elected. They have their own particular and peculiar interests in what happens to Hong Kong after 1997.

Fourthly, we have the people of Hong Kong. They have not been especially voluble in claiming that this, that or the other should be included in their future after 1997. On the other hand, it can be said that, in responding to the various signature campaigns that have taken place recently in Hong Kong, a good deal of interest has been shown. It is not sufficient to base the Basic Law, or opinions on the Basic Law, on what the people of Hong Kong think now.

The People's Republic of China is formulating the Basic Law, and I accept that that is its sole prerogative. The Basic Law will apply for 50 years hence, and it may develop after that. It is important to try to anticipate decisions and situations that could occur and may face the Hong Kong legislature in 20, 30 or 40 years' time, not only in the next five or 10 years. If there are crises, the Basic Law must be able to manage them, as it were, without making them worse. That is one of the problems. There is the general thought that the Basic Law will not be able to ensure that that is achieved.

If there is a crisis facing the legislature, the only solution will be for the Chief Executive to dissolve the legislature. If the new legislature that is then elected still insists on a certain course of action, that will lead to the resignation of the Chief Executive. That is not good. Crises should be resolved at a lower level and headed off. There should be ways of achieving a compromise. There should be channels of agreement that can be used before a crisis is reached.

China has the responsibility of taking over the sovereignty of Hong Kong after 1997. It has an interest in stability for the colony, or that part of China as it will be then. China wishes to take advantage of the trade, economy and prospects for development that have been established in Hong Kong. China does not necessarily wish for democracy to be present in Hong Kong after 1997. That is not necessarily one of its main concerns.

I am not privy to what goes on in the inner councils of the People's Republic of China any more than I am privy to what goes on in the inner councils of the British Government. As has already been said, in some ways the British Government's approach to legislation is more secretive than China's approach to the Basic Law. It could be said that the democratic rights of the people of Hong Kong will take second or third place to the main desires and political aims of the People's Republic of China. I am not trying to denigrate the People's Republic. I am not accusing it of duplicity or hypocrisy.

I understand that the People's Republic has many competing claims. I wish merely to observe that the democratic rights and political freedoms of the people of Hong Kong could be at a lower level than the other desirable aims of the People's Republic.

The Foreign Secretary has assured us that there will be no cosy relationship between China and the United Kingdom. It could be, however, that the United Kingdom Government see the possibility of trade with China as being much more important than the political or human rights of the people of Hong Kong. To say that is not to say anything disgraceful; nor is it to accuse the British Government of hypocrisy.

If the Foreign Secretary wishes to assure us that there will not be a cosy relationship between the two Governments, he must demonstrate why that is so. This is difficult with the Administration that has been formed by the Prime Minister. Recently, three IRA terrorists were shot in Gibraltar. That was followed by a well-managed news broadcast of the bomb being found. The Foreign Secretary said from the Dispatch Box that there were threatening movements of the terrorists' hands, which meant that justice had to be dispensed with and the terrorists were shot on sight. Witnesses said later that that was not true. The inquest has been delayed. Given that experience—there have been others that I could go into, but I shall not do so because I know that other hon. Members are waiting to speak—can we necessarily believe what the Foreign Secretary says, that there will not be a cosy relationship between Britain and China that will lead to Hong Kong being passed over with as little difficulty as possible?

I note that the Under-Secretary of State is furrowing his brow. He can prove that my assertion is wrong by

demonstrating that there will not be a cosy relationship. That could have been demonstrated by bringing forward direct elections to Hong Kong for 1988. The Foreign Secretary's justification for not doing so was to say that only seven of the 57 members of the Hong Kong legislature, who are not elected, voted for direct elections, or in a particular way, after the White Paper was published and debated in Hong Kong. That is no justification for failing to bring forward direct elections.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is a fair amount of good evidence that quite a bit of pressure was brought to bear on some members of the legislature to vote "appropriately"?

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman is right.

The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) spoke of a consensus that crossed the House. There might be consensus on some issues, but there is no consensus on other important issues that have been pushed into the background. The Government have used their usual disinformation propaganda campaign to try to dismiss these matters from people's minds.

I accept that the Basic Law is a matter for China. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), I am not amazed, but I regard it as an act of statesmanship, an act that other countries would do well to follow, that the Basic Law is being drafted in as open a manner as possible. I do not believe that that would have been done in this country or in Hong Kong because the present Government would have made sure of that.

The question arises whether the present draft Basic Law is in conformity with the joint declaration. That is our sole locus standi for discussing the Basic Law in the Chamber. I hope that what we say will be read by the authorities in the People's Republic of China. It is meant to be helpful and not in any way to ursurp the sole right of the People's Republic eventually to define the Basic Law.

Hon. Members have mentioned articles 16, 17, 18, 169 and 172. I agree in large measure with what has been said, especially by the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South in that regard. There are problems about article 16 for example. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress can revoke or return any law to the Hong Kong special administrative region. Suppose that a law was passed that was hotly debated in Hong Kong and mattered to many of the people there. Quite arbitrarily —for a reason that was not necessarily definable or explicable—the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress could decide to revoke or return that law. That could give rise to an unnecessary crisis. I hope that the Basic Law drafting committee will reconsider and will try to define the circumstances under which any such law can be returned and revoked, as well as the procedure that the National People's Congress would use in deciding whether to take such action.

It is important to try to define as closely as possible the laws that fall within the ambit of the Hong Kong special administrative region, in accord with the high degree of autonomy that it will have, and those laws which fall within the ambit of the People's Republic of China. Hon. Members have mentioned laws governing national unity and territorial integrity. We need to spell out those provisions as clearly as possible. If there are such laws, what are they? They may be about a national day for China or the definition of the flag; none of us would object to that. On the other hand, the provisions in article 17 might be there to deal with an unforeseen problem or with legislation enacted by the Hong Kong special administrative region that the People's Republic of China did not like. It is important for the People's Republic of China to define that more clearly and also to define the procedures that it would follow in seeking to exercise its influence over Hong Kong. If the People's Republic of China wants to exercise influence over Hong Kong, it will do so and rightly so because Hong Kong will be part of China.

There are other problems of interpretation. In mainland China laws are promulgated and interpreted by the National People's Congress. In Hong Kong, laws are enacted by the legislature, but it is up to the courts to interpret them. The systems clash. I shall not go into the matter in more detail, but I believe that it has not been addressed adequately by the Basic Law drafting committee and I am sure that the committee will receive many representations on it.

In my view, it would be quite wrong for the courts in Hong Kong to seek the advice of the Chief Executive and for him to say, under article 18, that a given law infringed the rights of the People's Republic of China and that he therefore refused to allow that law to be passed. It is wrong that any judgment should be given by one person. The Chief Executive could be an extremely powerful person in Hong Kong after 1997, depending on which of the variations is eventually accepted for the formation of the legislature and the powers to be given to him.

An ideal solution might be for the Basic Law drafting committee to examine the American model and consider having some kind of supreme court to settle questions about what is in the ambit of one party and what is in the ambit of the other. Alternatively, the committee could consider the European experience and what happens in the European Court in which one party can go to an appellate body whose decision is final. If the People's Republic could consider those systems and perhaps reach some agreement in the Basic Law drafting committee that some changes have to be made, I believe that progress along those lines would be useful.

I am concerned about the powers of the Executive and the absence of any checks and balances in the present draft Basic Law. Articles 70 to 73 deal with the Legislative Council. Article 70 provides, as an alternative, that

"The Chief Executive shall concurrently be the president of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region".

The equivalent here would be for the Prime Minister also to be Speaker of the House of Commons. If I am wrong, I hope that I will be challenged, but I do not believe that any hon. Member would agree with that. It cannot be right, and it should not be the case in Hong Kong after 1997.

Article 71 not as an alternative but as a firm provision in the present draft Basic Law, states:

"The President of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall exercise the following powers and functions:

(1) To preside over meetings;

(2) To decide on and control the agenda".

Those are extremely sweeping powers. The House should consider what the situation would be if the President were also the Chief Executive. That is unacceptable to almost everyone in this country and I am sure that it is unacceptable to the people of Hong Kong. I hope that the Minister will deal with that when he winds up the debate.

[Dr. Marek]

Experience in democracies throughout the world is such that the head of the Executive does not sit in the Speaker's chair controlling the agenda of the legislature. Whether there should be complete separation of powers is a question that we have not time to discuss today, but there must be sufficient separation.

The legislature must also include sufficient checks and balances to control or at least scrutinise the actions of the Executive. Article 72 provides for a certain amount of scrutiny. It states:

"The Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall exercise the following powers and functions . . .

(2) To examine and approve budgets and final accounts submitted by the executive authorities;

(3) To approve taxation and public expenditure".

It does not say "to approve or otherwise". It may not be possible for a Back Bencher in this House to bring forward such measures, but we can scrutinise them and, if necessary, change them or vote them down. If that is possible in democracies throughout the world, it should be possible for the people of Hong Kong and the British Government must demand it.

I appreciate that there are problems and questions of diplomacy and that not everything can be openly stated from the Dispatch Box because discussions have to take place at diplomatic level between this country and the People's Republic of China. I therefore do not expect an immediate reply from the Minister agreeing with me on all these points. Nevertheless, the situation demands more evidence and assurance that the British Government are not in a cosy relationship with the People's Republic of

The powers of the legislature under article 72 include:

"(4) To hear and debate on the work reports of the Chief Executive:

(5) To raise questions on the work of the executive authorities;

(6) To hold debates on any issue concerning public interests".

Again, that does not give the legislature after 1997 any powers to control the Chief Executive. It gives powers to ask questions, but whether those questions receive an answer, let alone an appropriate answer, is not provided for in the draft Basic Law.

The position could be even more difficult than that because article 73 states:

"However written consent of the Chief Executive is required before the following three kinds of bills are introduced:

(1) Bills relating to revenue and expenditure,"—

that is done in various legislatures—

"(2) Bills relating to government policies".

That is a sweeping constraint on anybody elected to the legislature in the Hong Kong SAR after 1997. The Chief Executive would have only to say, "This is a matter of Government policy, so you, as an individual member of the legislature of Hong Kong, will not be entitled to introduce any Bill on that." If that matter is not put right, it will lead me to conclude that there is a cosy relationship between the United Kingdom Government and the People's Republic of China. The people of Hong Kong have not had democracy for various reasons, which I understand, and it is unacceptable that they will not get it after 1997. Will the Minister reassure me that what I have said is not the case?

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall not be too long. The United Kingdom is morally bankrupt in allowing only 20 people a month for resettlement from the closed camps in Hong Kong. If we doubled that number, we would have a little more credibility internationally. I visited a camp earlier this year and I was sorry to see evidence of countries such as Canada and Australia treating the camps as a market place. People with skills could be resettled immediately, but those without were to remain incarcerated. People have been deprived of their liberty for five years and nothing has been done about it until now. I welcome the Government's intention to resettle all those refugees who came in under the previous set of rules as quickly as possible. Again, the Minister is furrowing his brow, so I hope that that is the case. If it is not, he will face heavy responsibility for depriving people of their liberty for five years or more in these closed camps.

I welcome the fact that the United Kingdom is now talking to Vietnam. That and the involvement of the international community is the only way towards a solution of the problem.

The people of Hong Kong require democracy after 1997, and I do not believe that the People's Republic of China will find it incompatible with the policies that it wishes to pursue after Hong Kong has become part of the PRC. A directly elected legislature is to some extent necessary. Hon. Members cannot get away from the principle that a 100 per cent. directly elected legislature would be ideal. I realise that ideals are not always achievable—that is what politics is about—but I insist on at least 50 per cent. of the legislature being directly elected so that the Basic Law complies with the joint declaration.

I agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that a grand electoral college would be a sham because, somehow, somebody would have to select or elect that grand electoral college. At the end of the day there is no substitute for a reasonable number of directly elected members in the legislature. The present members of the Hong Kong legislature—I say this with respect—are not elected; or, rather, they are elected to represent functional interests. Therefore, they do not have the authority and the backing of the people. They are subject to all sorts of other constraints and influences. That is the problem, and we should recognise that, at this stage, what the Hong Kong legislature says is not necessarily in the interests of the people of Hong Kong. If it were a directly elected legislature, it would have that authority.

Some things in the draft Basic Law are in too much detail. The Foreign Secretary was right when he said that there was no mention of a balanced budget in the joint declaration—I was in error in thinking that there was. Article 105 mentions a balanced budget, but there is too much detail. The draft Basic Law should provide a skeleton of a constitutional framework. Sufficient thought should go into that draft Basic Law to ensure that, if there is a crisis within the next 50 years, the procedures of the draft Basic Law will take care of it. It should not have to say anything about the particular type of economic policy that should be followed, and it should not contain too much detail.

I hope that the People's Republic of China will understand that and will take that into account when it publishes its next draft.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Seven hon. Members hope to take part in the debate before the winding-up speeches. Unless speeches are very much shorter, many will be disappointed. Short speeches, please.

12.47 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): After visiting a country such as Hong Kong there is always a grave risk of being billed by others, or billing oneself, as an instant expert. Therefore, I shall minimise that risk by speaking briefly on this subject, which may also increase my popularity with my hon. Friends.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And with the Chair.

Mr. Marshall: That is very important, and I hope that that is a brownie point that I can store for the future.

The first fundamental question that everybody asks about Hong Kong is whether the Chinese will adhere to the joint declaration. I have little doubt that they will, because of three outstanding features of the Chinese economy. First, it is still incredibly backward. Anyone studying Chinese agricultural practices is struck by the fact that they are generations behind the West. Secondly, there is the enthusiasm of the Chinese for encouraging overseas investment. They discovered perestroika long before the Soviet Union did. They recognise that China needs massive investment and that they are unable to generate that investment. Therefore they rely on others to do so. The third factor is that China has enjoyed a significant degree of international investment from the United States, Hong Kong and Japan.

The Chinese recognise two facts. The first is that it is not in their interest to destroy trust by reneging on the agreement. Trust is a tender plant, which once uprooted takes a long time to reappear. China also recognises that it is not in her interests to upset the basis of Hong Kong's prosperity. It would gain nothing and put at risk a great deal. It is in China's interest to be able to boast that the phrase "dictum meum pactum"—for those who have not had the benefit of the national curriculum that means "my word is my bond"—is true of that country.

I believe that, looking to the future, China's self-interest is a good guide to how the Chinese are likely to behave. Looking at the vibrant Hong Kong economy, I believe that it gives every sign of believing that China will be a country of her word. The high levels of growth and investment are signs that those who take decisions in Hong Kong believe that prosperity will remain well into the 21st century.

Those who know much more about Hong Kong than any Member of the House have taken their decisions and shown the amount of faith that they have in China's word. The fact that China herself has invested significantly in Hong Kong is a sign that she does not intend to destroy the prosperity of Hong Kong.

Anyone who visits a factory in Hong Kong must be struck by the ingenuity and hard work of everyone there. Frequently there is a temptation in this country to erect barriers to trade with Hong Kong, but I believe that it is wrong to deprive the European or British consumer of the benefits of the hard work of the people of Hong Kong. I hope that we shall remain a relatively free trade country rather than become protectionist in our attitude to Hong Kong's industry.

Finally, I should like to speak about the scandal of the plight of the boat people. It is an international scandal that there are still 15,000 refugees in the camps in Hong Kong. The problem is not the fault of the people of Hong Kong, because the Hong Kong authorities pay 75 per cent. of the cost of the camps. One has to recognise that the refugees regard Hong Kong as an entrepot rather than a final destination.

The responsibility for the plight of the refugees of Hong Kong rests in the tardy and ungenerous response of the civilised world to their plight. We should remember that the boat people set out on their uncertain voyage with chances of survival that were not great and with twin feelings of desperation and hope. All who set out on that perilous journey did so with desperation at the plight of their own country and expectations about the reception from the West. We are not responsible for their desperation, but we are responsible for the churlish reception that we have given to those who opted for freedom.

The reception from the West has been neither generous nor humane. We in Western Europe frequently lecture the Israelis on the plight of refugees in the middle east, yet we have connived at the hopelessly inadequate response of the world to the plight of the boat people. It is intolerable that those who have opted for freedom should instead be incarcerated in refugee camps for as long as the boat people have been.

We are critical of the failure to solve the problem of the refugees in the middle east, yet if we had shown one tenth of the generosity of spirit and cash that we expect to be shown in the middle east, I wager that there would be no problem of refugees in Hong Kong today. I urge the Government to have an even greater sense of urgency and generosity in dealing with the problem. Historically, we in the United Kingdom have a magnificent record of offering asylum to the victims of oppression, be it he Huguenots or the victims of the holocaust. I apologise for the fact that I shall not be able to hear the no doubt excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, but I urge him to emphasise yet again the strong commitment of the British people to solving that intolerable problem at the earliest opportunity.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for setting such a good example of brevity.

12.54 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I shall try to emulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) with the brevity of my speech, but it will probably be impossible. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has had to leave. He appears to be following the custom that has developed in this debate, which is to make a speech and then leave. It is the parliamentary equivalent of "Ten Green Bottles", and I hope that someone will be left to hear the Minister's reply. I assure him that I shall be here to hear his excellent speech.

I wish to talk about an aspect of life in Hong Kong that is somewhat different from the matters that have been discussed so far. That aspect of life in Hong Kong, which fills me with horror and revulsion, is the illegal trade in rare and endangered species. Hong Kong is a party to the

[Mr. Tony Banks]

convention on the international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora—or CITES. I have been assured, through letters and parliamentary answers to questions, that the Hong Kong authorities take their CITES responsibilities seriously, but, from the results, I do not believe that they take them seriously enough. I hope that before China assumes responsibility in 1997 the British Government and the Hong Kong authorities will mount a campaign of education and enforcement, which will be long overdue.

There would be enormous support in this country for a campaign to eliminate the obscene trade in endangered species in Hong Kong. To judge from recent public responses to newspaper articles and television programmes, the average person is probably more worried about that aspect of life in Hong Kong than about its post-imperial future.

I highlight three aspects of that especially vile trade. The first is the trade in ivory. On 13 June I asked the Foreign Secretary—the Under-Secretary of State replied—about the quantities of ivory that had been traded in Hong Kong during the past five years. It is clear that the trade is enormous. In 1983 imports were HK$22 million and by 1987 had reached HK$61 million. The bulk of ivory was imported into Hong Kong from China, Macao, Japan and Singapore—all countries that are party to the CITES regulations but do not seem especially enthusiastic, or able, to enforce them. I am not singling out Hong Kong in that respect. Hong Kong is just one country which, although it is a signatory to the CITES regulations, is not prepared to enforce them in the manner that I would expect.

There is good news to report to the House about the ivory trade. I congratulate the Minister on the part that he has played in ensuring that the CITES regulations are enforced. The Hong Kong Government will announce on 26 July that they will require CITES permits for imports of worked ivory. That is one of the most significant measures for years in the battle to halt the illegal ivory trade.

Traders have established two carving factories in Dubai specifically to work illegal ivory and enable them to import it into Hong Kong without a permit, but from 26 July that loophole will be closed. We appreciate that the traders will try somewhere else, but, as Hong Kong is the centre of the world ivory trade, life will be more difficult for them. In the first three months of this year Hong Kong imported HK$3·5 million worth of ivory from Dubai, all of which was of illegal origin and represented about 4,000 dead elephants—all illegally killed. Therefore, Hong Kong's new rules for worked ivory come not a moment too soon.

Secondly, there is the trade in rhino horn, which is used in its solid form to fashion dagger handles and in its powdered form in medicine. I understand that some people believe that rhino horn can be used as an aphrodisiac, but there is no evidence to prove that. However, there is medical evidence to show that anthrax can be communicated through the use of rhino horn. One can imagine some fairly nasty things happening to people at certain moments of high emotion and enjoyment.

I have asked a whole series of questions about the trade in rhino horn. I put one to the Prime Minister, who I know takes a close interest in this matter. I hasten to add that it is not the aphrodisiac qualities of rhino horn that so intrigue the Prime Minister, and of course all hon. Members pray to the Lord above that she never contracts anthrax. In January I asked the Prime Minister, after having given her notice, about the trade in rhino horn. She said:

"A total ban on the sale of rhino products within Hong Kong will take effect from July this year."—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 172.]

Unfortunately, that answer did not quite square with the reply that I received in June from the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The information that the Prime Minister had given to me did not seem to tally with the information coming to me from sources outside the House. The Under-Secretary of State said:

"The Hong Kong Government will ban the internal sale of rhino horn in July. They intend to implement a ban on the internal sale of medicinal products claiming to contain rhino horn as soon as possible. They have concluded that such a ban cannot be achieved administratively, as they had earlier intended, but will require new legislation, which they plan to introduce later this year."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 15-16.]

That is simply not acceptable to the House, because it clearly does not follow the undertaking given by the Prime Minister. Bearing in mind that black rhino are now one of the world's most endangered species, the Government must insist that the Hong Kong authorities carry out what the Prime Minister said they would do. There must be an immediate ban on the trade in medicinal rhino horn products in Hong Kong. I ask the Minister to give me some assurance on that when he replies to the debate.

My last point about this vile trade, in which Hong Kong seems to be so much involved, deals with the most repugnant and barbaric aspect of all—the use of endangered species as food in Hong Kong restaurants. An article appeared in the *Sunday Times* on 10 January based on an article in the magazine *Asia Week*. Both articles gave graphic details of the way in which tigers, leopards, civets, pangolins and other creatures are prepared for the tables of restaurants in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and China.

In case I am misunderstood, I should say that I am a firm believer in cultural diversity in this country and throughout the world, but no individual or country has a right to pursue cultural or economic traditions to the point where they are clearly endangering the very existence of another life form. The article in the *Sunday Times* attracted over 2,000 readers' letters, all of which expressed horror and complete opposition to what was described as a vile trade. I find it difficult to understand the sort of gastronomic perversion that seems to appeal to some people in Hong Kong. One of them is the eating of the brains of a live monkey. I think that it is called trepanning.

I propose to read to the House and for the record a description of trepanning. It is not a pleasant task. The description is from a book written by John Nicol and is based on a series of documentaries that appeared on Channel 4. The description of trepanning reads:

"I only know of this particular practice from Hong Kong and Macao where, provided one goes to the right restaurants and is affluent enough, one can order monkey brain as the highlight of a meal to impress the guests. It is not just the serving of monkey brain, you understand, there is a whole ritual to accompany the dish. During the course of the day of the banquet the poor monkey who is to be the star of the evening is fed considerable quantities of booze so that by the time the meal is served he is pretty intoxicated. When it is time for the monkey brain course, he is tied so that he is completely immobilised and inserted into a small cage that is just big enough to contain his body but leaves his head sticking out

through a hole in the top. From underneath the table the monkey's head is poked through an opening so that he is completely invisible to the diners except for the head, whose chin rests in suitably attractive garnish. When the host is ready, the chef delicately and carefully cuts round the skull just above the eyes and ears so that the whole top can be lifted off like a lid to reveal the brain. All the diners clap in delight at the thought of the treat to come, and tell their host what a super chap he is, and they then all dig in. Each diner dips a bread stick or something similar into the soft, creamy brain tissue and munches it with suitably appreciative noises while the monkey blinks solemnly at them until the eyes close for the last time—and all the brain disappears down the throats of these sophisticated, civilised people."

I want to believe that such barbarism is confined to a small number of people in Hong Kong. If such perverts want to enjoy a unique taste, they should try trepanning each other, if, indeed, they have brains worth eating.

I asked a number of parliamentary questions to find out what efforts the Hong Kong authorities were making to enforce the CITES regulations and to prevent restaurants from making an obscene mockery of those regulations. According to an answer from the Under-Secretary, 136 seizures of illegally imported endangered species were made in 1987. They comprised 16 pangolins, 117 birds of prey, 24 giant salamanders, 140 kg of pangolin meat and 2·5 kg of giant salamander meat.

I also wanted to know how many restaurants had been checked by the authorities, and I was told that they had checked 80 restaurants in 1987 and made 14 seizures. They seized five pangolins, 18 birds of prey, 16 giant salamanders and 12 bear paws. I asked how many inspectors were involved and was told that only five are employed full time. I have never been to Hong Kong, and in view of my comments perhaps I would not be welcome there, but I cannot believe that there are so few restaurants that only five full-time inspectors are required, or that 80 restaurants represent a good cross-section of the gastronomic trade of Hong Kong.

What further steps will the Under-Secretary of State take to ensure that such checks on restaurants are stepped up? I have seen a letter from the Foreign Office to the International Fund for Animal welfare, which says:

"There is therefore no doubt that the Hong Kong authorities are tackling this problem vigorously. But in the light of the strong public concern in Britain"—

that is a massive understatement—

"we have asked them to look urgently at whether there is anything more they can do; and to consider whether they could address some of these problems through additional measures aimed at educating the public."

What additional measures are being taken by the Hong Kong authorities, supported by the British Government?

I can genuinely say that I know that, although one crosses swords on many occasions with the Under-Secretary of State, the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, all of them take this issue seriously. I shall probably be the only hon. Member left in the House to hear the Under-Secretary's reply, so I hope he can tell me what pressure is being put on China to deal with the endangered species market in Shenzhen, a special economic zone on the border with Hong Kong. What educational and enforcing measures are being taken to stamp out this vile trade? On his answers, my attitude towards the future of Hong Kong very much depends. I know that he will address these matters seriously.

1.3 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am pleased to have caught your eye today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as many hon. Members have sought to make contributions to this important debate—a stark contrast from a fortnight ago when I spoke on Northern Ireland affairs and, throughout the debate, was the only Conservative Back-Bench Member present.

I am not a lawyer, constitutional or otherwise, and I do not have a lawyer's facility to pick up a brief, analyse it and construct a case to suit my goal. Today, I have been lucky, for, since Monday, those of us who take an interest in the affairs of Hong Kong and the future of its citizens have been positively deluged with briefing material which contains eminent and skilful opinion on the draft Basic Law. The analysis has been done for me. Furthermore, a case has been constructed for me—notably by the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Hong Kong Law Society and a group of young professionals led by Gladys Li and Frank Ching. We have also had the benefit of the draft speeches of some eminent members of the Legislative Council, which will have been delivered over the past two days, including a thoroughly statesmanlike speech by the senior Unofficial Member Lydia Dunn. Those briefs and supporting material pay tribute to the work done by the drafting committee.

It is clear that a large part of the draft Basic Law has met with approval and can thus be construed as largely uncontentious. However, it is equally clear that articles 16, 17, 18, 169 and 172, together with annex III have caused much concern. Taken out and highlighted, leaving aside the remainder, this fraction of the draft Basic Law can be construed to demonstrate a determination by the People's Republic to undermine the spirit of the joint declaration. I say "can be construed" because, by putting a more positive gloss on those articles, it is possible to accept them as benign. The whole exercise is like a game of snakes and ladders, with 172 steps from the beginning to the end of the game. There are undoubtedly ladders to accelerate one's progress towards one's goal—for much of the draft is excellent and reassuring to the concept of one nation/two systems.

The draft Basic Law even seems to have overcome the apparent inimical contradiction of a capitalist sub-state existing alongside its Socialist parent, a parent constrained to be Socialist by one of the most fundamental canons of its constitution. Articles 16, 17, 18, 169 and 172 and annex III appear to represent the snakes which send one slithering back to the beginning of the game. If one puts the worst interpretation on those articles, it is possible to conceive a position where one cannot attain one's goal because one falls foul of one of those impediments.

It is possible to see the whole draft as a cover, a smoke-screen, for the real PRC purpose of regaining Hong Kong and absorbing its commercial, industrial and trading pre-eminence, without conceding the basic Socialist tenet of the PRC's constitution.

I believe that that is the construction put on some of the contentious articles by the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Hong Kong Law Society and the group of young professionals. They have every right to view the Basic Law with great caution, and we would be foolish to disparage their caution. It is difficult for hon. Members to grasp the crucial importance of the Basic Law to the protection of the way of life of Hong Kong people for the rest of their

[Mr. James Couchman]

lives. Yet a wholly cynical attitude to the Basic Law denies the role of the nearly 50 per cent. of the drafting committee who are Hong Kong people and who, therefore, have the most certain vested interest in seeing that the Basic Law faithfully reflects both the word and the spirit of the joint declaration.

That cynicism denies China's need to regain and retain Hong Kong in its present form as a thriving, thrusting, vibrant and entrepreneurial trading post. That cynicism suggests that the great mass of the Chinese population will just swallow up Hong Kong's 5·5 million people and be prepared to sacrifice the vastly disproportionate contribution to China's economy that that population can make. In short, that cynicism denies the good faith and trust embodied in the whole Sino-British agreement that led to the joint declaration.

To assuage that lack of confidence, that cynicism, we must urge the drafting committee to look again at the contentious articles and annex. In particular, I believe that the way in which the first Chief Executive and Government, as well as the first Legislative Council, succeed to their positions is vital to the success of the whole enterprise. If the election or selection process is seen as a charade designed to put Beijing's placemen in power, confidence in Hong Kong will collapse, the last days of Britain's colonial rule will be marked with bitterness and acrimony and the serious leakage of middle management and professional people will become a torrent. All of those, who have transferable skills, will seek their exit, many with great sadness at leaving their homes. That would be the surest recipe for a breakdown of everything that makes Hong Kong such a special place and of such value to China and the rest of the trading world.

We must exhort the drafting committee to establish a system for the selection of the first Chief Executive and the Legislative Council, which is seen as a further step towards democracy and universal suffrage and as maintaining an evolutionary pace towards an eventually fully-elected legislature. I agree that an elected proportion of 10 representatives in 1991 with a possible further tranche of elected representatives in 1995 is right. Furthermore, if there were, for example, 20 elected members in 1995, their term would, in the normal course of events, have lasted two years beyond the handover date. They could form the vital element of continuity, which is so essential to a smooth handover. We should press the People's Republic of China on that point.

I am no expert on that peculiarly Eastern concept of "face" but it seems to me that China has put its name—we must believe that it is in good faith—to its most important international treaty since the formation of the People's Republic. China has to make the agreement work and it can work only if it is perceived by Hong Kong people to have been honoured in both word and spirit. If the agreement is broken or collapses because it has not been honoured in word or spirit, in the eyes of the world that would involve a massive loss of face for all Chinese people, and especially their leaders.

I retain my faith that the agreement, born out of mutual pragmatism, can and will be made to work. Should that come to pass, I have no doubt that Hong Kong post-1997 will be as exciting a place as it is today in which to live, to work and to visit. I have no doubt that hon. Members of this House will be as keen to see one nation/two systems working as they are to visit the very symbol of enterpreneurial capitalism which Hong Kong is today.

1.16 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst):

"The puplication of the first draft of the Basic Law is a remarkable event. Who could have conceived, fifty, twenty or even five years ago that the Government of China would one day publish the draft of such a law, widely promulgate its text, and formally invite public comment upon it? It is also remarkable that China from the beginning has involved Hong Kong people in the drafting process."

Those are not my words, they are the opening words of the hon. Lydia Dunn in her speech in the Legislative Council a couple of days ago. They enable me, first, to pay tribute to Lydia Dunn as she makes her swan song from LegCo; secondly, to establish a link between that debate and this; and, thirdly, to emphasise what she is saying and what a remarkable event it is.

I recall the visit here a few years ago, when the negotiations were at an early stage, of a senior Chinese Government official. He was seeking information and, knowing that I was an officer of the Hong Kong group, asked what the Hong Kong group was and what it did. I sought to explain and said that no doubt when some agreement was reached members of the group would be involved in the debate in Parliament. He asked, "What debate?" I said that once an agreement had been reached it would be published in the form of a White Paper and would certainly be debated in Parliament. He said, "What has it got to do with Parliament? If the two Governments have come to some agreement, how is Parliament involved?" I hope that he benefited from the little teach-in that I subsequently gave him.

That story demonstrates how far the Chinese authorities have gone in a relatively short time. In that time the people of Hong Kong have travelled far along the democratic path. They held their direct elections to LegCo only three years ago. When I was there, I recall seeing something of the interesting system of functional constituencies. I visited a hospital and found it plastered with election notices. That is something unfamiliar to us. The people of Hong Kong have not experienced parliamentary and representative democracy much in the past, but they are learning fast.

On the one hand there has been a Communist regime that is unfamiliar with parliamentary democracy; on the other, a community that is surely the epitome of private enterprise and to which representative Government was a new concept. We may protest that we do not approve of a few aspects of what is, in effect, a draft constitution for post-1997 Hong Kong, but we should surely marvel at the fact, that there is any draft at all in the circumstances that I have described. We should also marvel at the fact that about 95 per cent. of it is proving acceptable to both sides.

Various political, professional and legal figures have been making representations to us, in correspondence and in person, on their doubts about certain aspects of some articles. Those doubts have been well covered and I shall not go through the problems that have arisen. The interpretation of the Law is an interesting example of the differing approaches of the two countries. Those people have genuine concerns and valid arguments against some of the articles, but it is fair to say that the Chinese Government have made it clear that this is a draft. They undertook extensive consultations before producing it,

and they are now offering more. Those professional, legal and political figures have an important part to play in that consultative process.

If it is true that the people of Hong Kong have not had a great deal of experience of politics, nor have they of diplomacy. I suggest to them that it is not helpful to the consultative process for some in important positions to use language, in public and in private, such as "broken promises", "bad law" and "an abomination"—that last having been used to describe one of the articles. That is not the way to influence those who will finally decide on the form that the Law will take.

I have been a friend of Hong Kong for many years, on a business and a personal level. I want the best possible arrangements for post-1997 Hong Kong, and I ask the people of Hong Kong to recognise what has been achieved, to use every means open to them to promote the changes and the clarifications that they justifiably want, but to do so in reasoned argument, not by using invective.

Other hon. Members have rightly raised the subject of the Vietnamese refugees. Hong Kong has an extraordinary record of having accepted 120,000 of them since 1975, of whom not one has been turned away from its shores. The rate has increased substantially recently. The figures are surprising: there were 8,000 arrivals in the first six months of this year—4,000 in June alone—compared with 405 in June last year. In those circumstances, it was surely right for Hong Kong to introduce its recent measures to try to control the influx and return the refugees.

Many of the genuine refugees have been resettled, about 13,000 of them here. We all remember well the publicity that attended the boat people and the great surge of interest and emotion in this country at the time—local authorities provided housing, the community made them welcome and so on. Recently we have heard of success stories among those who arrived at that time, but the problem remains in Hong Kong. There are still about 16,000 there, some of whom have been there for a long time. About 2,500 have been there for more than six years and 425 have been in camps for more than nine years.

What are we doing to solve the problem? The answer is very little. We have undertaken to accept fewer than 500, who have to be members of families, and we are taking them at the rate of 20 a month. They are multipying at twice that rate. There are 40 births a month in the camps in Hong Kong. Taking 500 at 20 a month will not be of much help. In any event, those who are taken must be members of families. It is an extremely restrictive policy. It seems that we have virtually closed the door on the further intake of refugees to this country.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the problems of refugees, but I was disappointed that he suggested no new steps that should be taken. How can we expect other countries to take more of these refugees if we are not prepared to do so ourselves? We are not talking about people from the Indian subcontinent who want to improve their economic position. Instead, we are talking about genuine refugees. As the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) said, we are talking about people, not about statistics.

I shall not apologise for expressing a personal interest. My son worked for a time in a Hong Kong camp with the refugees. On subsequent visits I have had the opportunity of meeting some of these people. To make a small contribution myself, I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office about 18 months ago. I referred to the Bach family. I gave full details of it, the members of which have been in Hong Kong for many years. The family arrived there in 1980 and have been in the camps ever since. I wrote to say that I would be willing to sponsor them to come here. I said that I would try to find accommodation for them and a job. After 18 months my hon. Friend the Minister of State said, "No. I am sorry but the family cannot be admitted." It is dispiriting for the refugees to feel that there are no prospects for them.

When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State replies, I hope that he will be able to say something that will give hope to the refugees. I appreciate that their admittance is a Home Office responsibility, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has some influence in appropriate quarters. I hope that he will use it to ensure that provision is made for more of these refugees to come to Britain. That will encourage other countries to take more as well. I feel that we have a moral obligation to them. I suggest also that we have a moral obligation to the Government and people of Hong Kong, who have borne the refugee burden for far too long. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to review the Government's immigration policy in the interests of the refugees and in the interests of the territory, whose future many of us regard with concern and affection.

1.27 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): There are two major reasons why Hong Kong should be reassured about its future. The first reason is the negotiating ability of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. The second reason is that the People's Republic of China has carried out a formulation of the Basic Law in an open manner. These two factors should give the Kong Kong people and the House great confidence in believing that it is possible to get the Basic Law redrafted and put into a satisfactory condition so that Hong Kong may continue with the prosperity and freedom that its people now enjoy.

In the few minutes that are available to me I shall make one or two comments that might be helpful in getting those involved in the negotiations to understand the difficulties that face the Hong Kong people. The first issue is competence. Why, in view of what I have just said, should the Hong Kong people lack confidence in the future and in the negotiating procedure? Most people in Hong Kong left China and arrived in Hong Kong because it was a refuge and a way in which they could put behind them some of the horrific experiences that they and their families had to undergo during a series of revolutions and changes of Government, the last of which was the cultural revolution. Those events are not easily put out of people's minds, so the Chinese People's Republic and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary must go out of their way to reassure the people of Hong Kong that they will re-enter the world that they wanted to leave.

Many hon. Members have referred to the worrying number of emigrants, which has doubled again this year to 48,000. That is an estimate, and the number is probably greater. Of those emigrants, 75 per cent. are in the managerial and professional classes. When one considers economies in the world that have failed, one realises that they have failed because those classes of people have left. They are some of the most indebted and poverty-stricken countries in the world and they are a warning to us. My

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right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has tried to reassure the House by saying that that emigration is nothing unusual, but I believe that we should take it seriously.

Why are people leaving Hong Kong? It is because they feel that their individual freedom will be restricted under the Basic Law as it has been promulgated. They fear that their quality of life will worsen, and they fear for their children's future, which is guaranteed by the joint declaration for only 50 years, if we get the constition right. People leave Hong Kong because they have the opportunity to go overseas, but they are also worried about the frequent policy changes in the People's Republic of China. They cannot be certain that the current conditions and philosophy in Beijing will continue, and they doubt the Chinese Government's ability to maintain stability. They fear for the safety and welfare of intellectuals; they remember intellectuals who emigrated from the People's Republic of China because they were persecuted and oppressed during the cultural revolution.

I want to concentrate my remarks on the position of the Chief Executive under the Basic Law. When I visited Hong Kong, I was worried by the way in which the Hong Kong Government propose to develop the system of government when the People's Republic of China takes over in 1997. There seems to be no urgency to develop the institutions of government, particularly those that are needed to provide checks to the executive power held by the Governor, which we see reflected in the Basic Law, and to provide checks to the power of the Chief Executive, which I believe is overstrong and will be insufficiently checked by the legislature. The legislature will not be the prime institution, as the House of Commons and the House of Lords are in this country. The powers that are proposed for the Chief Executive violate the principle that this country fought for and won in 1688, and which was incorporated in the Bill of Rights.

The Chief Executive will be the superior power in many ways and will be able to maintain his position despite any lack of confidence from the legislature. I believe that if the Chief Executive loses the confidence of the legislature, or of the Beijing Government, he should resign and a new selection and election should take place. Under the draft Basic Law, there will be a complicated procedure.

It would be very much better if the Chief Executive were to be elected by an alternative system, which would be at least vaguely democratic—that is, by selection by one tenth of the legislature, as proposed, and then by direct election on the basis of adult suffrage.

I shall illustrate the powers that will be unacceptable if they are not restricted by the legislature. The Chief Executive can appoint all judges and cannot be questioned on those appointments. There will be no means by which he can be checked when making those appointments. He will have the power to dissolve the legislature if it refuses to vote for legislation that he supports. That should be the other way round.

The Legislative Assembly has no powers to amend a budget, only to accept or reject it. The Chief Executive has the power, not just to appoint, but to remove, judges. Where is the independence of the judiciary there? The Chief Executive has powers similar to those of a colonial Government. In recent years the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not been distinguished in its ability to formulate constitutions which have endured for long without becoming the instruments of dictatorial forms of government in many of our former colonies. The draft Basic Law gives the same impression, and I urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, in his attempts to revise it with the People's Republic of China, to ensure that the necessary checks on the Executive, the independence of the judiciary, universal adult suffrage and direct elections are built into the system of government instituted in 1997 with the support of the People's Republic of China and endure beyond that time.

That must be my right hon. and learned Friend's objective, and he has many levers of power to try to insist upon it. There are real reasons why the People's Republic of China wishes Hong Kong to be successful and independent. For instance, there is the question of Taiwan. We have the ultimate sanction of saying that the treaty has been broken, and there is much evidence to suggest that the proposed laws do not coincide with the joint declaration, as Professor Wade has said, and as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) mentioned today.

I believe that we have the opportunity, with great effort, to ensure that the new system of government is subject to the necessary checks and balances. That will restore confidence that the people of Hong Kong will be able to conduct their own affairs, that they do not need to leave Hong Kong, that they will not be subject to unnecessary interference from the Chinese Government and that the miracle of Hong Kong can continue.

1.37 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): In this debate, I suffer the great disadvantage of never having lived in Hong Kong, although I have visited it, and of having no commercial or other interests, disclosed or undisclosed, in Hong Kong. That brings one advantage, however, in that I can speak dispassionately on the subject and, to some extent also, on this country's position.

I did not think of this as a debate about the Vietnamese refugees, but I very much endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) about the need for this country to be more generous in that context. Even if we have to wait until the flow has dried up, let us at least then pledge ourselves to be more generous and to take more refugees from the closed camps.

This interesting debate has perhaps underestimated the enormous excitement of the extraordinary experiment that is to take place. The whole concept of one nation and two systems is of dramatic interest and hope for the future. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was right to say that Hong Kong is and should remain the principal component of any burgeoning Anglo-Chinese partnership. He was also absolutely right to stress our duty to ensure that the Basic Law, which we did not draft, honours the joint declaration that we signed. That duty is the more pressing in view of the seeming reluctance of so many Hong Kong citizens to stick their heads above the parapet and make public comment in the present period of consultation.

We should also remember the international context of this debate. It is being held at a time when we have an

extraordinary vindication of the open, relatively unrestricted, substantially capitalist system of trade over the inward-looking, heavily regulated, state-run economic systems which have hitherto been the principal legacy of Marxism in the 20th century. Generally speaking, I can well understand the natural anxiety in the PRC lest, on the one hand, it kills the golden goose by failing to create the confidence necessary to keep Hong Kong alive and, on the other, it kills the farmer's wife by so encouraging the goose that the whole basis of China's political and social philosophy is undermined. I do not think that that is a real fear because clearly the PRC could at any time snuff out Hong Kong's independence if it felt threatened. There is nothing written anywhere to prevent it from doing that. As was well put to me yesterday by a representative from Hong Kong, we are not talking about some disastrous cataclysm. We are looking at the insurance policy, and when one does that one looks closely at the small print to ensure that one buys the best policy one can get.

There is a difficult balance between being prescriptive enough to reassure interests in Hong Kong which want particular safeguards written into the Basic Law, and being so prescriptive as to make it almost certain that the SAR will find its freedom of movement damagingly restricted. It is fair to say that the present constitution of Hong Kong is both undemocratic and authoritarian, but, as Lydia Dunn pointed out two days ago in Hong Kong, all recent governors have accepted the well established constitutional convention that they cannot override either the Legislative or Executive Councils and that the most important feature of the present system of government is that no one has supreme power. It is partly because it is vital to emphasise the importance of evolving convention in the creation and continuation of dynamic societies that I want to stress my unease at the articles in the draft Basic Law that seek to prescribe too closely the form of economic policy which the Hong Kong SAR should pursue.

Judicial independence is a crucial question. Enough has already been said in the debate for it to be unnecessary for me to do more than add my support to those who want to see that the statement in the joint declaration with the power of final judgment in the Hong Kong SAR should be vested in the court of final appeal and should not be undermined by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress extending its control year by year into additional areas of the law.

The great story told about Sidney and Beatrice Webb is that, when they were asked what constituted their happy marriage, Beatrice Webb said that the answer was that she took the small decisions and Sidney the big ones. It was then asked who took the decision about which were big and which were small decisions and she said, "I do." There is a slight flavour of that in the draft Basic Law in that when it comes to deciding whether a matter is for the Hong Kong courts, the Standing Committee has too much say. I am anxious about that.

Then there is the question of human rights. In the United Kingdom we can apply for a writ of habeas corpus. It is not in any statute, but it is still a right for which one can apply. Something of that kind, which would give assurance to Hong Kong citizens, whether they were under the jurisdiction of Hong Kong or, for some reason, China, would be useful.

Clearly there are important differences within Hong Kong about how exactly the political structure should be built. I am not knowledgeable enough to give useful advice except perhaps in general terms. I will venture two suggestions. First, it must be better for confidence in Hong Kong if the Chief Executive is elected from within Hong Kong rather than appointed, however indirectly, from without. The nomination and election system must be taken into account. Secondly, the system should be so constructed as to minimise the risk of friction between the Chief Executive, the principal officers and the Legislative Council.

The present draft Basic Law suggests that Hong Kong will have several years of disagreements followed by dissolutions. That would be wholly destructive. We should consider the proposal that Chief Executive candidates should be nominated by LegCo and voted for on a widening, if not universal, franchise if that would remove that risk. On those issues the draft Basic Law departs from, or is perceived by the people of Hong Kong as departing from, the joint declaration. It is our duty to ensure that that divergence is removed from the final version.

The role that the United Kingdom plays between now and 1997 is important. How we play our cards in Hong Kong is vital to us as well as to Hong Kong, the Western world and the future of our relations with the People's Republic of China. That role cannot rest on sentiment or nostalgia—those are broken reeds in international relations. Our role must rest on mutual self-interest. Last year our exports to the territory were a record £1 billion, and that made Hong Kong seventeenth in order of importance to our export markets. Our invisible earnings, of course, were much higher.

Our exports to Hong Kong grew slower than Hong Kong's global imports, so our share of available trade is falling. Even so, we exported to Hong Kong two and a half times as much as we exported to the People's Republic of China. We have even managed to set up a branch of Gieves and Hawkes. The idea of setting up a tailoring establishment in Hong Kong is amazing and the reverse of what I was brought up to believe in as a child.

Hong Kong companies own or have an interest in 2,000 factories in Guangdong province and they provide employment for 2 million Chinese people. Therefore, China has a major interest in the future of Hong Kong. Hong Kong companies are China's largest source of direct external investment and China earns more than one third of its foreign exchange through the territory. As the ruling power we need to use our position to take positive steps in the closing years to strengthen our position. We need to work hard to boost our trade and increase our investment.

Chinese is a uniquely inacessible language to people of the West. I know that because my daughter is about to spend nine months in Beijing to try to learn it. We should also insist on improving the teaching of English in Hong Kong schools. I understand that such teaching is not a success at the moment. We should also seek to strengthen our links with the Hong Kong university and increase substantially the exchange of students and other individuals between the United Kingdom and Hong Kong.

All those matters are within our control and are of mutual benefit and of long-lasting, substantial importance to the Western world. Such increasing commitment from the United Kingdom to Hong Kong would do more to boost the confidence of Hong Kong than anything else over which we have direct control. At the end of the day, the future of Hong Kong as a special administrative region

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

of the People's Republic of China depends upon mutual trust, and no amount of legislation and logic chopping can provide the protection that mutual confidence and mutual interest would sustain.

1.49 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, we greatly welcome this debate on Hong Kong, which fulfils the promise given by the Government to the Opposition. We agree that it is right that the debate should be on a motion that allows discussion on all aspects of the current position there, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) illustrated rather strikingly, if somewhat horribly. He made me glad that I am missing my lunch today. However, it is understandable that most of those who have contributed to the debate concentrated on the first draft of the Basic Law. I shall return to that for the bulk of my contribution on behalf of the Opposition, but first I should like to refer to two other matters that were raised in the debate.

First, the Vietnamese refugees. Anyone who has seen, as other hon. Members and I have, the sad faces of the Vietnamese refugees, the number of whom now amount to 16,000 in the camps in Hong Kong, knows what a human tragedy they represent. In all cases, as hon. Members have rightly said, they are as well looked after as possible by the Hong Kong Government, with some assistance from voluntary groups. However, in the closed camps, one of which was built as an island prison, life can be nothing less than desperate in what amounts to an oriental Alcatraz. Our Government have direct responsibility for them. The recent decision to screen 4,000 new arrivals is only just beginning to be implemented. I recently found out in Hong Kong that it is estimated that only 10 per cent. will be accepted as refugees. As the Foreign Secretary said, the others will be put into separate camps. The Minister knows our reservations about the screening process, but, given that it is now going ahead, the crucial question that arises is: what happens to those who are screened out and put into the other camps?

We heard from the Foreign Secretary that a team, including a Foreign Office official, has been invited to Hanoi to discuss the situation, but the Foreign Secretary was rather bland about what is happening. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will reply to those questions. What guarantees of safety will the team seek from the Government of Hanoi if the screened-out refugees are to be returned? What will be the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees? What assurances will the team seek on ending the flow of refugees? Not just messages should be sent; positive action should be taken.

The Government need to make a much more determined effort to obtain the changes that will ensure that the flow of refugees is stopped. They must again press the Government of China to help to stop the flow and also the help that people in China give to the boat people as they journey from Vietnam to Hong Kong. I was able to say that in recent discussions that I had with the Chinese Vice-Premier on my visit to Beijing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) said that the Government had pledged to resettle all the refugees. I only wish that he was right and that that were so, but my understanding—subsequent speeches confirmed it—is that we shall take in only a very limited number with family connections, which is less than the amount that the birth rate is adding to the number of refugees.

Dr. Marek: What I meant to say was that the Government will now make arrangements for the refugees who were in the camps before the new regime to be resettled, not necessarily in this country. I hope that that is the Government's intention.

Mr. Foulkes: We shall see from the Minister's reply. I hope that he will make it clear. We should not leave 16,000 refugees rotting in camps in Hong Kong, but we should be sympathetic to the case for resettlement. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham said, the British Government should give a lead—not taking in all the refugees, but encouraging other Governments to join us in providing places for them. I hope that the Minister will say exactly what the Government intend to do.

The second issue was also raised in the debate. I hope that the Minister will say what the Government are doing about the Hong Kong tourist groups that have been turned back. As the Foreign Secretary said, members of the Legislative Council raised the matter with him and the Minister of State on their recent visits. It was also pointed out to me on my visit that some people of very modest means in Hong Kong, who save up and are thereby able to visit Britain, have many justified grievances. The Foreign Secretary said, again somewhat blandly, that appropriate action has been taken following their return. What action? I hope that the Under-Secretary will tell us in his reply what action Ministers have taken to fulfil their promises to LegCo members to examine the matter.

The main issue in the debate today has been the Basic Law. I will deal with a number of points that have been made, but first, somewhat unusually when replying to a debate. I shall deal with a couple of contributions that have not been made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who is on the Front Bench, has shown a long interest in Hong Kong and visited it with a human rights delegation. He would have participated in the debate if he had been here at the beginning and had been able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he has been doing a very valuable job during the past couple of weeks in the Kensington by-election. We have seen the excellent result in this morning's newspapers. He has been working to great effect, and I congratulate him and our candidate on the excellent result. I know that he endorses many of the points made from these Benches.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) would also have wished to be associated with the points that I am making on behalf of the Opposition, but again he is unable to be present.

As most hon. Members must by now be aware, I returned only yesterday from a visit to China, on which I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). They are in Hong Kong on their way back from China and may be listening to this debate on the radio. When we were in China we had a meeting with the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zhou

Nan, during which the future of Hong Kong was the major item of discussion. We also met the Vice-Premier, Tian Jiyun, and discussed the issue with him.

On Wednesday, when I stopped over in Hong Kong, I was lucky enough to sit in on the first day of the debate on the Basic Law. I heard the speech of Lydia Dunn and some other speeches in the Legislative Council. I met the Governor and discussed the future of Hong Kong with him, as I did with some representatives of the young professionals, others of whom have been here in London talking to hon. Members during the past few days. Having listened to some of the speeches, especially those of Conservative Members, I appreciate that the lobbying has been to great effect.

During our discussions in China we heard the two familiar words—those of us who have been participating in these debates know them only too well—stability and prosperity. Like the Foreign Secretary, when we met and spoke to Ministers in China, we added the third important word that has come up repeatedly in this debate—confidence. We must talk not just about stability and prosperity for Hong Kong, but about stability, prosperity and confidence.

I said to Ministers in China that, by making the present consultation exercise on the Basic Law effective and meaningful and by being seen to make it effective and meaningful, the Chinese Government could give a significant boost to the confidence of the people of Hong Kong about the future of their territory. Some of the pessimists argue that that will not be sufficient to stem the damaging outflow of professionals that we have heard about in the debate. I agree that those professionals are vital to the future prosperity of the territory. It may not be sufficient, but it is certainly one of the necessary ingredients of any formula that will help to stem that tide and bring back and maintain confidence in the future of the territory.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the lack of confidence in Hong Kong was demonstrated by the fact that only six people turned up to the first central Hong Kong relationship session, organised by the Basic Law drafters to collect public opinion, and that only two voiced opinions? That pattern was repeated on 2 July when 30 people turned up and five voiced opinions. People are reluctant to voice opinions in case they are identified by the People's Republic of China, and in any case they do not think that their opinions would be taken seriously.

Mr. Foulkes: They are wrong if they think that they will not be taken seriously, because I am sure that they will. The hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest the identification of individuals for future retribution. That suggestion is unwarranted given the sort of changes that I have seen in the People's Republic. I am afraid that the small turnout mentioned by the hon. Gentleman is due more to disinterest by the people of Hong Kong. I hope that there will be greater interest and the kind of participation that we witnessed when the White Paper was discussed. I said to people in Hong Kong and to people that I met here that I hoped there would be greater participation in the consultative exercise by the people of Hong Kong because it was a meaningful exercise.

I think that without breaking any confidences I can tell the House that the Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs made it clear that he accepts that the first draft of the Basic Law is not perfect and will be amended, especially where a clear consensus emerges on Hong Kong issues. That deals with the point raised by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). Every effort should be made by people in the territory to achieve consensus on the consultation exercise.

Following my short visit on Wednesday, I am a bit more optimistic that a broad consensus can be reached. That message does not seem to have got through to all my colleagues. Surely many of the deficiencies in the Basic Law are much more likely to be due to the cumbersome drafting procedure and to inadvertence than to a deliberate lack of concern to make a success of a unique one-country, two-systems, experiment of which Deng Xiaoping is extremely proud.

There is also a danger, which should be avoided, of some people in Hong Kong wrongly anticipating or second-guessing the views of Beijing. In doing so, they take a line which is not justified by the real view of the Government in Beijing, which I discovered when I talked to them. The Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs also made it clear that suggestions and opinions from Britain on the Basic Law are welcome, provided they are made in the appropriate way. While detailed comments are, as they should be, transmitted in writing, I strongly said, and repeat, that hon. Members should continue to have no inhibitions about making comments in the House that are subsequently transmitted to the Government of the People's Republic.

When we comment we should try to imagine what our reaction would be if the situation were reversed and we were receiving comments from China. We must also recognise that we have a special and important responsibility as the other signatory to the joint declaration. Some hon. Members have already said that, and it was emphasised by the Foreign Secretary. Most hon. Members have said that our particular responsibility is to comment if we feel that the draft Basic Law does not properly or adequately reflect the joint declaration. As Lydia Dunn rightly said in the LegCo debate, the draft Basic Law should reflect not just the letter but the spirit of the joint declaration.

On the bases that I have just outlined, I have several general comments to make. First, amendment to the draft Basic Law is necessary to ensure the unfettered application of all the human rights principles included in international covenants and applicable in Hong Kong. They were detailed by my noble Friend Lord Irvine of Lairg in another place in an eloquent and comprehensive speech. I shall not repeat, but merely endorse, what he said on that occasion. Like many other hon. Members, I feel that consideration needs to be given to ensuring that the balance between the powers of Beijing and the Hong Kong special administrative region reflects the high degree of autonomy promised in the joint declaration. That was underlined by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). Like me, he has participated for a number of years in the debate on devolution in Scotland, and we can hear some echoes of that debate.

Of particular importance in Hong Kong is that responsibility for interpretation of the law on all devolved matters—which would appear to be more in line with the joint declaration—should lie with the Court of Appeal in Hong Kong. This applies also to the power to amend legislation passed in the special administrative region and on the revocation of the existing laws of Hong Kong.

[Mr. Foulkes]

After my visits to China and Hong Kong, I am optimistic that representations from Hong Kong will form a consensus and, in the light of the promises of the Government of China, will be accepted in the further drafting. There is also a growing consensus in Hong Kong that while China will assume sovereignty on 1 July 1997, this must not assume dissolution of the organs of Government, particularly the Legislature—and that has been repeated in the debate today. That would cause unnecessary disruption, and the concept of the through train, which a number of hon. Members have mentioned, is rightly finding much wider favour in Hong Kong, as I found in the LegCo debate.

There still remains some debate, and some differences, on the composition and method of election of the Legislature and on the method of the choice and accountability of the Chief Executive. I am sure that most hon. Members will agree when I say that I hope that consensus can be found in Hong Kong on these issues because, again, its views are then more likely to be accepted in China. Our view is that the term in the joint declaration, "constituted by election," is best reflected by direct elections, no matter what may be said by anyone of whatever eminence. Stretching a point, some form of indirect elections through an electoral college might be argued as fulfilling the obligation, although I do not like such a scheme. However, no stretching of the term can come up with the grand electoral college which, as other hon. Members have rightly said, means an attempt to legitimise some form of nomination.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foulkes: I am a little short of time as I wish to leave the Minister as much time as possible to reply, so I will not give way.

Furthermore, the Chief Executive should be responsible to the Legislative Council, as others have said, or relations between them will be intolerable and confused, and the Chief Executive should be chosen from within Hong Kong.

We welcome the Foreign Secretary's statement that the reports of the proceedings in this place and in the other place will go to the Government of the People's Republic of China as part of the submission. We recognise that the Government of the United Kingdom have a responsibility to Hong Kong until midnight on 30 June 1997—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said with his usual unerring accuracy, for eight years, 11 months and 15 days. We have discussed the 1991 LegCo elections, and the Foreign Secretary and the Minister know that we are not happy with the proposal that only 18 per cent. of the members should be directly elected.

We must also consider what further progress will be made towards democracy and direct elections to the Legislative Council between 1991 and 1997. Perhaps, as there will be a Labour Government during that time, I should be answering my own question. Nevertheless, it may need some preliminary discussion before 1991, and I hope that the Minister will consider that. We should also monitor the further stages of the development of the consultation process and of the discussions over the next few years.

We should note two further points. First, we should acknowledge the valid admonition by the Government of China that nothing was done to advance democracy during a whole century of British responsibility. I am not proud of that. Secondly, we should acknowledge the essence of the joint declaration that, from 1 July 1997, the People's Republic of China will be sovereign. Some hon. Members have said that that means that the Chinese Government can do anything they wish, but, as others have said, there are constraints on them. Our responsibility is to secure all the safeguards that we can, realise their limitations, as the *Financial Times* said in its leader yesterday, and ensure that the Basic Law corresponds as much as possible with the spirit and letter of the joint declaration. After that it is a matter of trust.

In Beijing, the Government of the People's Republic of China described their signature of the joint declaration as a solemn commitment. I accept their sincerity—much more than I do that of the present British Government on a number of issues. The Government of the People's Republic of China have asked us to join hands in making efforts to build up confidence. We should all be careful not to do anything, either deliberately or inadvertently, to undermine confidence in Hong Kong's future. The Government representatives whom we met added that China wanted to demonstrate, in deeds as well as in words, its commitment to one country, two systems, and to the future of Hong Kong. We said that the most striking evidence of that will be the account taken by the Chinese Government of the views, first, of all the people of Hong Kong and also of the British Parliament and Government during the consultation process.

I believe, from my observation of the current position in China—I am sure that the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford, who I sometimes think of as my hon. Friend, would agree—that the Chinese reject the cultural revolution even more than we do. There have been striking economic developments and, even more important, the start of fundamental political change in China. China is also concerned about the future of Taiwan. From our assessment of the statements by the Chinese, we have no reason not to trust them. We have a responsibility to contribute to the building up of confidence—the confidence that is so necessary for a successful and democratic future for the people of Hong Kong.

2.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am sure that we are all delighted that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has been able to return from China early to take part in the debate. I cannot help but reflect on the way in which he praised the economic revolution occurring in the People's Republic of China, although I sometimes wish that he would give rather more praise to the economic revolution that is occurring in the United Kingdom.

This has been another thoughtful and well-informed debate on Hong Kong. It reflects the great interest of the House in the territory's affairs and the depth of concern for Hong Kong and the future of its people. The debate has demonstrated the strong and undiminished sense of responsibility that we all feel towards Hong Kong and all its inhabitants. There should be no doubt that the British Parliament and Government intend to discharge their

reponsibilities to Hong Kong to the full. That means that all of us are committed to doing all that we can to create the conditions for Hong Kong's continued prosperity up to and beyond 1997.

It is right that the debate has concentrated on the draft Basic Law. It is the instrument that will set out in legal form the principles and policies enshrined in the joint declaration. Therefore, it is the Basic Law, above all else, that can provide both the conditions for continuing confidence in Hong Kong and the conditions that will enable Hong Kong to continue as a thriving territory in which people will wish to make their homes.

Hon. Members of all parties have shared their knowledge and insights when discussing the draft Basic Law. We know that people in Hong Kong will follow today's debate closely. I trust that they will be reassured that the concerns that have emerged in the public debate there have been clearly reflected in the House today.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said that this was the last occasion on which the House would have an opportunity to influence the future of Hong Kong. I doubt that, because I am sure that the House will follow events in Hong Kong closely between now and 1997. I dare say that we will have an opportunity to consider this matter at some stage and in an appropriate way when the second draft of the Basic Law is produced.

Before I turn to the points raised in the debate, I should stress again that we are paying close attention to all the views put forward on the Basic Law. I have no doubt that the Chinese authorities are paying equally close attention. We shall ensure that the record of today's debate is formally brought to the attention of the Chinese Government.

Hon. Members have noted that the Legislative Council in Hong Kong has also debated the Basic Law in the past two days. From the reports that I have received, it was a particularly thoughtful and constructive debate. We shall also ensure that the views expressed in that debate, many of which have been echoed here today, are drawn to the attention of the Chinese Government.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and other hon. Members have paid tribute to the openness with which the drafting of the Basic Law has been pursued. That is a general and strongly held view. We are glad that a number of mainland members of the Basic Law drafting committee visited Hong Kong in June to listen to the views of Hong Kong people. While there, they had opportunities, in discussions with the Governor and his officials to learn about the workings of the Hong Kong Government. We are encouraged by their public statements of readiness to reconsider critically those articles in the draft Basic Law that have given rise to concern in Hong Kong. We welcome the plans for a second group of mainland drafters to pay a similar visit to Hong Kong in September. I am sure that that will be appreciated generally.

I like to cover many of the specific points raised by hon. Members as quickly as I can. If I cannot cover any, I undertake to write to hon. Members in due course. Several hon. Members referred to the Vietnamese refugees. The House is considerably concerned about these people. I am sure that the people of Hong Kong will have been delighted by the support that has been given by this House to the Hong Kong Government in providing assistance and help to the refugees. The people of Hong Kong will also have noted that there has been acceptance by this House of the new proposals that have been introduced in Hong Kong in the past few weeks.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley asked several specific questions. Those who are screened out as non-refugees will be detained as illegal immigrants, pending their return to Vietnam when arrangements for their return under suitable safeguards —I stress those words—have been agreed with the Vietnamese authorities. Until that time they will be accompanied in closed centres, run on similar lines to the existing closed centres.

We have always made it clear that the boat people would be returned to Vietnam only if there were guarantees that they would be treated humanely. We envisage that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will play a valuable part in monitoring their conditions on return. Discussions with Vietnam will take place in the fairly near future.

The conditions in the new closed centres will be as similar as possible to those in the previous ones and will be as humane as possible. The correctional services department will run workshops and provide facilities for training and recreation. I can assure the House that families will not be split up and that children will have access to recreational facilities.

We remain conscious of the plight of refugees in Hong Kong who are awaiting resettlement. We are actively considering all aspects of that problem. We are in touch with other Governments about it. In the meantime, our existing resettlement programme is continuing. I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) that we shall take the 468 refugees under our existing commitments. That commitment is in numbers, not names.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) raised a number of questions about endangered species in Hong Kong. There are laws controlling the import and export of the products of endangered species. They are rigorously enforced and a review is under way that will lead to further legislation in the next LegCo Session to tighten up present provisions. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be delighted to hear that there will be a ban on the internal sale of rhino horn, to take effect from 1 August this year. I shall write to him about the other points that he mentioned.

Several hon. Members discussed the rate of emigration from Hong Kong. Some called it a brain drain. We must squarely face that problem. The Government do not intend to minimise it. That is why we have welcomed the establishment by the Hong Kong Government of a special task force to study the extent of the problem. At the same time, it is only right to point out that a considerable proportion of emigrants return to Hong Kong when they have established citizenship elsewhere. There was, for instance, an impressive response to recent advertisements for people for specific jobs in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is also rapidly replenishing its numbers of fully qualified people. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of people graduating from Hong Kong universities, and from overseas universities and then returning to Hong Kong. The number of qualified people is increasing, not decreasing, despite the current level of emigration.

Several hon. Members mentioned the concern felt in Hong Kong about immigration procedures here and the

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

difficulties that some Hong Kong people have encountered when seeking entry into the United Kingdom. My right hon. and learned Friend has already said that he is having discussions with our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about this, but it is important to put it into perspective. Last year, 61,000 Hong Kong British passport holders travelled to Britain, of whom only 310 were denied entry because immigration officials were not satisfied that the purpose of their visit or proposed length of stay had been genuinely explained. All countries and territories, including Hong Kong, operate rules controlling the level of immigration, but we are examining this concern as a matter of priority.

The major preoccupation of this debate has understandably been a discussion of the Basic Law. Hon. Members on both sides raised the question of its consistency with the joint declaration. Much of the draft reproduces provisions of the joint declaration, often word for word, but some parts of the joint declaration are couched in very general terms. It would be possible to give effect to the declaration in more than one way, so consistency is much more complicated than any single assessment would make it out to be. We do not want to come to premature conclusions. We will listen carefully to all the views that are expressed in the House about Hong Kong and so, I am sure, will the Chinese authorities.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to concern about the judicial system. We welcome the provisions in the draft Basic Law for the continuation of Hong Kong's common law system—article 8—and for an independent judiciary in articles 18 and 84. We note that there is provision for final judgment to be vested in Hong Kong.

We are well aware of concerns in Hong Kong that the provisions in the present draft on the relationship between central and local authorities on judicial and legislative matters are not yet quite right. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary referred to those provisions, as did many hon. Members on both sides of the House. These are articles 16, 17, 18, 169, 170 and 172. These are especially complex issues and I do not have time to comment on the detailed proposals that have been made. However, we shall consider the proposals carefully and draw them to the attention of the Chinese authorities. We welcome the statement by Chinese officials who have visited Hong Kong that they have taken careful note of the comments that have been made on these articles. I understand that a considerable revision of article 18 has been mooted.

We have taken careful note of the concern that has been expressed about the phrase in article 17—this is in addition to other laws—that gives expression to national unity and territorial integrity. We recognise the need for certain so-called nationwide statutes to apply to Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South suggested that all relevant laws should be listed in an annexe to the Basic Law, and we consider that to be an avenue that will bear further consideration.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), among others, commented on whether the Executive is properly accountable to the legislature. It is not apropriate, lock, stock and barrel, to import into Hong Kong a system that is practised elsewhere outside Hong Kong. We know that Hong Kong has a different political tradition from other countries. We believe that future arrangements in the SAR should involve the present system, which has worked well and is suited to Hong Kong's unique circumstances.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed some concerns about the provisions on the economy—for example, a balanced budget and a low-tax policy. It has been suggested that the provisions should be drafted as guidelines rather than as legally binding stipulations. That may be something that should be pursued.

Concern has been expressed about the human rights provisions and their inclusion in the Basic Law. It is not clear at this stage whether concern about possible conflicts between international conventions and articles 38 and 39 is a matter of substance or more a matter of drafting. Chinese officials have indicated that there is no intention to impose greater restrictions on human rights than those that now exist. We think that it should be possible to devise drafting improvements that will resolve the issue.

A number of hon. Members mentioned the need for an authentic English text of the Basic Law. There is considerable force in the argument for such a text, and a recent statement by Chinese officials suggests that they are now fully seized of the importance of having one available.

A major theme of the debate has been the need for confidence. Several hon. Members referred to the important task of sustaining confidence in Hong Kong and we are firmly committed to that. I assure the House that we shall uphold our responsibilities to Hong Kong and its people until the last day of British sovereignty over the territory. We have no intention of washing our hands of Hong Kong. We shall not walk away from the problems of transition. On the contrary, we shall stay to tackle them in co-operation with the Hong Kong Government. An equal responsibility lies with the Chinese Government, and I have no doubt that they acknowledge and respect that fact.

In our many contacts with the Chinese authorities, a central theme has been the need to monitor and sustain confidence among the people of Hong Kong. We have emphasised to the Chinese that it is crucial to get the Basic Law right and to respond fully to the anxieties that have been expressed in Hong Kong and voiced today in the House. We have stressed that the first draft of the Basic Law must be amended to take account of genuine anxieties.

For their part, the Hong Kong Government continue to lay a firm foundation for Hong Kong's future prosperity. There are massive investment and development plans afoot to improve the quality of life and to underpin the territory's booming economic growth. For all that to work the people of Hong Kong must have confidence in themselves. Of course, they have their doubts about the future, and we understand those doubts. The future is mapped out——

It being half-past Two o'clock the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 19th July, Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Housing and Social Security may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and

if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall then put successively the Question already proposed from the Chair and the Questions on such of the remaining motions as may be made.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Maternity Services (Bexley)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment a subject that is causing some concern to a significant number of my constituents—the provision of maternity services in the Bexley health district. Before I discuss the specific matter that has been raised by my constituents, I must make it clear that I have received no complaints about the standard of clinical care or treatment that my constituents have received, whether at antenatal clinics, in hospital during confinement, or from community midwives and health visitors at home following the birth of a child. Without doubt, the treatment that patients receive is extremely good and I wish to express my praise and support for the doctors, nurses, midwives and other National Health Service staff who provide such a high standard of care.

I know from my own visits to local hospitals of the dedication of the staff. As a National Health Service patient myself, I appreciate the tremendous work that is done throughout the Health Service. My constituents have raised only limited complaints about the facilities in the hospitals where they have been confined. In contrast, I have heard a great deal of praise for the conditions and facilities in our local hospitals and for the services that they provide. The National Health Service is a unique British institution, which is highly regarded by all patients. It is much valued and much loved.

However, nothing is perfect. The NHS has never been perfect and probably never will be. More and more money is spent, and more and more money is used to provide better services, but there will always be specific complaints and demands, such as the one that I raise this afternoon.

The complaint of a large number of my constituents who are expecting babies is that, although they receive good care, they do not receive it at the hospital of their choice. Although Erith and Crayford is within the Bexley health district, many expectant mothers in my constituency are denied access to the only maternity unit in the district, which is at Queen Mary's hospital in Sidcup. It is an excellent hospital, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health knows from his visit there a year or two ago.

I am concerned about the lack of maternity provision because Erith and Crayford are the main areas of population growth in the London borough of Bexley. Substantial house building is under way in my constituency, particularly of starter homes and homes for young families, in Thamesmead, Erith, Belvedere and Crayford. This influx of people is most welcome because it will not only rejuvenate the area but will ensure a balanced community in the north of the borough of Bexley.

A consequence of that is a high demand for the services that young families require, such as nursery and infant school places, child welfare services, playschools, recreation facilities and, of course, maternity care. In Crayford alone, the birth rate is on average 350 to 400 births a year. Women who live in Erith and Crayford expect and are entitled to receive good health care, including maternity provision, and that is what I wish to bring to the attention of the House this afternoon.

[Mr. David Evennett]

In part, the problem has been caused by local geography. The constituency of Erith and Crayford is long and narrow, bounded to the north by the river Thames, to the west by the London borough of Greenwich, and to the east by the county of Kent. As in many Greater London areas, local road and rail communications are part of the network radiating out from central London to the surrounding counties so that in the main they run from east to west. There have been considerable transport problems, particularly with bus services. There is no longer a direct bus route to the hospital at Sidcup, following major alterations to local services by London Regional Transport, without any proper consultation with the district health authority. I am amazed that there is no statutory obligation to consult health authorities when services to local hospitals are altered, but I realise that I cannot pursue that aspect in this debate.

The problems with the location of hospitals in the area are also partly historical. Erith and Crayford originally formed part of Greenwich and Bexley area health authority, which had three general hospitals strategically located throughout the area—Queen Mary's in Sidcup, the Brook hospital, and Greenwich district hospital—as well as a number of smaller hospitals, including maternity hospitals at Woolwich and Bexleyheath, which, sadly, no longer exist. Following reorganisation of the National Health Service, the area was divided into two districts and many of the smaller and older hospitals were closed, leaving Bexley with a very small complement of hospitals—the district general hospital at Sidcup and the small cottage hospital at Erith, which provided very few acute services.

Although Queen Mary's hospital is the only hospital in Bexley providing maternity services, the catchment area for those services does not include parts of Erith and Crayford—a situation that my constituents and I find unacceptable. Until recently, this did not present too great a problem. With easier east–west transport links, expectant mothers in western parts of the constituency such as Belvedere and Thamesmead received maternity care at Greenwich district hospital. Again, I have received very few complaints about the treatment provided at Greenwich, and many constituents—including my research assistant's wife, Mrs. Belinda Bracken, who gave birth to a baby girl there four weeks ago—have nothing but praise for the hospital. However, the fact that women living in Belvedere and Thamesmead have to go out of the district for maternity care presents some problems, especially with a deteriorating bus service.

Until recently, people in eastern parts of the constituency such as Crayford and Slade Green were in a similar position, finding it easier to travel to West Hill hospital in Dartford for their maternity care—another hospital about which I have a heard a great deal of praise for the quality of care and attention provided. This was largely a quid pro quo arrangement, with residents of Dartford and Crayford and the surrounding area making the easier journey to Dartford while Dartford and Gravesham residents in and around Swanley travelled to Sidcup.

A further problem has now arisen, affecting those who live in the area previously served by West Hill hospital, because Dartford and Gravesham health authority has decided to end maternity services at West Hill and, in the jargon of the NHS bureaucrat, to "rationalise" maternity services at Gravesend hospital, many miles from my constituency. The change was strongly opposed by Bexley health authority, which foresaw the problems that would be created for my constituents, but I understand that the regional health authority—a body which rarely seems to understand the real needs of patients—has agreed to the ending of maternity services at West Hill despite the objections. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is concerned about the bureaucracy within the NHS and is considering how it can be improved so that the Health Service operates in the best interests of the patient as consumer. This is a case in point, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health will take note.

As a consequence of the change, expectant mothers in Crayford and surrounding areas will be expected to travel to Gravesend for maternity care—a journey of considerable difficulty for a pregnant woman, particularly if there are young children to be transported as well. The journey to Sidcup would be shorter and easier.

Obviously, maternity care is not just about confinement for delivery. Effective care must begin from the time that a woman finds that she is pregnant and continued for some time after the child is born. To be effective, at least part of that care should be provided by the hospital where the baby is to be born, if only to establish a link between the expectant mother and the hospital so that she is familiar with it and the surroundings, and so be more at ease when the time comes for admission for birth.

Given the need and reason for such an approach, it is a failure on the part of the Health Service to assign a patient to a hospital which is so far from where she lives that she may be deterred from attending clinics by travelling problems, the cost of travel, or the time involved. I have several constituency cases where that has been the case, and it worries me.

Such an arrangement is ludicrous when one realises that first-class facilities already exist at the general hospital in the district where the patient lives but to which access is denied because of the definition of the hospital's catchment area. The present position is so unsatisfactory that I raised it with the chairman of Bexley health authority, who assures me that the catchment areas are to be reviewed, but he is not sure that the results will be to the satisfaction of the patients in my part of the health authority. I am grateful to him for what he is doing, but I am concerned that a substantial change will not take place unless alternative facilities are provided at Queen Mary's hospital for out-district patients who at present receive maternity care at Queen Mary's.

The maternity unit at Queen Mary's was designed to deal with 3,000 births a year. I understand that it handles about 3,400, of which more than 1,000 are to out-district patients. At the same time, some 690 Bexley residents, mainly from Erith and Crayford, go out of district for maternity care. Obviously, the solution is not simply in the hands of the district health authority. It requires positive action by the regional health authority to adopt a strategic approach to resolve these problems.

The decision to make the boundaries of London boroughs and health districts conterminous was not just some chance happening or coincidence, but a logical and sensible way of linking health authorities with the local community. Bexley health authority, like other district

health authorities, has members who are local councillors and the connection between the authority and the community is strong and generally effective. As a consequence, decisions should be taken in the interests of that local community and with an awareness of its needs.

In deciding to end maternity services at West Hill, Gravesham and Dartford health authority was undoubtedly acting from similar motives. West Hill is on the edge of that disctrict and for people in the Dartford area the journey to Gravesend is not so difficult. However, given Bexley health authority's objections to the change, one can only assume that limited consideration was given to the effect that this change would have on out-district patients —my constituents.

The most sensible solution would be to ensure that, so far as possible, all in-district patients have the opportunity of being treated at hospitals within their district. That should not be assumed to imply any criticism of Gravesend hospital: the complaint is about transport and sheer distance. It is of an organisational nature.

All that is being asked of my right hon. Friend the Minister, his Department and the regional health authority is that expectant mothers in Bexley be given the option of confinement at their local hospital, which they are being denied at present. Understandably my constituents find it difficult to understand why they cannot be treated within their health district, particularly as one third of those receiving maternity care at Queen Mary's are from Bexley and other neighbouring districts. They object to being forced to seek treatment miles away while at the same time they are told that out-district patients treated at Queen Mary's cannot go elsewhere for treatment because the journey would be too difficult for them.

In common with many other complaints about the National Health Service, this complaint is not about the standard of care or about financial and material resources. It is about administration—about which I feel particularly strongly. I believe that wherever possible we should aim for district self-sufficiency. A patient should have to go out of district only as a result of arrangements that are acceptable to him. Some of my constituents in Belvedere and Thamesmead may wish to go to Greenwich, but presently they have no choice. In the cases that I have taken up with Bexley health authority, patients have been positively refused treatment at Queen Mary's. Where the decision of a neighbouring health authority might mean that a patient receives care of a lesser quality—I emphasise "might" because I have no evidence that that is so—I believe that the health authority has a moral obligation to ensure that it acts to resolve the problem.

The answer to this problem is not complicated. Pregnant women in Crayford look to the local health authority to protect their interests. I believe that we have one administrative tier too many in the NHS. I would like the regional health authority to be removed and I do not believe that my constituents would shed many tears if that authority, located in its south coast haven, was no longer around.

I urge my right hon. Friend to consider carefully in-district care and to do all that he can to ensure that patients have a choice so that they can receive their maternity and other care at their nearest district hospital. Patients are under district care and receive treatment at Queen Mary's for all other health matters except for maternity care.

The patient is the most important person to be considered, and I cannot emphasise too strongly that in the bureaucratic discussions that take place the patient is sometimes forgotten. We are not asking for a great deal. The numbers involved could be catered for at Queen Mary's in Sidcup if the patients of Erith and Crayford so desired. I urge my right hon. Friend to consider this matter carefully.

2.47 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on securing, once again, an Adjournment debate to pursue the interests of his constituents. I know from being here on a similar occasion not so long ago that he is extremely assiduous in pursuing his constituency interest. I have a fat file of correspondence that will also testify to that.

I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not attempt to follow him too far down some of the wider, albeit enticing, paths which he has sought to tempt me on the wider organisation of the Health Service. As a number of problems in this case cross district boundaries, I believe there is some role for the regional health authority, or as he implied in his remarks, some body above the district health authority, to attempt to resolve the problems.

My hon. Friend spoke about maternity services, and I know that he has been in correspondence with the chairman of the Bexley health authority, Mr. Brian Hord. I am also aware, from the visit to which he referred, that Bexley's district general hospital, Queen Mary's in Sidcup, is very highly thought of. I know that that is part of the background to my hon. Friend's argument. Among other things, I know that the maternity and geriatric departments are held in high esteem. The maternity department at Queen Mary's was extended in 1984. It currently has 81 obstetric beds and 14 special care baby cots and, as my hon. Friend said, it is designed to cater for 3,000 births a year.

My hon. Friend will know from some recent questions that he has asked in the House that Bexley has a greater provision of maternity beds than the average rate for English health authorities. It has 1·7 beds per thousand women in the relevant age group, compared to the 1·6 average for England. I pay tribute to the authority for its excellent record and local reputation for good care, which is borne out by its place in some of the national statistics. Bexley's neonatal mortality rate—deaths within the first 28 days following birth—is well below average, and so too is its perinatal mortality rate—stillbirths or deaths within the first week. From our 1986 Health Service indicators we know that Bexley health authority has the lowest neonatal mortality rate in England, and its perinatal mortality rate is a long way below the England and Wales average.

I can well understand why mothers are so keen on having babies at that hospital, but, as my hon. Friend said, in 1987 there were 3,423 deliveries at Queen Mary's, which was above the design capacity of 3,000 births per annum. I hope that that use of statistics does not make the place sound more like a factory than a hospital, but for planning purposes one has to make an assumption about the amount of work that will be done. Queen Mary's is already well exceeding what was orginally expected.

My hon. Friend will agree that health athorities have to plan their maternity services to provide an efficient and

[Mr. Tony Newton]

safe level of care. Assessing the number of beds required is a complex process, using estimates of the number of women aged from 15 to 44 in the catchment area, the local birth rate and the average length of stay following childbirth. That was part of the process leading to the extension in 1984. Where demand increases beyond the planned provision and an expectant mother from outside the hospital's usual catchment area asks for her confinement to be at the hospital, she may necessarily have to be referred to a neighbouring hospital, for reasons that I am sure my hon. Friend will understand.

My hon. Friend commented on catchment areas and patient flows in his locality and acknowledged that those flows are complex. As he said, many of his constituents in Crayford have traditionally been in the catchment area of West Hill hospital in Dartford and Gravesham health authority, which is thought to be more accessible for them. Approximately 200 Bexley mothers per year have been going there for their maternity care. A reciprocal arrangement has operated, with approximately 100 mothers from Swanley—situated in the south-west corner of Dartford and Gravesham health authority's boundaries—going to Queen Mary's because that is thought to be more accessible for them. There are a variety of other arrangements between Bexley and Greenwich health authorities, which my hon. Friend mentioned.

Those cross-boundary flows of mothers sound very complicated, but I think it is fair to say that they have been well understood by local GPs and hospital staff and help to ensure that expectant mothers can go to their most accessible hospital, which is perhaps the most important point, whether it is within their own health authority's boundaries or not. There are similar arrangements in all sorts of places across the country. There is an obvious need for such arrangements in a speciality where, by definition, the possibility of a waiting list does not arise.

My hon. Friend set out the implications for his constituents—I well understand the reasons why he raised the matter—of the move of obstetric and gynaecology services from West Hill hospital in Dartford to Gravesend and North Kent hospital. I do not have time to go over those arguments in full, but in September last year, after careful study, Ministers approved the proposal, which was one of several inter-related proposals by Dartford and Gravesham health authority, to rationalise—I realise that my hon. Friend would prefer me not to use that word, but I cannot think of another one—some of its acute in-patient services. I can testify that my hon. Friend wrote to Ministers, drawing attention to his views on the matter and what he believed to be the effect on his constituents. I can assure him—I hope that this is at least some comfort—that his representations were fully considered before the final decision was taken. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State visited both West Hill and Gravesend and North Kent hospitals in September last year to make sure that we had done a full assessment of the proposals and to hear the objections at first hand.

There were several reasons for our deciding in the end to endorse the Dartford and Gravesham proposals, one of which, it is important to say in the context of what my hon. Friend has raised, was that the facilities at West Hill maternity department were old, cramped and inadequate. There is little doubt that if some change had not taken place, there could have been serious midwifery recruitment problems, because the likelihood is that recognition by the professional body for training purposes would have been lost. In our judgment, it would have become increasingly difficult for Dartford and Gravesham to have continued to provide a safe obstetrics service at West Hill hospital if Ministers had rejected their proposal. It is important that that should be understood.

My hon. Friend referred to the fact that there is a study of catchment areas for maternity services under way involving Bexley, Dartford and Gravesham, Greenwich and Bromley health authorities, along with the South-East Thames regional health authority. This week the chairman of Bexley wrote to my hon. Friend in some detail on the review. It is clear that the possibility of changing the arrangements for his constituents in Crayford is among those that will be considered. I am sure that the review will be undertaken thoroughly, and I undertake to ensure that the chairman of the South-East Thames regional health authority is sent a copy of the *Official Report* of the debate. However, I might remove that part in which my hon. Friend suggested that his existence was no longer required. I shall draw his attention to the importance that my hon. Friend attaches to the matter so that my hon. Friend's worries can be taken into account. That does not prevent my hon. Friend from writing to the regional chairman, and, if he has not done so, I hope that he will.

There is not much more that I can say this afternoon, because the study is in hand, but I mention one point on which my hon. Friend may wish to reflect and on which I hope the health authorities involved will also reflect. When preparing for this debate, I noticed that our Health Service indicators showed that lengths of stay in obstetrics in both Bexley and Dartford and Gravesham are very long—among the highest 5 per cent. in the country. The district and regional health authorities should consider that point in their deliberations, because a reduction in the lengths of stay may ease some of the pressure on their maternity departments and perhaps allow additional flexibility in their consideration of catchment areas. It is also worth noting that an increase in the so-called domino system of maternity care—not a phrase for which I care much—where mothers are in hospital for only a short time, might contribute to resolving some of the difficulties.

I have been unable to go over all the ground as to why the changes took place in Dartford and Gravesham, but I hope that I have at least said enough to convince my hon. Friend that, although those changes have been inconvenient from his point of view and he regards the result as less than satisfactory, they were made with a view to ensuring the continued provision of good maternity services and, not least, to ensuring that a proper pattern of service could continue in Dartford and Gravesham.

I have undertaken to ensure that the views expressed by my hon. Friend this afternoon will be drawn to the attention of those conducting the review. I shall urge them to do everything possible to ensure that changes are made which will convince my hon. Friend that the interests of his constituents are being met to the maximum possible extent. I shall ask the regional authority to keep me informed of developments, and I hope that it will not be too long before it reaches conclusions that my hon. Friend will find more satisfactory than the present position.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising this matter. His constituents can be assured that, as long as he is their

Member of Parliament, thay will not want for an advocate in matters relating to the quality and location of their health services.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 18 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Departmental Staff

1. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many established civil servants there are in his Department dealing with regional financial assistance to industry; and what were the figures for the same period in 1987, showing separately in both cases the numbers on temporary transfer *(a)* from and *(b)* to that division.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): On 1 July this year there were 86 established civil servants dealing with regional financial assistance. This compares with 80 on 1 July 1987. In neither case were there any staff transferred temporarily from or to the division concerned.

Mr. Morgan: Given the announcement about the future of the Rover car pressings factory at Llanelli this morning and the loss of 900 jobs there, does the Secretary of State agree that he has grossly underestimated the demand and the need for greater concentration on regional assistance to industry in Wales? Does he agree also that he must abandon all plans to start dispersing civil servants from the Welsh Office industry department later this year?

Mr. Walker: I have no such plans. All the staff at the industry department are fully employed and work a great deal of overtime as a result of the substantial number of applications for regional aid that they are processing. I am delighted to say that that will continue. I regret the announcement of any future closure. I hope that the positive approach to regional policy that we are pursuing will assist in finding many more new jobs.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: With Wales becoming an increasingly attractive place in which to invest, does my right hon. Friend agree that the number of applications for regional assistance is likely to continue to increase? Will he assure me that he will continue to strive to reduce the time spent in processing each application?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. Applications for regional development grant, for example, are being processed at twice the rate of a year ago. There has been a great improvement. We shall ensure that every endeavour is made to process all applications as quickly as possible.

Mr. Barry Jones: May I say nuts to the Secretary of State—especially pistachio nuts? Does he know that the Firegreen company has applied to the Welsh Office for a grant, which may lead in the end to 300 jobs, and certainly over 100, in my constituency at Hawarden? May I ask the right hon. Gentleman carefully to examine the application that has been made? Will he speed up the making of his decision so that the prospect of jobs might be realised?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman, with his experience, will understand that I cannot comment in detail on a particular application. Queries and inquiries are taking place. I realise the importance of the application, and it is receiving careful consideration in my Department, which is in touch with the firm concerned.

Ministerial Visits

2. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many overseas visits he has made on official business since he took office as Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Four.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his achievements in securing jobs for Wales and in projecting a virile and energetic profile of Wales throughout the world are universally admired throughout Wales, and that the admiration is shared by many Labour-controlled councils? There is universal admiration, with the possible exception of two or three unreconstructed Labour Members.

Mr. Walker: The progress is exceedingly good. Overseas investment this year is already more than the record which was set last year. I hope that this progress will continue. I am pleased to say that in the past few days a major new investment from Germany has been announced.

Mr. Page: The House knows that whenever my right hon. Friend travels abroad he enhances the image of the Principality. Is he aware that he may be asked to reciprocate and to receive visitors? Will he guarantee that his officials will keep a welcome in the valleys for any visiting minor politician and ensure that he will not be held at gunpoint and sworn at?

Mr. Walker: I assure the House that the hospitality of the Welsh Office is total and that no such incidents will take place.

National Health Service

3. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to improve the National Health Service in Wales in the light of the increasing average age of the population.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Grist): We shall continue our successful programme of improving the National Health Service to provide the people of Wales generally with the best care possible from the record levels of resources that we are making available.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that a twin crisis is approaching that will peak in 1991, when we shall see a 9 per cent. increase over 1986 in the numbers aged 65 years and over, combined with the lowest figure for those aged between 50 years and 65 years, who provide the majority of family and voluntary carers? Will the Minister promise that Welsh area health authorities will be adequately funded for that dual crisis? Will he give us, for a start, a

guarantee that every health authority area will be adequately funded to enable it to meet the nurses' pay award? Will he confirm, or deny, the figures that have been quoted for the shortfall in Wales?

Mr. Grist: In response to the hon. Gentleman's first point, I assure him that the funding of the Health Service will continue to be at the correct and proper level, as we have assured since we came to power. In response to the question about nurses' pay, we will have to wait and see precisely what demands are made when the regrading structure has been carried out.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that the county with the projected greatest increase in the number of elderly people is Gynedd, not only because of a natural increase, but because of a movement of retired people into private homes who, as they get older, may well bring additional pressure on the hospitals? In the light of that, will the Minister ensure that any consideration of the future of the hospitals in Gwynedd, particularly in Portmadoc and Caernarfon, will be part of a coherent long-term strategy and not an ad hoc reaction to short-term cash shortages?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I cannot comment on the particular hospitals that he has named. However, the fact that Gwynedd has an aging population is appreciated and taken into consideration in the various formulae for health authorities. This of course rather begs the question that all of us here are likely to fall in the next century into the age groups that we are now discussing. We should bear that mind.

Mr. Foot: Leaving aside any invidious matters about age groups, will the Minister give an absolute assurance that the latest proposals put forward by the Gwent area health authority will be subject to genuine consultation with all the parties concerned, that the Welsh Office will listen carefully to all the representations and that if those representations point to the fact that there should be a very considerable increase in funding in Wales, the Welsh Office will carry that message back to the Government?

Mr. Grist: I guarantee that all consultations carried out by the Welsh Office are carried out in a genuine, full and open fashion.

Mr. Marlow: If a patient were to present himself to the Health Service in Wales with steam coming out of his ears, could my hon. Friend the Minister assure the House that there would be facilities for dealing with that complaint? Also, if anybody aspiring for a position of leadership in Wales or outside Wales were unable to control his temper, can my hon. Friend confirm that facilities exist where that person could get the necessary treatment?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Paul Murphy.

Rating Reform

4. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received any representations from Welsh businesses in connection with the implementation of the proposed unified business rate.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Secretary of State agree that the deep unpopularity of the proposed business rate in Wales is due largely to the fact that it will mean an increase in the commercial rate and because it threatens the vital link between local authorities and local industries, which is a major factor in determining industrial investment in Wales.

Mr. Walker: I am delighted to say that of the 11 business organisations consulted, nine were in favour and only two against.

Mr. Flynn: The result of the changes will be less accountability to Welsh councils, because up to 80 per cent. of the money received by Welsh councils will be determined centrally. How does that make Welsh local authorities more accountable?

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman would like less given centrally and more taken locally, I note his proposal.

Hospitals

5. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals in Wales have *(a)* been closed and *(b)* been opened since 1979; and what is the net loss of hospital beds in that period.

Mr. Grist: Twenty-three National Health Service hospitals in Wales closed between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1987 and nine opened. The net loss of hospital beds in that period was 2,544, of which almost two thirds —1,690—were for people with a mental handicap or mental illness, in line with our policy that services should be developed in the community so that such people may lead as normal a life as possible.

Mr. Williams: Is the Minister not ashamed of those figures, of 2,500 beds lost, and of fewer hospital beds in Wales today than when the National Health Service was formed in 1947? May I ask him about Mynydd Mawr hospital, which is just outside my constituency? Part of East Dyfed health authority's proposals for modernising Llanelli hospital include closing Mynydd Mawr hospital, with a loss of 58 beds for elderly people. Does the Minister not realise that cottage hospitals are much needed and wanted? Why is it that when it comes to hospital modernisation, the Government are willing to put up with certain losses of hospital beds?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will know that the proposal he mentioned is purely the responsibility of the local health authority at the moment, which sees it in connection with the proposed expansion of phase 2 of the new Llanelli hospital. Clearly, that is not something on which I can comment at present. As to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, since 1967—for the past 20 years—there has been a fall in the number of staffed beds in Wales, as the policy of closing beds to keep people in the community has been common to both sides of the House.

Mrs. Clywd: Does the Minister not realise that the nine area health authorities have already said that if he is unable to fund the nurses' pay award in full they will be between £8 million and £10 million short? Where does the Minister expect them to find that money? Where are they to get it? Will that shortfall mean further ward closures and longer waiting lists? Will he tell the House?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Lady mistook what I first said. I said nothing to the effect that we are not going to fund the nurses' pay award.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Minister aware that there are 580 people waiting for ENT operations in Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr, alone, and that 80 per cent. of them are children? Is he aware of the distress caused to both children and their parents, who are now being driven to pay for private treatment—often to the consultants who are at the hospital? Does he not think that that is scandalous? Is it not time that he took action?

Mr. Grist: If the hon. Gentleman is speaking of his own particular hospital, he will be aware that matters there are under investigation by the hospital's own authorities. My Department is keeping a close eye on those investigations.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is it not a fact that, as I have said on a number of occasions, each advance in medical science may increase the length of some waiting lists by enhancing the demand?

Mr. Grist: That is true. Fifteen years ago one would not have had a waiting list for hip operations, because the operating method was unknown them.

Mentally-Ill Patients

6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of mentally-ill patients in Wales who have spent more than three months in *(a)* mental hospitals and *(b)* psychiatric wards in general hospitals.

Mr. Grist: On 5 April 1987, the latest date for which this information is available, there were 2,680 patients in mental illness hospitals and units in Wales who had been resident for more then three months. Equivalent information is not available centrally in respect of patients cared for in general hospitals.

Mr. Wardell: Does the Minister accept that Wales has one of the worst statistical records for the percentage of mentally-ill patients who are treated in general hospitals' psychiatric wards, as opposed to hospitals for the mentally ill in the Principality? The World Health Organisation has clearly pointed out that fact. What measures is the Minister taking to correct that imbalance and to remove the stigma that so many of our people suffer by being treated in mentall illness hospitals? For example, in West Glamorgan there is not a single bed in a psychiatric general hospital for the treatment of the mentally ill.

Mr. Grist: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that, unfortuntely, mental illness still carries with it considerable stigma. That must change if we are to make a success of developing those locally based services of which I spoke earlier. That is our determination, and I think that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Minister share our concern that the poll tax may be the deciding factor in forcing families no longer to accommodate mentally-ill members of their own family, thus not only breaking up families, but increasing the burden on our psychiatric hospitals? How does the Minister reconcile the increased burden of the poll tax with the Government's professed aim of keeping mentally-ill people in the community?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will know that the sort of people of whom he speaks will be disabled and therefore will not pay the poll tax.

Mr. John: Does the Minister recognise that we all share the desire for a number of people in mental hospitals to be discharged into the community, but that that is not a cheap option? Can he tell me how much has been paid for the care and support of such people within the community following the Government's initiative, and how many places have been created within the community as a result of that initiative?

Mr. Grist: I am not able to give the exact figures, but the hon. Gentleman is right: it is not a cheap option. According to the figures that I have, we are spending some £110 million a year on mental illness services, £65 million of which goes on the nine large hospitals in Wales.

Sport and Recreation

7. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's proposals for private management of sports grounds, leisure and recreation facilities, in so far as they affect *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 1 July.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Minister for that helpful answer. Is he aware that the average deficit for a swimming pool in the Principality is £200,000? Attempting to make a profit in those circumstances is likely to mean having to cut staff or otherwise risk the safety of the pool's users. Has the Minister taken that into account?

Mr. Grist: Certainly. All safety measures will have to be maintained by anyone who takes on a contract to run a swimming pool. That is absolute an in law.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my hon. Friend watch the position with some care? Is he aware that there is legitimate concern in many quarters about the possible consequences of privatising the sports centres, which could result in the introduction of fruit machines and other such undesirable intrusions into what should be a public amenity?

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that the management of these facilities will be under the control of the local authorities. People have not understood that, for instance, pricing and admission policies will also be something that the local authorities can lay down at the outset.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Minister recognise that we are probably unanimous in the House in our deep concern at the exessive drinking, drug taking, vandalism and hooliganism among the young? Does he agree that there are enormous social gains to be made if, by providing positive activities for the young, we can reduce any of those crucial problems?

Does the Minister accept in this context that merely fiddling with the management of existing facilities is irrelevant to, and a diversion from, the real problem, which is the need to provide more resources and facilities that are directly relevant to the needs of the young? What meaningful proposals has he to make?

Mr. Grist: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would notice, for instance, the sprouting

around Wales of enormous numbers of leisure centres, which are a very new development. They will remain available, and the pricing and admission policies will remain in the hands of the local authorities when they lay down the contracts. Those who run such facilities will have an absolute incentive to persuade as many people as possible to take advantage of them, whereas at present they have no such incentive.

Housing

8. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he will take to improve the quality and quantity of housing for rent in Wales at affordable prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Government are seeking to improve the quantity and quality of housing available for rent principally by taking action to stimulate the development of the private sector, and by increasing the investment in housing association schemes.

We are also taking steps to improve the management of rented accommodation in the public sector and providing new safeguards for private sector tenants against harassment.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that the private rented sector now deals with only about 6 per cent. of households in Cardiff, and that there has been an increase of well over one third in the number of homelessness presentations in the capital city? Does he accept that there is a desperate need for the Government to give positive support to the council house sector if those homelessness figures are not to continue to escalate and the council house waiting list is not to continue to lengthen? Would it not be appropriate for the Minister to assure us that finances will be made available, not only for management, but for an increase in the number of houses in the public sector to meet that desperate need?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on the fact that the provision of private rented accommodation is too low. It has been sat on and harried for many years. We wish to bring that to an end and to expand both the private sector and the housing association movement. Local authorities ought to look after their stock and keep it in good repair. A great deal of publicly owned housing has fallen into serious disrepair and we have urged local councils to spend money on repairing it. Local councils are free to build, and they are doing so.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister failed to answer the key question, which is how much housing there will be for rent in Wales at affordable prices. Does the Housing Bill provide a guarantee to tenants that rented accommodation will cost no more than 20 per cent. of their income? If the Minister cannot say that it does, the promises in the Housing Bill are as nothing and will not meet the demand all over Wales for cheap, decent rented housing.

Mr. Grist: We believe that social housing, or affordable rents, will be available through the housing association movement in particular. Housing benefit will be available to all who are paying rents at or below the market level.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister has referred several times to housing associations, but in areas such as Gwynedd and Dyfed house prices are escalating so rapidly that housing associations are finding it next to impossible, given the bureaucratic procedures, to compete in the market place and acquire housing. What additional provision does the Welsh Office intend to make available to housing associations to enable them to undertake the vital role to which the Minister referred?

Mr. Grist: That is why we are making £60 million available this year to the Housing Corporation in Wales. I think that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the establishment of Housing for Wales, a body which will be able to take into account the factors to which he referred.

Hospitals

9. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals he has visited in Wales since 1 January.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have visited two hospitals and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has visited four.

Mr. Jones: When the Minister makes his visits, is he apprised of the serious national shortage of speech therapists and physiotherapists? Will he dwell on the distress and upset in many homes that shelter within them children who, when in language units at school, do not have sufficient time devoted to their speech defects? I ask the Minister to call an all-Wales conference, to give extra money to the health authorities and to give a lead in helping very distressed families.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman knows that we have increased the number of speech therapists in Wales and the money that is being spent on speech therapy. However, I recognise that this is an important area and that parents feel anxious and aggrieved. I should like the improvement to be continued.

Dr. Marek: When does the Minister intend to keep the promise made by the Under-Secretary of State for Wales that by last spring nobody in Wales should have to wait more than a month for an urgent operation?

Mr. Walker: I am glad to say that there has been a substantial improvement, unlike the sharp deterioration that occurred in the year before this Government took office.

Mr. Alan Williams: On the Secretary of State's visits to various hospitals he will no doubt have noticed the shortage of nurses. Since the recent review exercise had, as part of its purpose, giving proper pay to nurses to ensure that they no longer left the profession and—equally important—to ensure that recruitment was improved to make up for shortages, has any provision been made to meet the costs of filling vacant nursing posts and, if so, precisely how much?

Mr. Walker: That will vary from one district health authority to another, but the right hon. Gentleman must be very pleased that there are at least 13 per cent. more nurses today than there were when we took office.

Sport and Recreation

11. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to improve the sporting leisure and

recreational facilities available to the people of *(a)* Rhondda, *(b)* the valleys of South Wales and *(c)* Wales as a whole.

Mr. Peter Walker: Central Government support to sporting, leisure and recreational facilities is provided primarily through the Sports Council for Wales, the Welsh Arts Council and the Wales Tourist Board. Urban programme support will also be available for worthwhile projects. Developments in the Rhondda and other South Wales valleys will be given added impetus by the recently announced specific programmes announced in the Valleys programme.

Mr. Rogers: Last week, in the debate on sport, the Minister drew attention to the enormous increase in the use of sporting and leisure activities in the past 10 years. After an intervention, and with some bad grace, he acknowledged that that was due to the efforts of local authorities. Will the Secretary of State now acknowledge the enormous contribution made by local authorities in the development of leisure and recreational activities? Will he give an assurance that the facilities in Wales will remain in public hands and not be ripped off for private profits?

Mr. Walker: They will certainly remain in public hands. I am delighted that the various organisations and the servicing of them will be compared with private tenders, but they will remain in public hands. The hon. Gentleman will be delighted at the announcement of the £8·26 million of capital grant in the next three financial years for various leisure and sporting facilities, which will make quite an impact. Of course, local authorities make a major contribution. I am sure that local authorities in Wales are relieved that in recent years 66 per cent. of that contribution was financed by central Government.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to welcome the new pub hours due to be introduced in Wales by 1 September? Does he acknowledge that the introduction of the Licensing Act will not only add greatly to the facilities available for recreation and leisure in Wales but will enable the courts to crack down on under-age drinking?

Mr. Walker: I certainly welcome any proposals that enable the courts to crack down on under-age drinking.

Enterprise Education

12. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the provision of enterprise education in Wales.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The "Survey of Enterprise Education and School Industry Links," by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, which was published earlier this month, confirms that the enterprise culture is taking hold in Wales. Nearly 90 per cent. of all Welsh secondary schools are now involved in some form of enterprise education, with more than 70 per cent. specifically involved in mini-enterprise activities.

The HMI report suggests that in the best schemes enterprise education has helped to relate the curriculum to industrial and commercial activities and to the local community. Pupils acquire an awareness of the world of business through practical experience and develop personal abilities and initiative.

Mr. Jones: I welcome my hon. Friend's reply. Is he satisfied that the business community is now ready to play its new full role in the governance of schools and colleges?

Mr. Roberts: Certainly the business community has reacted extremely well to the industry-schools initiative of 1986. There is a very prominent role for the business community in the governance of schools. Some 25 per cent. of the governors of local authority colleges are required to be representatives of the business community for the future.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that in encouraging enterprise in education, which is very desirable, one must take the greatest care not to affect the public service ethic, which is the foundation of all proper education, including the conduct of all our public examinations at GCSE level? In particular, does he agree that the activities of academic racketeers, such as Mr. William Hoole, the principal at New college, Cardiff, who has shown a great deal of enterprise but not very much ethic, are thoroughly undesirable? Does he also agree that if he were to study the dossier of allegations of misconduct in GCSE, O and A-level examinations at that college he would see that students were being given tip-offs about which subjects were coming up in A and O-level practical examinations, that atlases were being taken into examinations when that was not allowed under Welsh Joint Education Committee rules, and other examples of ways in which the public service ethic would be very seriously affected if that kind of thing were continued?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is confusing at least two matters. With regard to the situation at New college, Cardiff, he is well aware that I have asked him to submit to me any information that he has. The premises will be visited by Her Majesty's inspectors for the second time in the coming year.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point, of course education is a public service, whether it is provided by the private sector or the maintained sector. I am sure he will agree that an important part of education is that children should be introduced to the world of work.

Welsh Parliament

14. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the establishment of a Welsh parliament since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the past year I have received only two letters specifically asking for a Welsh parliament.

Mr. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the response by the people of Wales to Opposition Members' demands shows that they recognise the importance of being fully represented in this House and that they do not wish to see another tier of government added to the burden on the Welsh people? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that the new-found interest of Opposition Members is merely a recognition of their impotence?

Mr. Walker: In fairness, my hon. Friend must specify which Opposition Members have one view and which have another. The last official view of the Opposition was in their manifesto, which said:

"Wales is an integral part of the United Kingdom. Labour rejects any proposals which would separate Wales in any way from the rest of Britain."

I trust that after his triumphant return from Zimbabwe the Leader of the Opposition will make clear the Labour party's position.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State accept that since 1979 thousands of people in Wales who voted no on that occasion have seen the potential merit of having a directly elected Welsh body, namely, that the responsibilities of the Welsh Office would come under the control of people elected in Wales who would answer to the people of Wales? If there were sufficient evidence from Wales that there was a strong desire for an elected tier of democracy there, would he for ever more pitch his heart against it?

Mr. Walker: I noted the result of the last referendum on the subject. In fairness, the hon. Gentleman has remained consistent on the issue as has his party. Indeed, it is the main purpose of his party. The Conservative party has also remained consistent on the issue. The only party that changes its view from time to time is the Labour party.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend propose to invite the Leader of the Opposition for discussions on this important matter on his return from Zimbabwe? Does he think that the Leader of the Opposition will have learnt anything of interest from his visit to Zimbabwe that will help the Welsh people, or does he believe that he will be so upset by what happened to him there that he will be incapable of any discussions on anything?

Mr. Walker: I do not wish to join my hon. Friend in that sort of allegation. I happen to be one of the leaders of the belief that we must preserve the present Leader of the Opposition at all costs.

Ogwr Borough (Development)

16. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much extra finance is available for any new development in the Ogwr borough area from his Valleys initiative programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: The level of expenditure in Ogwr will depend to a large extent on the number and quality of projects which come forward from local authorities, industrialists and others in the area over the three years of the Valleys programme. But, there is no doubt the area will benefit. For example, in 1988-89 expenditure on derelict land clearance in the hon. Gentleman's constituency is forecast to be some £400,000—over 50 per cent. up on last year; Welsh Development Agency expenditure on factory building will be about £500,000 compared with nothing at all last year; and urban programme allocations to Ogwr borough council in 1988-89 total some £1·2 million—about 20 per cent. more than last year. In addition, I shall shortly be announcing a new experimental scheme based in the Bridgend area which will aim to improve the link between small businesses and private investors.

Mr. Powell: Is the Secretary of State aware of the Welsh Institute of Directors' statement last Saturday? Clearly, they are appalled at his suggestion that the Valleys initiative will do anything without cash back-up? Can he explain to the House whether there is any new money for his new initiative? I remind him that in the Ogwr borough area the only new initiative announced is the refurbishment of the Blaengarw working men's hall. The other proposals offered for Ogwr were already on the books long before he announced his Valleys initiative.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman's constituency benefits massively from the enormous increase in factory building and derelict land clearance. The trouble is that the hon. Gentleman is horrified at the substantial improvements taking place in the valleys.

Tenants' Choice

17. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his proposals for tenants' choice in Wales, in the light of the publication by the Secretary of State for the Environment of a document setting out the position in England.

Mr. Grist: Exactly the same principles will govern the implementation of tenants' choice in Wales as will govern it in England. Once Housing for Wales has been established, it will take over the functions of the Housing Corporation in this regard, as in others, but will continue to apply the same principles. I am today issuing similar guidance to that which has been issued in England. Copies of the guidance are available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Griffiths: What consultations did the Minister undertake with local authorities in Wales before publishing the guidelines? Will he explain how he foresees this initiative increasing the amount of housing available for people in Wales?

Mr. Grist: The initiative increases tenants' choice. Labour Members have always opposed people's right to buy their houses or to have the landlords of their choice. The Labour party is not the party of freedom and choice for the individual.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

County Palatine

19. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next proposes to visit the County Palatine on official duties.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I frequently visit the County Palatine, and I expect to make more visits in the autumn.

Mr. Pike: When the Chancellor next visits Lancashire, will he get away from the wining-and-dining circuit, visit north-east Lancashire, look at the difficulties of people being unable to get housing grants and of the problems that will arise as a result of the poll tax? If he meets ordinary Lancashire folk, he will find that the Government have been a disaster for Lancashire. Will he use his office to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to do something about the problems?

Mr. Clarke: I wine and dine on quite a modest scale in Lancashire and meet many straightforward Lancashire folk. My experience of the county is that at present it is going through an extremely successful period. East Lancashire is experiencing one of the most sustained falls

in unemployment that the area has known for a long time. That is likely to continue as long as the British economy is doing so well.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the people of Lancashire take a very positive view of life, as he does himself? They resent Labour Members' denigration of a county that is flourishing. The only fly in the ointment is the high level of rates that has been levied since the Labour party took control of the council. Rates have almost doubled since it took over. Apart from that, it is a super county.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that Lancashire is proving especially successful in attracting new investment and jobs, even in the constituency of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). The Burnley and Pendle development corporation has been doing very good work over the past two years. The fly in the ointment in parts of Lancashire has been the excessive spending of councils, which has resulted in high rates for local industry. Even some of the councils are beginning to learn the lesson.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Publications

20. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the publications for which the Church Commissioners are responsible.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners (Mr. Michael Alison): The commissioners' publications include their annual report and accounts, their report as the central stipends authority and, in partnership with the Central Board of Finance, "Crockford's Directory", and a three-yearly report on the Church's finances. The commissioners also publish a variety of material for information on such matters as parochial fees, the parochial expenses of the clergy and other matters for which they have some responsibility.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for his courteous reply. In considering the publications programme, will the Church Commissioners bear in mind the yearning of the British people for a moral lead? When they consider whether to publish the works of the Bishop of Durham, will they bear in mind that many of us would be reluctant to see my right hon. Friend charged with the once capital crime of heresy?

Mr. Alison: I note carefully what my hon. Friend says. The utterances of the Bishop of Durham are as likely to find themselves recorded in the columns of *Hansard* as in any Church Commissioners' report. The utterances, teachings and moral exhortations of bishops and other clergy occur regularly at parish and diocesan level, where they are most valued and most effective.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true that sentences of consecration must be issued on cemetary land and that such sentences were issued on the three cemetaries sold by Westminster city council? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that those sentences of consecration prevent the sale of such land to property speculators? Will he confirm that the consistory court of the diocese——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must be related to publications.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman instigate an inquiry into these matters?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman has asked me a question which, although profoundly relevant to many aspects of life and death, is outside my remit.

Pensions and Lump Sum Payments

21. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church Commissioners will be asked to contribute per head, in lump sums and in pension payments, to bishops and clergymen who opt out of holy orders in the event of the ordination of women; how many bishops and clergy are expected to be involved; at what estimated total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The draft legislation concerning the ordination of women and the related financial provisions is now awaiting consideration by a revision committee. I shall arrange for details of the payment provisions, as the legislation is at present drafted, to be published in the *Official Report*, but I can say that the cost per 100 men is estimated at some £3 million spread over five years. No reliable estimate can be made of the numbers who might resign.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that a substantial number of men have said that they will leave holy orders in the Church of England in the event of the ordination of women, thereby creating a major schism within the Church? Will my right hon. Friend seek talks with the Church Commissioners to ensure that any men who exercise their right to leave holy orders are thoroughly compensated, as they should be?

Mr. Alison: The details of possible compensation are already under scrutiny, as my answer revealed. My hon. Friend must bear in mind that there must be another election of the General Synod in 1990 before any irrevocable decision can be taken on the ordination of women. Such a decision is a long way off and far from certain at this stage.

Following is the information:

Under the draft Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure, a diocesan bishop would receive a lump sum loan of £15,990, a resettlement grant of £1,700 and periodic payments of £7,995 per annum for up to five years according to age. An incumbent would receive a lump sum loan of £15,990, a resettlement grant of £1,700 and periodic payments of £5,330 per annum for up to five years according to age.

The total cost per 100 men is estimated at some £3 million spread over five years. Half of that relates to loans, which would be repayable from the lump sum payable at retirement age.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Auditors (Payment)

23. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what is the total sum paid to

outside auditors by the National Audit Office for each of the last five years; and how many private sector audit practices were in receipt of such payments.

Sir Peter Hordern (The Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The main National Audit Office contracts for audit work placed with firms engaged in private sector audit practice amounted to £53,000—including VAT—in 1984-85 involving two firms. The figure for 1988-89 is estimated at £139,000. The number of firms involved this year is three. I have arranged for full details for the five years covered by the question to appear in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Field: Can my hon. Friend really be satisfied with those figures, given the substantial size of the National Audit Office? Should we not look for a much greater proportion of the audit work being put out to the private sector?

Sir Peter Hordern: It is open to the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General, who has complete authority in these matters, to decide just how much work should be put out to the private sector. The Comptroller and Auditor General recognises the importance of the work being carried out in the private sector to help his auditors gain experience of the private sector market, as is happening increasingly.

Following are the figures:

The main National Audit Office contracts with firms engaged in private sector audit practice have been as follows:

Year	*Total Contract Value (including VAT) £*	*Number of firms*
1984-85	53,000	2
1985-86	81,000	4
1986-87	88,00	2
1987-88	97,000	2
1988-89[1]	139,000	3

[1] Estimate.

These contracts cover the audit of NAO's own accounts and audit work on other organisations' accounts on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Commission Meetings

24. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission when the Public Accounts Commission last met; and what matters were discussed.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Commission's last meeting was held on Tuesday 12 July, when the subjects discussed included the salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the salary of the Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General. The Commission also agreed a report on its recent activities. The report was published this morning.

Mr. Allen: Does the hon. Gentleman have any comment to make on the respective salary levels that obtain within the Public Accounts Commission, especially for Northern Ireland, where the situation is difficult?

Sir Peter Hordern: I have to report to the House that the Commission is not satisfied with the Government's attitude towards the salary of the Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General, which has been both obstructive and negative. Ministers must understand that the independence of the Comptroller and Auditor General, whether here or in Northern Ireland, is vital to the proper execution of his duties. When I tell the House that it was seriously suggested that the Northern Ireland Civil Service should help to assess what the Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General should be paid by way of salary, I think the House will appreciate how unsatisfactory the present position is.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that the present Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General did absolutely invaluable work in bringing forward the facts of the De Lorean scandal and making them known to the House? Is it not disgraceful that Ministers have left matters as they are? I know that my hon. Friend and the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission have made a personal approach to Ministers, but will my hon. Friend go back to them again and insist that they take early action?

Sir Peter Hordern: Yes, we shall do that.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the salaries of the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland and of the Comptroller and Auditor General seem to be largely determined by the views of the Civil Service? As their function is to monitor and control expenditure by civil servants, that is a wholly unsatisfactory state of affairs. Will the hon. Gentleman accept the strong support of the House for the action that he is taking?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. What is particularly sad about the present impasse is that the common purpose that has existed for more than 100 years between this House and the National Audit Office has now been called into question. It is absolutely essential that the Comptroller and Auditor General should be seen to be independent of the Government and that his salary should not be directly related to any particular service or grade in the Civil Service. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we hope to have further discussions with the Government.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: Will my hon. Friend take note of the general view of the House on this matter, which is clearly in support of the strong, but wholly appropriate, language that my hon. Friend used about the Government's attitude to the salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland? It is very important, and I ask my hon. Friend to ensure that he makes the strongest renewed representations to Ministers asking them to think again.

Sir Peter Hordern: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks. I shall certainly do that. The trouble is that the affairs of the Public Accounts Commission are not widely known, and I would therefore commend to the House the report of the Commission, which appeared today.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Medical Facilities

25. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to improve the medical facilities open to Members and staff of the House.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will want to join me in paying tribute to the work of the nursing sister. The medical facilities of the House are kept under continuous review, with improvements being made from time to time on the advice of medical experts. If the hon. Gentleman has a particular point in mind, I suggest that in the first instance he should contact either my hon. Friend the Member for Reading East (Sir G. Vaughan) or the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie).

Mr. Wareing: Does the Lord President of the Council realise that, notwithstanding the marvellous work done by the nursing sister, no other medical staff are available on a full-time basis either to the House of Commons or to Members of the other place? Should there not be medical staff, and should we not make provision for them to consider the health hazards and problems of Members and staff who work in this place? Heaven knows, with this Government introducing so much legislation, it is a wonder that there are still so many well people in this place.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It only adds to the time.

Mr. Wareing: It is ludicrous that it should be the will of the electorate that determines how many members of the medical profession we have in this place. At the moment we happen to have one hon. Member on either side of the House who is a medical practitioner. Should there not be a more permanent arrangement than that?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that there could be a case for the review of a medical surveillance scheme for hon. Members. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will at least discuss his ideas with my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East and the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy.

I am sure that we are all extremely grateful to Dr. Snashall, who operates the present service, and to his predecessor Dr. Gage. Provisions for dealing with emergencies of the kind that the hon. Gentleman may have in mind have been made on the advice of the Civil Service medical adviser and have included the training of a number of qualified first-aiders among the staff. In addition, we are fortunate in having a number of excellent hospitals nearby.

Mr. Couchman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is to be a tug-of-war this evening between Members of the House and Members of the other place in aid of the Macmillan fund, which is an excellent charity? What arrangements has my right hon. Friend made to ensure that medical facilities are on hand in case of accidents in this perilous venture?

Mr. Wakeham: I sincerely hope that no special arrangements will be required. I have seen some of the hon. Members who are taking part in the tug-of-war and they look pretty fit to me.

Palace of Westminster (Passes)

26. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received about the number of passes issued to gain access to the Palace of Westminster, about the case for the numbers to be limited and about the feasibility of limiting pass holders to more restricted areas of the Palace.

Mr. Wakeham: Since 10 November 1987, when the House resolved that the Services Committee should consider the control of access to the precincts of the House, I have received one letter from an hon. Member and answered 10 parliamentary questions on matters relating to the number of passes issued.

In addition to that, during the course of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee's inquiry into access to the precincts of the House the Sub-Committee took oral evidence on four occasions and received some 35 memoranda. The Sub-Committee has just completed that inquiry and intends to publish the report, which encompasses, among other issues, numbers of passes, their limitation and the question of controlled areas, on Monday 25 July.

Mr. Chapman: In view of my right hon. Friend's reply, I shall wait to read with interest the report of the Select Committee. In the meantime, could my right hon. Friend assure the House that the deliberations and proposals of this Committee will be based not only on grounds of security but on the simple fact that the Palace has limited facilities for a limited number of people and that, on the space factor alone, more restrictions will be necessary?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the force of my hon. Friend's point. However, I recommend that he awaits publication of the report.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Leader of the House confirm that there are no fewer than 140 Government press officers with passes to this building which give them access to the Press Gallery, and that that means that there is one Government press officer for every three journalists entitled to get into the Press Gallery? Is that because Ministers are incapable of explaining the Government's policies?

Mr. Wakeham: It is because they are capable of explaining their good policies and because they have plenty to say that, from time to time, press officers are required in the House. The hon. Gentleman is being mischievous if he thinks that the 140 are here together at any one time, because there are many Government Departments. The hon. Gentleman has some knowledge of these matters. I suggest that he awaits publication of the report, which he played some part in preparing.

Dining Rooms (China and Cutlery)

27. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many pieces of *(a)* china and *(b)* cutlery are estimated to have been removed without authority

from House of Commons Dining Rooms in each of the past five years; at what cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Wakeham: The average cost per annum over the last five-year period of purchases of tableware amounted to £43,000, which represents approximately 2 per cent. of the Refreshment Department's annual turnover. These purchases were substantially to cover general wear and tear. It is not possible to give a breakdown.

Mr. Greenway: It is annoying that we cannot have a breakdown of the figures for china. In view of the high cost of the replacement of china and cutlery—items of which are usually taken as souvenirs—will my right hon. Friend save the taxpayers' money by electronically tagging all china and cutlery? Will he consider issuing plastic knives, forks and spoons stamped with the House of Commons crest to all visitors, so that they can take them away with them?

Mr. Wakeham: As usual, my right hon. Friend comes up with novel and interesting suggestions. I am not sure that the losses that we incur, although we want to keep them down to a minimum, are out of line with those for a busy Department. I shall refer my hon. Friend's suggestion to the General Manager of the Refreshment Department.

Mr. Rees: Will the Leader of the House take account of what is done in one of the most expensive restaurants in London? As so much expensive cutlery is stolen, the men who attend the table now add the cost of it to the bill and, because the people who steal it are so ashamed, the issue is not raised? The owner of the restaurant says that he covers his account every year in that way.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know whether the 2 per cent. is added to the bill anyway, but I do not agree with that suggestion. The 2 per cent. is not an unreasonable figure. Again, I shall refer the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion to the head of the Refreshment Department.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend accept a little advice from me? If he were to send a runner round the offices of Members of Parliament in this and other buildings, he would find any number of cups, saucers, knives, spoons and forks, which have not been permanently removed, but have been taken, as a matter of convenience, when hon. Members have been sitting late through the night, and have then been left there. Rather than cast aspersions on the integrity of visitors to the House, he might follow that suggestion. I have two items in my office.

Mr. Wakeham: May I suggest to my hon. Friend that he returns them forthwith; and, if other hon. Members have any, perhaps they could return them, too.

Select Committees

28. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has for reviewing the work of the Select Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no present proposals for any such review.

Mr. Dalyell: If a Government want to bury an inconvenient Select Committee report, what better than to have it published in the fourth week of July, preferably to coincide with a royal wedding or tercentencary celebrations? Now that we have a 10-minute rule for speeches, would it not be a good idea to debate each Select Committee report for at least half a day on the 10-minute basis for speeches? Would that not give some added point to the hard work that colleagues of all parties do in Select Committees?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept that any Select Committee report that the hon. Gentleman finds interesting has been buried as a result of any Government activities. He should know that that is not the case. All Select Committee reports are available for comment. It is a matter for the Select Committee on Procedure, in the first instance, to consider whether arrangements for debating Select Committee reports could be changed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the application under Standing Order No. 20 first.

Nelson Mandela

3.31 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the continuing imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and the urgent need to secure his immediate release on the occasion of his 70th birthday."

Yesterday, in Hyde park, a quarter of a million people heard Archbishop Tutu make the most impassioned appeal for the release of Nelson Mandela. Yesterday morning, at Canterbury cathedral, Archbishop Runcie made a speech about the dangers of racialism in the world.

Nelson Mandela is one of the most courageous world leaders. He has spent 26 years in prison. I, among many others, took part in the demonstrations at the time of the Rivonia trial when he was imprisoned for life. He is a symbol of the black people and of many white people in South Africa. His release has been demanded by many nations and national leaders across the world, the United Nations Security Council, the Commonwealth, the EEC Heads of State and the Churches, and has wide support across the House.

It is especially appropriate for the House to devote some time to this issue, in view of the historic and economic links with South Africa and the fact that it is Nelson Mandela's birthday. It is urgent because his continued detention is one of the factors leading to a daily loss of life in South Africa and his release would give fresh hope.

The House has adjourned to mark the death of great world statesmen. I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to allow the House to prevent the death of a great nation by the continued violence against Nelson Mandela.

I know very well the formula from which you, Mr. Speaker, read in rejecting applications under Standing Order No. 20, but I ask you to set those words aside today and to grant the request which may be effective in saving life as well as in honouring a great man wrongly imprisoned for great principles which are important to the future of the world.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the continued imprisonment of Mr. Nelson Mandela and the urgent need for further Government action to secure his immediate release on the occasion of his 70th birthday."

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I am enjoined, under the Standing Order, not to give reasons for my decision but to take careful note of the criteria laid down in the Standing Order. I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Rover Group

3.34 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the statement by Mr. Graham Day this afternoon that he and the Rover board propose to close two Rover plants in the next year or so".

The matter is specific because Mr. Day has made no bones about his intention to close the Cowley south and Llanelli plants, with the loss of 4,900 jobs, very much along the lines of which many of us warned last week when two ministerial statements were made on the subject of Rover. This matter is also specific in that Mr. Day has indicated an established timetable for the carrying out of the closures.

The matter is clearly important, not only to the local economies and the people whose jobs will be destroyed but to the future of what remains of the British-controlled volume car industry. In effect, this development signals the end of that industry. It solves the puzzle of why the Rover corporate plan was regarded as a matter of such contention by the Government, the EEC Commission and British Aerospace. We now know why British Aerospace regarded it not as "neither important nor material", as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster maintained, but as an essential precondition to going ahead with privatisation. It is also important because one of the avowed intentions of the sale is to take the future of the British car industry out of the remit of the House and put it into the hands of those who will consider only commercial factors.

The matter requires urgent consideration because we have had two ministerial statements on Rover in the past week, neither of which ventured upon this development or gave any inkling that it was in store. In the light of Mr. Day's statement just two hours ago, we desperately need urgent ministerial clarification. The matter will be resolved one way or the other, presumably during the summer recess, so this may be the last opportunity for the House to consider this important matter. It would be outrageous if we were denied the chance to debate a development of such fateful significance to the British car industry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closure by Rover group of two major plants in the next few years".

Again, I have listened with concern to what the hon. Member has said, but I have to give him the same answer as I gave to his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised meets the criteria for granting a debate under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.37 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. "Erskine May" states that, whenever it seems to you a suitable occasion, you should communicate to the House letters and documents addressed to you as Speaker relating to the rights and privileges of the House or of its Members, such as communications announcing the arrest or imprisonment of a Member. Will you please make an announcement soon? At least half the House wants to know about the return of the bomber-jacketed ambassador for Britain, although sadly that half of the House does not include the Labour party.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no notification about that, and it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. One of the speakers at yesterday's great demonstration in Hyde park was the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. On behalf of the Commonwealth, he made a very clear statement that the Commonwealth and all its members were in favour of the release of Nelson Mandela. On that basis, why cannot we have a debate on the subject in the House of Commons? *[Interruption.]* With respect, Mr. Speaker, is it not time that the yobbos on the Conservative Benches were kept in order?

In view of the statements made by Archbishop Tutu, Bishop Huddlestone—who has done more than anyone for peace, friendship and reconciliation—and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, is it not possible to have a debate today? This is a very important day. Nelson Mandela is 70 years of age today and has spent 25 years in prison—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may think that this is a joke, but we do not.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the whole House treats this matter with great concern. *[Interruption.]* I do anyway. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have difficult decisions to take on Standing Order No. 20 applications about whether they meet the criteria. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any reasons for my decision.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is not on the matter that I have already dealt with.

Mr. Forth: You, Mr. Speaker, are the custodian of this House and of its Members, and I know that from time to time you have contact with the Speakers of other Parliaments, particularly those in the Commonwealth. Have you made it your business to be in touch with the Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe over recent distressing incidents involving a Member of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I have not been in touch with that Speaker, but I hope to have the pleasure of meeting him this week during the Commonwealth Speakers' conference.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said that you would take very seriously indeed the issue of Nelson Mandela being kept in prison. As you know, it is 26 years since he went to prison, and today he celebrates his 70th birthday. We are a founder member of the Commonwealth, and every Commonwealth Parliament has passed motions deploring the continued detention of Nelson Mandela. I should like to ask for your advice on two matters.

First, as Speaker of the House, would you be willing to send a message to Nelson Mandela on his 70th birtday? That would be very much in line with the Government's view because they have said that they are against his being kept in prison. If they are against his being kept in prison, why cannot you, on our behalf, as Speaker of the British House of Commons, and because Britain is a member of the Commonwealth, send a message? Secondly, would you be willing to accept a manuscript motion asking you to do what I have just suggested?

Mr. Speaker: I would need to have the authority of the House to do that.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On page 252 of "Erskine May", footnote 20 says:

"The Speaker's decision on the identity of the Leader of the Opposition is final".

You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that cases of doubt occasionally arise, especially abroad where the "Yesterday in Parliament" programme about proceedings in Parliament is not broadcast. Do you not think that it would be to the benefit of the House if on future tours by Leaders of the Opposition you were to accompany the right hon. Gentleman or were to issue him with a certificate saying, "Believe it or not, this person is actually the Leader of the Opposition"?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we will not reduce our deliberations in this place to a farce.

BILL PRESENTED

Re-establishment of Free Trade Unionism

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Bob Clay, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Pat Wall and Mr. Bill Michie, presented a Bill to repeal the Employment, Employment and Training, Trade Union and Wages Acts 1980 to 1988; to re-enact previous legislation repealed by those Acts, and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 199.]

Education Reform Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [1st February), as varied by the Order of the House [17th February], be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed in two allotted days.

(2) The allotted days which are given to those proceedings shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below, the Lords Amendments shall be taken in the order shown in that Table and, subject to the provisions of the Order [1st February], each part of the proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of that Table.

Proceedings

Allotted day	*Lords Amendments*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	Nos. 1 to 6, 8 to 16, 147 to 186, 227, 476, 480 and 557	6.45 pm
	Nos. 7, 17 to 25, 54, 68, 187, 188, 272, 275 and 537 to 539	8.15 pm
	Nos. 26 to 38	9.00 pm
	Nos. 89 to 146 and 189 to 226	10.45 pm
	Nos. 39 to 53, 55 to 67 and 69 to 88	11.30 pm
	Nos. 266 to 271, 273, 274 and 276 to 292	Midnight
Second day	Nos. 228 to 265	6.30 pm
	Nos. 293 to 342	7.45 pm
	Nos. 343 to 395	8.30 pm
	Nos. 396 to 437	9.15 pm
	Nos. 438 to 475, 477 to 479, 481 to 536, 540 to 556 and 558 to 569	10.00 pm

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of the Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) if Mr. Speaker is satisifed that any remaining Lords Amendment imposes a charge upon the public revenue such as is required to be authorised by resolution of the House under Standing Order No. 47 (Certain proceedings relating to public money) and that such charge has not been so authorised, he shall in accordance with Standing Order No. 76(3) (Lords Amendments deemed to be disagreed to) delcare he is so satisfied and shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment;

(c) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(d) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted at any time by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

(5) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, is to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

When the House discussed the guillotine motion in Committee on 1 February, I said that our purpose was to secure an even pattern of debate so that the major issues were properly dealt with. I gave an undertaking to try to ensure that every major matter was given full and measured debate. I said that it was in the interests of all —both the Opposition and the Government—that this should happen. We have honoured that commitment. The House has already discussed the Bill for 203 hours and we are about to devote a further two days to it. That will make eight days on the Floor of the House and 22 days in Committee. In addition, the other place has given the Bill close scrutiny during about 150 hours of debate, or 15 days. I have been unable to find any measure since the war that has been more debated or has had more parliamentary time allocated to it.

Despite the fact that this is a large Bill, each of the clauses that will stand in the final version has received, on average, one and a half hours consideration by Parliament. As a high proportion of clauses are technical in nature, the time spent in discussion of substantive issues has, quite rightly, been very much higher.

As we reach the closing stages of the Bill, we need this timetable motion to ensure that Parliament's work bears fruit as early as possible. I have always made clear the urgency that the Government attach to the reforms of the Bill. We believe that they will have an enormously beneficial and stimulating effect on our education system. It is vital that they have a chance to begin to make their impact at the earliest opportunity. That is why we shall seek Royal Assent next week.

I shall illustrate a few of the areas in which there would be significant delay if the Bill were enacted during the spillover period and not before the summer recess.

First, there is the national curriculum. The provisions now in the Bill and the amendments to be considered by the House later today reflect discussion in Parliament over the past two months. We need to begin consultation over the summer on the draft orders designed to begin the process of bringing the national curriculum into effect from September 1989. I shall be publishing the reports of the science working group and the maths working group, which I know that many throughout the education system and the country will want to comment on. That process of consultation requires the enactment of the Bill, and we want to allow a proper period of time for it.

Similarly, the National Curriculum Council needs formally to be in being if the consultation is to take place. If the Bill is not on the statute book until the autumn, I cannot set up the NCC with proper statutory duties. That will mean that our preparations for the national curriculum will be delayed for at least a year. So would be the improved standards that we seek to promote through the national curriculum

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Training Commission's TVEI proposals for the curriculum, which are 30 per cent. of the 70 per cent. of time that the right hon. Gentleman says should be given to the national curriculum, would be taken up by technology and sciences? The result is that the rest of the national curriculum has to be included in that 40 per cent. period. That means that single subjects such as history and geography could be pushed out completely from any GCSE programme. Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify the situation for us?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman has come late to the debate. What he says is rubbish. The foundation subjects are laid down clearly in the Bill. That issue will be debated on two occasions later this evening. We want to ensure that the successful work of the technical vocational education initiative since 1983 is implemented in the full curriculum. I made that clear.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I am delighted that the Secretary of State has discovered consultation. I wish him success in the consultation that will take place. Would it not have been better to have had a longer period of consultation last summer? If that had been done, we would not have 569 amendments before us, the purpose of which is to try to make the Bill reasonable.

Mr. Baker: There was a long process of consultation before the Bill was introduced, which was continued during its consideration in both Houses. Many of the amendments that were accepted in another place reflect the result of that consultation.

If the passage of the Bill is delayed until the autumn, the national curriculum will be delayed for at least a year and our policy on school admissions will also be delayed. We want parents to be able as soon as possible to take advantage of the improved arrangements that are set out in the Bill. It is clear that the arrangements cannot begin to operate for secondary schools until September 1990. If the Bill is delayed until the autumn, it is likely that those arrangements will be delayed for a further year.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Why?

Mr. Baker: There is a process of consultation locally on the standard number. The hon. Gentleman should know the Bill by now. We have already issued draft guidance and we must issue final guidance. If the Bill is delayed, final guidance will not be issued until Christmas or beyond.

There are measures on financial delegation to schools and colleges. Nearly everyone on all sides of the political spectrum agrees with that part of the Bill. We want to see budgets handed down to the schools as soon as possible. However, that would be delayed. We have set a timetable and I have issued draft guidance. The guidance remains draft until the Bill reaches the statute book. If it is delayed, LEAs' proposals will be delayed for at least a year and that would delay implementation for another year.

Finally, there are amendments relating to the reorganisation of education in inner London. If the Bill was delayed for enactment in the autumn, the transfer of powers to individual boroughs in London would certainly be delayed for another year. That would cause grave concern among Conservative-controlled boroughs. Having met representatives of the Labour-controlled boroughs in London, I am aware that they are very enthusiastic to see the end of the Inner London education authority and to take over its responsibilities. Any delay would spite the Labour party's supporters.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Secretary of State should not deceive himself by suggesting that the Labour-controlled boroughs in London are enthusiastic about the abolition of ILEA. Like any responsible boroughs, if they are forced to confront the abolition of ILEA, they will be responsible for making adequate educational provision for their children. That is a big difference.

Mr. Baker: I met leaders of the eight Labour-controlled boroughs in London a week or 10 days ago, and they convinced me that they will enjoy and use the powers to run their own education authorities—powers like those enjoyed by the local authority in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

I now want to refer to the number of amendments tabled in the House of Lords. Some 569 amendments were approved——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This point relates to the whole principle of consultation with which the Opposition would agree, particularly if it had been pre-legislative and not just post-legislative. Does the Secretary of State agree that the important Lords amendments Nos. 8 to 16, relating to religious education, are of great significance? However, does he also agree that due to the timing of this—their being passed very recently—it has been impossible for the Secretary of State or hon. Members to consult with those most concerned in the execution of any law that the House may approve?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will remember the final stages of the Bill before it went to their Lordships, House when there was a debate on religious education. I mentioned several amendments that we were moving then as a result of a debate in this House. Further debates have taken place in the House of Lords on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report in which further changes have been made and voted upon by their Lordships. The first debate after this guillotine motion is agreed will be on those measures and the House will have an opportunity to express its views both corporately and individually, as I recognise that on these matters hon. Members have very strong and possibly different views.

Nearly 500 of the 569 amendments approved by the other place are technical or consequential—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but they need only read through the Amendment Paper—a rather unfamiliar process for many of them—and they will learn that only 75 of the Government amendments can be described as amendments of substance. Of those, 18 were commitments given while the Bill was before this House. Of the remainder, 27 represent Government responses to debates in the other place. That leaves just 30 substantive amendments, not all by any means of great moment introduced solely on the Government's initiative. Some of those respond to concerns voiced during our continuing consultations. As we have said all along, we proposed to respond to those concerns as Opposition Members would know if they had listened to the arguments in Parliament and elsewhere.

My Department has received more than 25,000 letters from an enormously wide range of people about our proposals. As the principles of the Bill become better known, people have been concentrating increasingly on the detailed way in which it is to be implemented. We have been willing at every stage to amend the Bill, both in Committee and on Report. I cite as evidence the fact that the Government accepted more than 40 amendments from members of the other place, including those mentioned by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) concerning religious education.

I noted that over the weekend the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) claimed that many of the amendments increased the Secretary of State for Education and Science's centralising powers. The Opposition have claimed all along that this is a centralising Bill. The truth is the reverse. The fact is that the Opposition dislike many of the measures that will give greater power to parents, governors and head teachers. Above all, they dislike grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges, because they will break the LEA monopoly of free education.

Mr. Straw: Does the right hon. Gentleman deny that there are 415 new central powers in the Bill?

Mr. Baker: We have had this debate many times, and I say to the hon. Gentleman that many of the powers I have taken are designed to give institutions greater independence and authority. In order to free the polytechnics from local education authorities, I must have powers to free those polytechnics from the LEAs. In order to have grant-maintained schools, I must take powers to provide for a system ensuring that grant-maintained schools will come about. In order to give greater power to parents and parental choice, I must take powers to ensure that parental choice will exist.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: In a moment. I have given way a great deal. The more that I give way, the less time there will be in this hour for anybody else. I feel that I should not give way again.

The hon. Member for Blackburn specifically asked about the powers that the Lords amendments give the Secretary of State. I can give the House examples of some of the amendments that give me extra powers. In financial delegation, we have strengthened the role of the head teacher. That is not increasing the Secretary of State's central power. In religious education, we have established the responsibility of the individual local authority's standing advisory committee on religious education. That is not giving the Secretary of State the power to impose a religious curriculum upon schools. The governors are being given greater control over the timing of the school day. The complaints machinery has been extended to all curriculum powers and duties, including religious education and collective worship. Parents are given a right of appeal against amendment of a statement of special educational need. Those cannot remotely——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I must say no, because this debate is restricted to one hour.

I believe that a great deal of the opposition to the guillotine motion is synthetic. All through the debates in Committee the SLD has been making the running in opposition and not the Labour party. If Labour really feels strongly about this measure, where is the Leader of the Opposition? Why is he not leading the campaign against the Bill? We all know where he is—he is on the banks of

[Mr. Baker]

the Limpopo. That is where he is conducting his campaign—on the dark, grey-green, greasy banks of the Limpopo, surrounded by fever-trees.

Mr. Straw *rose*—

Mr. Baker: Before the hon. Gentleman intervenes, I hope that it is to tell me that the Leader of the Opposition is at this very moment rushing back to this country to attend this debate. Will the hon. Gentleman please tell us at which airport the Leader of the Opposition is landing, and whether we may be sure that he will come here?

Mr. Straw: I was going to ask the Secretary of State why the Prime Minister is not here to support him.

Mr. Baker: The Prime Minister will be in the Lobby supporting this Bill today—unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who will still be returning from the Limpopo.

I have explained why the motion is both necessary and reasonable. It ushers in the final phase of what is undeniably one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation ever put before Parliament. I commend the motion to the House.

3.58 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The guillotine motion is an abuse of the procedures of the House. It is an example of the elective dictatorship that has become a hallmark of the present Administration. We must deal with 569 Lords amendments today and tomorrow at a rate of 70 seconds per amendment, and with 49 new state powers at a rate of 11 minutes for each power.

I have heard some poor speeches, but few to match the Secretary of State's speech this afternoon. It was tawdry, specious and inconsequential. The right hon. Gentleman could come up with hardly any argument for not delaying consideration of the Bill and Royal Assent until the autumn Session. He says that we need to obtain Royal Assent in the next week because the national curriculum will be coming into force. He knows very well, however, that, owing to the shortage of teachers, the fact that the curriculum is so ill-prepared and the problems of which my hon. Friend the Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has spoken, the curriculum's implementation will in any case be delayed until well into the next decade—long after the right hon. Gentleman has left his present office.

The right hon. Gentleman talked of the need to get ahead because, he claimed, London borough leaders are enthusiastic for the reorganisation of ILEA. That is simply an untruth for which the right hon. Gentleman should apologise to the House. If that is their view, why did those London borough leaders urge us in March when the Bill was on Report to move an amendment—which was moved—seeking a delay in the implementation of the transfer of ILEA from April 1990 until 1991? It is the borough leaders—of whom, if I may say so, I have rather more knowledge than the Secretary of State—who have been telling us how difficult it would be to secure an effective transfer. They care about the children who will be in their charge, and they will work to do their best whatever circumstances are imposed on them. The simple reality is, however, that they wanted far more time than the Secretary of State has been willing to give them.

We all acknowledge that in any parliamentary system the side that commands a majority will ultimately see its will carried through, but any effective parliamentary system requires that proposals for legislation be fully and properly discussed so that the nation's elected representatives have a chance to consider Bills carefully and to cross-examine Ministers. The very notion of the rule of law depends on that. Yet this afternoon government by the process of law is being replaced by government by edict.

Many of the issues raised in the amendments have never been debated here in detail. For example, the carefully constructed bipartisan approach to religious education and worship is to be replaced, through a string of amendments, by a wholly new edifice that many believe is retrograde and will unsettle the 1944 settlement that has kept religious intolerance out of schools for 50 years. Whatever the merits of the amendments—and they will be discussed in the next debate—surely no one can deny that they deserve much more time than two hours when they propose to overturn a settlement that has stood the test of time for 46 years. The unelected representatives in the other place spent days discussing religious education and worship. We are expected to do so for two hours and literally to take it or leave it, with no chance of any serious line-by-line examination.

Significant changes in the conception of the national curriculum and of testing are written into the Bill. Some are welcome: they show that the Secretary of State has at last understood, however dimly, that his idea of imposing a state syllabus for 90 per cent. of a school's time—as he proposed in the consultative document on 20 July—was based on profound ignorance of how our state education system works or could ever work. However, other aspects of the national curriculum still arouse great controversy and need debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, in an intervention, drew the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that the Manpower Services Commission—or the Training Commission—has proposed new guidelines for schools that are to take the TVEI extension. It is proposed that 30 per cent. of the curriculum in respect of 14-to-16-year-olds should be devoted to technology and to what is described as balanced science. If a school's acceptance of TVEI extension depends on its acceptance of that condition, that leaves only 70 per cent. for all the other core and foundation subjects, for religious education and worship and for all the non-national curriculum subjects. Those who have written to my hon. Friend fear that that could seriously endanger the teaching of history and geography as separate subjects at GCSE level.

This is a serious issue which needs proper debate, yet we are to have a total of an hour and a quarter to debate the whole of the national curriculum and assessment.

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining the point.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is rubbish.

Mr. Rowlands: I hope that the Secretary of State's judgment that it is rubbish is right, because we do not want it to happen.

Given the Secretary of State's assurance that only 70 per cent. will cover the national curriculum core subjects, is it not likely that 14-to-16-year-olds will not be given

enough time to study subjects such as English literature, geography and history properly? That will jeopardise GCSE subjects, certainly as potential A-level subjects.

Mr. Straw: I agree. That underlines the fact that there should be more consultation and discussion over the summer before the Bill becomes law, rather than afterwards.

When the original guillotine motion was debated on 1 February, the policy of Her Majesty's Government in the Bill on the future of ILEA was wholly different from their present policy. When we cross-examined the Leader of the House on that occasion, he refused point-blank to admit even that a change of policy was being contemplated, let alone what it was. At that time, the right hon. Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) had yet to work their poison on the Secretary of State. Then, individual boroughs were going to opt out where entire councils agreed. Now, ILEA is to be broken up altogether.

Major changes in the arrangements for ILEA were made in the Lords. The Secretary of State has taken new powers to control education in individual boroughs, and unprecedented powers to veto not only appointments of chief education officers but appointments—I quote from Lords amendment No. 359—

"to any designated post forming part of the management structure of the council".

For the first time the Secretary of State—who has told us that he is not centralising power—is taking the power to veto appointments. That applies not just to chief education officers—there was some precedent for that before 1974—but to every other level of the management of an inner London education authority that he so designates.

We have just half an hour to debate those new powers, and an hour and a half to debate changes in the balloting arrangements for opt-out schools. We have two hours to discuss academic freedom and the funding of universities. To debate city technology colleges, on which there has never been a debate in the House, because the Secretary of State is frit—afraid to discuss his policy—we have just two hours, two years after the policy was first announced.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I thought that I heard the hon. Gentleman say earlier that it was wrong of unelected Members of the other place to tamper with the will of this Chamber in regard to religious education. I take it, therefore, that he will be equally opposed to their tampering with the will of the House in regard to opting-out schools. May I take it that he will support the Government's counter-amendment on those schools?

Mr. Straw: I am tempted to say that I can now see why the hon. Gentleman retired hurt from the Government. He has not just twisted what I said; he has invented things that I never said. I do not dispute the right of the other place to make amendments. What I am disputing is the right of the Government to force through the House amendments made in the other place without proper discussion. If unelected Members can take days and days to discuss religious education and worship, this House should have the right to do so as well.

It was Lord Hailsham who developed the phrase "elective dictatorship" to describe Governments who sought more and more power for themselves, with less and less scrutiny of the legislation. We heard this afternoon the classic Stalinist perversion of Marxist-Leninism, the argument for the dictatorship of the proletariat: that in order to set people free we must put them in chains. That is the Secretary of State's argument. He says, "I am taking these powers only to set people free." Tell that to a London borough whose appointments will be subject to the Secretary of State's veto. Tell that to any university, or to the Universities Funding Council. They know that they will be subject to the Secretary of State's control. Tell that to an individual academic who is to be fired because he has lost tenure. Tell that to local democratically elected councillors who are losing one power after another to the Secretary of State. But he says that that is all being done in the name of freedom.

When the Bill was published on 20 November, 175 new powers were written into the Bill. By Third Reading in this place that number had risen to 366, but another 49 new powers have been added to the Bill in the other place—all, the Secretary of State says, in the name of freedom. That makes 415 new powers of central control, a figure with which the Secretary of State did not disagree when I intervened a few moments ago.

The Bill nationalises our education system. It takes away from local people their power to determine the kind of education that they wish their children to receive. In the autumn the Secretary of State is to visit the home of the Stalinist perversion of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. What a great irony it is that, as the Soviet Union is dismantling its powers of central control over education and the rest of its national life, the Secretary of State is going the other way. When he gets there, I wonder who will teach what to whom? Does he intend to worship at the shrine of Leonid Brezhnev to find out how to exercise these new powers?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): If the Labour party is so opposed to centralism, why did the last two Labour Governments try to force all local authorities to go comprehensive?

Mr. Straw: We passed the law, but the person who closed more grammar schools and who opened more comprehensive schools was none other than the Prime Minister when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science. We moved to impose law in that area and only after there had been a decade of change by consent and support for comprehensive education from Conservative authorities as well as from Labour authorities. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that comprehensive education is such a bad idea, why has no Conservative education authority in the country yet dismantled or even sought successfully to dismantle its own comprehensive system?

The Secretary of State excuses 500 of the 569 amendments by saying that they are all technical and consequential. They are consequential indeed on the Secretary of State's inadequacy and lack of forethought, but that is not an excuse that the House ought to let him get away with. The Secretary of State allowed only 10 weeks for consultation last summer, most of it during the school holidays. We warned at the time that bad law would be the result.

The Secretary of State has a reputation, although it may be a little tarnished after this afternoon's performance, for public relations. We are told that his internal meetings are dominated by presentational matters. It is a great pity for our children as well as for the making of law that the

[Mr. Straw]

Secretary of State does not spend more time on the content of policy, on thinking things through. These so-called technical amendments are the consequence of giving officials and parliamentary counsel neither the time nor the instructions to do a proper job in the first place. Hon. Members who will be detained later this week on the poll tax Bill by having to discuss hundreds of technical amendments should reflect on the fact that it is this Secretary of State, not the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is ultimately responsible for that mess, too—of selling to a sceptical Cabinet and sceptical party a policy that got the Conservative party out of a small, temporary, presentational difficulty, only to lead to a much greater permanent policy catastrophe.

Nine years into government this Administration still lack a coherent well-thought-out policy for the education of all our children. We saw that during the last general election campaign when the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister disagreed so violently and publicly on opt-out schools. We have seen it since on testing, on academic freedom, and on religious education as Cabinet government is replaced by Downing street rule by aides and advisers, when the Secretary of State almost literally has to busk, to make things up as he goes along, when he is not told what to do. The approach that is so publicly humiliating to the Chancellor of the Exchequer today, with Downing street-inspired stories of the resurrection of Sir Alan Walters as economic adviser to Downing street, has already operated on the Secretary of State, for the mark of the Prime Minister's policy adviser, Professor Brian Griffiths—unelected and unaccountable—can be seen on page after page of the Bill.

When the original guillotine was imposed on 1 February, the Leader of the House admitted that there was no justification for that abuse of power. He said:

"I am not complaining about the rate of progress; . . . I am not suggesting that there has been any filibustering"—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1988; Vol. 126, c. 726.]

There was no justification then for a guillotine. There is even less justification today. We are dealing with the education of 7 million children and their futures. We owe it to them to get things right.

On Thursday my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that

"there are no action replays of childhood."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 557.]

Authoritarian rule is not only offensive to democracy. In the end it is profoundly inefficient because so often it gets things wrong. This motion is an offence to democracy, and it is an offence to our children. It must be opposed.

4.16 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): In the light of the Education Act 1976, I must say that the comments of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science taking powers was a bit rich. We can recall, if he cannot remember, that it was that Act that took powers from local education authorities. But this Bill, when it is enacted, will ensure that powers and responsibilities are transferred to parents. They will decide what is best for their children.

We have heard a fairly routine guillotine speech from the hon. Member for Blackburn. There were the usual moans about time, there was the ritual anger and there were the same arguments, We heard all the same synthetic indignation when the timetable motion was announced for the Committee stage, but the fact is that the Bill received 180 hours of discussion in Committee and, in addition, the benefit of another 32 hours on the Floor of the House. This Bill has received more active consideration than any other Bill on any subject since the war. That demonstrates the importance that the Government attach to the education of children in the state sector.

Their Lordships made a substantial number of amendments, but the majority of them are technical and they are designed—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) laughs, but she ought to refer to *The Times Educational Supplement*, which does not normally favour the Conservative party. An editorial dated 15 July, headed "Seven Months later. . .", says:

"The great majority of the amendments—as is usual with a Bill of this size—were moved by Ministers, improving the drafting or shutting loopholes."

Does the hon. Lady disagree with that statement? As she does not rise to intervene, we must presume that she agrees.

Mr. Spearing: Does not the hon. Gentleman recall that when I intervened, by the grace of the Secretary of State, he did not dissent from my point that the most important new clauses, 8 to 16, that deal with religious education and worship are not susceptible to proper consultation with those concerned outside this place before we debate them and that that makes us question whether we should pass them today?

Mr. Pawsey: The amendments received substantial debate in the other place, and in addition they will receive more debate in this Chamber during the next few hours. If the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is really interested, he will have the opportunity to raise points on that specific item. It will be interesting to see whether he seeks to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is no doubt that this Bill will improve education to the maximum benefit of the children of our country. That is the raison d'etre of the legislation. Some of the amendments made in another place will improve the Bill and I have not the slightest doubt they will be accepted. Only a relatively small number—for example, those on religious education, to which the hon. Member for Newham, South referred, and those relating to grant maintained schools—are genuinely contentious. I have not the slightest doubt that they will receive the consideration that they warrant. They will be debated today and tomorrow—a further full two days debate on the Floor of the House—and will receive an appropriate amount of discussion.

If Opposition Members are genuinely concerned about the amount of time available for the consideration of the amendments—then I hope that we do not get the usual string of bogus points of order which always seem to arise following Prime Minister's questions—perhaps they will exercise a degree of control tomorrow. Opposition Members are the time wasters—*[Interruption.]* I hear that they are the time servers as well. They choose to reduce the time available for debate.

The Opposition should understand that the principal reason why we want the Bill to reach the statute book before the recess is so that its provisions can be available

for the commencement of the next school year. Some of those provisions, such as open enrolment, could take effect from September. Opposition Members may be cavalier in their attitude towards children's education, but Conservative Members take such matters rather more seriously and we are determined that the Bill should be enacted before we rise for the summer recess.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred to the anti-democratic guillotine. Opposition Members surely must remember that the record for the number of guillotines introduced in a single day belongs to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who is in his place today. The great democrat became the great dictator when he became the arbiter of parliamentary time.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you could stop the hon. Lady in pink, the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), from constantly hectoring and nagging my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey)? It really is a bit much if people in this House have to conform to sexual stereotypes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I think that we had better get on with the debate.

Mr. Pawsey: Matters could be worse. One could be married to the hon. Lady.

This debate detracts from the amount of time available to discuss the Bill.

Mr. Straw: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On reflection, will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that remark, which was of a very personal nature?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a very short debate, and I hope that it will be conducted in good humour.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Member for Blackburn is somewhat thin skinned. To do her credit, even the hon. Member for Durham, North-West did not rise to that. However, if my remark caused offence either to the hon. Gentleman or to the hon. Lady, I willingly withdraw it.

Even this debate detracts from the amount of time available for the discussion of the Bill. Would it not be wiser if we proceeded to the principal and more important business—the discussion of the Education Reform Bill? This debate and the time it takes will be the real measure of the Opposition's concern. The quicker we start to debate the substance of the Bill, the better.

The Bill will improve the quality and the standing of state education. We are happy to debate it today and tomorrow. Who knows, if Opposition Members actually bring open minds to our discussion, they may join us in the Lobby.

4.24 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Although I consider that the way in which the Bill is being put through is scandalous, and although I strongly support what my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said from the Opposition Front Bench, I wish to concentrate for a few minutes on the part of the Bill that has been introduced mainly in the House of Lords during the past few weeks and which gives rise to even more insult to the House of Commons. I refer to the provisions concerning religious education.

Whatever view people may take on different forms of religious education, surely a Minister responsible for education in this country should have enough knowledge of its history to know that for many decades, almost for centuries, arguments about religion have destroyed the possibility of sensible agreements and education reform. It was largely because of that understanding that that part of the 1944 Act was so successful.

When R.A. Butler introduced that Bill, he took account of the consultation that he had taken on that subject for many months and many years. It is scandalous for the Secretary of State and the Government to say, "We push all that aside. We do not worry about the history of the country, the history of education or the history of religious argument. We know better and we shall push through a different arrangement for dealing with a very delicate subject which could give rise afresh to other arguments which could do great injury to our education in future." It is scandalous that the Secretary of State should have given his name to that.

Of course, the right hon. Gentleman can say that it has all been thought up by the bishops in the other place, that they had a hole-in-the-corner meeting and that is supposed to be good enough for the House of Commons. It is not at all good enough for the House of Commons. Many besides bishops have a right to speak on the matter.

If the right hon. Gentleman does not remember it, I can quote to him another verse from his famous anthology. It is by Jonathan Swift who knew something about the church and the bishops. In "Verses written upon windows", he wrote:

"The Church and clergy here, no doubt,
Are very near a-kin;
Both weather-beaten are without;
And empty both within."

I do not apply that to any particular bishops in the other place, but it would embrace many of them. Seriously, it is absurd for the right hon. Gentleman to think that a hole-in-the-corner compromise worked out in the other place, which has no representative authority in these matters, could be satisfactory for dealing with such a delicate subject. It is utterly shameful, so I ask the Government to withdraw it.

I speak on behalf of those who uphold a humanist tradition in this country—a very proper and worthy tradition. We have as much right to be consulted about such things as have other people. We do not trust the bishops or the representatives of other denominations. We have a right to discuss such matters.

The Secretary of State has been responsible for pushing aside all forms of consultation on the matter. I understand that a report was drawn up by one of the inspectors and that quite a lot of consultation was taking place. That report has been supressed, it was never properly debated and at the very last moment, when the Bill is being dragged through the House of Commons, we are told that we have to agree to the religious, non-religious or anti-religious measures. It is a scandal for the Government to deal with it in this way. If the Government have trouble in different schools—and we all know that there are many people of different religion in different schools around the country—if they believe that they know best and that they have only to take up these phrases that have been adopted by a few bishops at the other end of the corridor, push them

[Mr. Michael Foot]

through the House of Commons and deal with a delicate problem that occurs in so many areas of the country, that is a scandalous way for them to deal with a major question.

If the Secretary of State had any honour in these matters, he would never have brought the measures before us. He would have said that they would be brought in only after full consultation. On those grounds alone, the guillotine motion is an offence to the House of Commons. The Government are inviting trouble. There is a history of people disobeying education laws. I suppose the Prime Minister has forced this upon the Secretary of State, but Ministers should read up on some British history before they attempt to teach it to anybody else.

4.30 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was referring to the next debate, rather than this one. However, it was a pleasant contrast to the huffery and puffery of the opening speech made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) put his finger on the reason why there was so much huffery and puffery when he referred to the Labour party's policy of the past. It used to have a policy, which was to comprehensivise everything. Now, it has no education policy. Labour Members huff and puff and say that our policy is wrong, but they do not say what is right.

The Labour party has formed a group called Parents in Partnership. The hon. Member for Blackburn will know about that. It has come up with various initiatives which have been dismissed as virtually worthless, not by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke, but by Mr. Neil Fletcher, the leader of the Inner London education authority and a member of the Labour party's new education forum. He, along with many in Labour local government circles, is critical of the knee-jerk policy-making of the parliamentary team. I will dwell no more on the knee jerking, but that is what we have had today.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose——*

Mr. Bowis: I am sorry, but I cannot give way because we want to speed this through.

If the Labour party had been interested in the debate on the Education Reform Bill, it could have nodded the timetable motion through and let us get on with the debate. There has been sitting after sitting on the Bill. There was the Second Reading, 42 sittings in Committee, four days on Report, the days in the Lords, and now two more days in the House. No Bill can ever have had such rigorous debate and consideration. There have been probing and testing amendments, which have received consideration. The Committee and the House have listened and, above all, the Government have listened. That is why we have the amendments before us today. If the Government listen, they come forward with amendments. They listened to the House of Lords as well as the House of Commons, and tabled amendments in the Lords. Many of us are pleased about that.

The nation wishes us to get on with it. The schools and colleges are waiting for the final go-ahead so that they can put the measures into practice. The public are looking forward to the new measures and there is further public consultation to come. The public approval of the Bill is one reason why we can brook no delay. On London figures 72 per cent. of the public want the national curriculum, and only 16 per cent. are against it, 74 per cent. are in favour of core testing and only 20 per cent. are against and 75 per cent. are in favour of the grant-related status option and only 17 per cent. are against. Public opinion, parents and Parliament are in favour. The only people in favour of delay are Her Majesty's Opposition. We should brook no delay today.

4.33 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The debate has been typical of the brevity with which the Government deal with education matters. I suspect that it is unique in that, probably for the first time in our experience of education debates, the Secretary of State, after a poor performance, is looking to the Minister of State to dig him out of a hole. I suspect that, given the Minister of State's record in Committee, the Secretary of State will be relying on something of a forlorn hope.

The debate has been typical in its brevity and typical of the Government's consultation process. It is typical of a Government who allowed little time for consultation with parents, teachers, or local authorities. It is typical of a Government who introduced a guillotine in Committee when the Leader of the House said that there was no evidence that the Opposition were filibustering. This guillotine, as with the guillotine in Committee, and the shortness of time for consultation may show a damaging ideological triumphalism, but they also show an uncertainty about the measures that they are introducing. It is an uncertainty that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) referred to in terms of religious education, but it is an uncertainty that runs to the heart of the Bill.

The Secretary of State said that the Bill had to be enacted over the next two weeks or it would be impossible to carry forward the consultation on the national curriculum. No argument could be more specious. The Secretary of State knows that the working parties are in operation and that he can establish shadow bodies and carry out the necessary consultation. The simple truth is that the national curriculum is a long way from formation because the Government rushed to legislation without having the courage and decency to consult teachers, parents or local authorities.

The same is true of testing. The Government have shifted their ground on a number of occasions. We are told that the Secretary of State is in favour of diagnostic testing. We suspect that other Ministers are not in favour of such testing. One has reason to believe that the Minister of State is opposed to diagnostic testing and supports the Prime Minister in the need for simple competitive testing. We have every reason to believe, if the newspaper reports are correct, that it would be in the interest of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), to support the Prime Minister in that argument. The simple fact is that, on the crucial issue of testing, the Government's position is as unclear as it was 12 months ago.

In terms of higher education, the Bill was transformed in the House of Lords. The Government have had no clearly defined position and no defined analysis and perception of the role of higher education. Nowhere has

that been made clearer than in an article by Lord Beloff in *The Times* last week. In relation to universities, the noble Lord said that there seemed to be disagreement, even among Ministers. The article said:

"The Secretary of State . . . had praised the extent to which they"—

the universities—

"had already adapted themselves to the new demands made upon them by economic and social change and was usually ready with soft reassurances."

How typical. The article went on:

"On the other hand, the junior Minister for the universities, Robert Jackson, had left a trail of wounded feelings as he toured the universities to explain the Government's proposal."

That division on higher education goes to the heart of the Government's policy and image.

The guillotine is being used to protect an uncertain and weak ministerial team. Because of that uncertainty and weakness, Ministers lost the argument in Committee. They lost that argument and votes in the House of Lords. Because of that weakness and uncertainty, they seek to limit further debate. They know, as do all educationists, that the Bill will appear intemperate and irrelevant against the real educational needs of our children and our country. That is why we oppose the guillotine. There is a need for more time for debate and a proper education agenda for the country.

4.38 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am sad to say that I have not been particularly impressed by the arguments adduced by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) or, more recently, by those adduced by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). In Committee, the Opposition generally seemed a little hard put to find good arguments and they appeared to be supine before many of the arguments in support of the Bill put by my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friends.

I was somewhat astonished, therefore, to hear the hon. Member for Leeds, Central say that it was important to have more time to discuss every item that comes before us after having been in the other place. For the record, let us be sure of what took place in Committee when we examined every clause and every amendment tabled. In Committee, the Opposition forced Divisions on 38 of the 147 clauses and on two of the 11 schedules. That does not appear to be an example of an Opposition firmly opposed to every part of the Bill.

Occasional reports have appeared in the education press—and even in national newspapers—that the hon. Member for Blackburn said that the national curriculum was not my right hon. Friend's idea but his, and that the Labour party had proposed it some time ago. Had that been the case, I would have found it difficult to understand the arguments made by the hon. Member for Blackburn. He said that he did not agree with the proposals for the national curriculum. He would like to think that he proposed a national curriculum and, indeed, to put before the House and the other place proposals as good as those in the Bill.

Much concern has been expressed about consultation. The Bill has been discussed for well over a year. Indeed, it was discussed before the general election in June 1987. The public were aware of the Government's proposals and voted decisively, in the light of experience, for them. The consultation procedure has continued ever since. The Department of Education and Science has received no fewer than 25,000 letters about the Bill, all of which have received a reply and none of which have produced further comments. Much of what has been said during the consultation process has been reflected in the various amendments.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who is no longer present, said that the technical and vocational educational initiative would take up 30 per cent. of the national curriculum. The Opposition argue that if the national curriculum takes up 70 per cent. of the time, that leaves only 40 per cent. remaining. I hope that Opposition Members will at least have an opportunity to watch their children going through the mathematics curriculum. It will allow them to understand that 30 per cent. of the curriculum will not be for subjects specified as core and foundation subjects but for other subjects. Time for TVEI will also be taken up partly within scientific and mathematics curriculum subjects. Mathematics is an important subject. It has been shown to be especially important for some Opposition Members.

It is clear that there has been considerable discussion and much consultation. It is important therefore that the matters of concern to Opposition Members should be discussed, so I commend the motion to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 183.

Division No. 416] **[4.43 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David

Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin

Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Education Reform Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Lords amendments considered.

4.55 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for the fact that I was not able to give you notice, but I have only just ascertained a possible problem. Mr. Speaker has grouped together a number of amendments to be considered first. I am in a slight dilemma, because I happen to support some of those amendments and to oppose others. I understand that under the terms of the guillotine motion it is not possible to have separate votes on specific Lords amendments. Is that correct, or will it be possible for an hon. Member to indicate support for some amendments but to dissent from others?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): If the time stated in the guillotine motion is reached, it will be possible to have a vote on the main amendment being discussed.

Mr. Spearing: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry but, as you will appreciate from the debate on the guillotine motion, the following debate is important. Do I take it that we shall debate Lords amendment No. 1 and amendment (a) thereto, together with all the other amendments in the group? The implication of your ruling is that, if the Question is not put on the main amendment until the allocated time is reached, there will be no opportunity to vote on any of the other amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. If the debate on Lords amendment No. 1, together with amendment (a) thereto, were to run the full time it would be possible to have a Division on amendment (a) and on the amendment itself. The Chairman would then be obliged to put the rest of the Lords amendments en bloc.

Clause 1

DUTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE CURRICULUM

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 17, leave out from "them" to "with" in line 18 and insert

"by this Chapter with respect to religious education, religious worship and the National Curriculum".

Read a Second time.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, after "by" insert 'an Order made by the Secretary of State under'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, after 'education', insert 'and'.

Amendment (c) to the proposed Lords amendment, after 'worship', insert

'in respect of each local authority area'.

Lords amendment No. 2, in clause 2, page 2, line 2, leave out from beginning to "in" in line 6 and insert.

"The curriculum for every maintained school shall comprise a basic curriculum which includes—

(a) provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the schooi; and

(b) a curriculum for all registered pupils at the school of compulsory school age (to be known as "The National Curriculum") which meets the requirements of subsection (2) below.

(2) The curriculum referred to in subsection (1)(b) above shall comprise the core and other foundation subjects and specify"

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 5, after 'school', insert

'in any area in respect of which an Order has been made by the Secretary of State and has come into effect'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 7, after 'National', insert

'Core Curriculum and the National Foundation'.

Amendment (d) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 10, after 'core' insert

'subjects which shall be mandatory'.

Amendment (e) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 10, after 'subjects' insert 'which shall be advisory'.

Lords amendments No. 3, 8 to 16, 147 to 185.

"(3) Subsection (1)(a) above shall not apply in the case of a maintained special school."

Lords amendment No. 186, in line 3, at end insert—

"(1A) No proposals shall be published under this section for the purpose of making a significant change in the religious character of such a school unless the trustees of the school (if any) have given their consent in writing to the change in question."

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, after 'section', insert '(a)'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, at end insert—

'(b) for the purpose of introducing any form of selection by ability at the school; or

(c) or the purpose of introducing any fees for educational provisions at the school, beyond that provided for under sections 95 to 100 below'.

Lords amendments Nos. 227, 476, 480 and 557.

Mr. Straw: Amendment (a) and the linked amendments provide that the arrangements written into the Bill for religious education and worship in each local authority area will come into effect by order by the Secretary of State as he becomes satisfied about them.

We have just under two hours in which to debate a crucial part of our public and national life. When religious education and worship were last discussed in the House on 23 March, I said:

"I accept the importance of religious worship and education in schools".

I went on to say:

"We can have no understanding of our history and culture unless we understand that we have a Christian tradition."

—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 418.]

I was expressing my personal view. This issue cannot and never should be a party issue. The Opposition have already made it clear that there is no Whip and that Opposition Members are free to vote as their consciences dictates.

I also said that we would do well to remember that one part of the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland—has a capacity for great religious tension and strife. That point was underlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). I said that we must remember how easily religious division can turn into tribal destructiveness; that there was a fine and delicate balance between the two.

In the Education Act 1944 Rab Butler did two things that guaranteed him a place in our history. First, the Act established a system of free education based upon principles of equality of opportunity. Secondly, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent said, the Act secured a settlement in the great and divisive argument about the role of the Church and religion in schools. It may be trite to say that the 1944 settlement has stood the test of time, but it has. That is the considered view of the Opposition and it has also been the considered view of the Government. In the 1985 White Paper, "Better Schools", Lord Joseph, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, said:

"the Government has no plans to propose changes in the provisions of the Education Act 1944 relating to religious education and collective worship in schools, provisions which have stood the test of time."

I hope that we shall see the Secretary of State in his place to hear this important debate. The consultative document, published last July, said that the Secretary of State

"has no plans, therefore, to propose changes in what the law requires"

in respect of religious education. Speaking for the Government in the House of Lords in February this year, the Earl of Arran said:

"That schools in this country have successfully provided religious education and worship for many years is, I think, a testimony not only to the success of the Education Act but also to the tolerance and understanding of the British people in overcoming the barriers of different faiths and denominations."

He went to to say—a point that I shall put to the Secretary of State in this debate:

"Evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectors shows very clearly that, generally, Christianity is still at the core of religious education in our schools . . . We would not wish to see a situation where children in maintained schools are divided into separate acts of worship for different religious groups."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 26 February 1988; Vol. 493, c. 1483-85.]

That was the considered view of the Government and of the Secretary of State earlier this year. It was also a view that was repeated by the Secretary of State in our very good and constructive debate in the House on 23 March. He said:

"The 1944 Act got the balance right."—[*Official Report,* 23 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 422.]

I agree with that, and the whole House agrees with that.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to describe some modest amendments to the structure of the 1944 settlement. He said that religious education should be defined statutorily before the core and foundation subjects. He said that he would wish to strengthen the arrangements for a locally agreed syllabus. My clear recollection and reading of his remarks in that debate is that he proposed no significant changes to the structure of religious worship in schools. That arrangement was acceptable to both sides of the House and there were no Divisions on that occasion.

In the same debate the view was expressed that a requirement that teaching and worship should be Christian should be written into the Bill. A separate view was expressed that not only that concept but, more specifically, the notion of the scriptures should be written into the Bill. On 23 March, the Secretary of State resisted that proposition. I believe that he was correct to do so then and that the House would be right to do so tonight.

We are a multi-cultural multi-faith, multi-religious and multi-denominational community, and we were even before the arrival of Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities in this country. Although the debate about the inclusion of the word "Christian" within a legal framework for religious education in a country with a Christian tradition may seem casuistical, the decision whether to incude those words raises profound issues of tolerance and questions about how we treat people who have different faiths from our own. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] I hear some hon. Members saying "Rubbish". It is those who take one view and seek to rubbish the views of others who have been the cause of religious strife and intolerance in this country, which some of us thought we had dealt with in 1944 and again on 23 March. I hope that we do not hear any more such abuse of one view by people with another view during the debate.

When discussing such a sensitive issue, we should judge what should become law not by what is suitable for ourselves but by what is suitable for others, who may disagree with us. Those of us who regularly go to church know that we are in a minority. Those of us who take our children to church know that we are in an even smaller minority. We may regret that, but it is the truth. We must be careful about imposing our approach to family life and religion upon others. I think that that was the view taken by the Secretary of State on 23 March. It was certainly the view taken by the House of Lords in Committee on 3 May.

The Lord Bishop of London, with the support of the Government and the Opposition, sought to write into law the arrangement in respect of religious education that the Secretary of State had described on 23 March. Baroness Hooper said:

"I am glad to be able to say that they"—

the amendments—

"have our wholehearted support. I know also that they have the full support of the leaders of the Catholic and Methodist Churches. Today we have heard that they have the support of the noble Lord the Chief Rabbi. I am sure that the Committee will agree that his ecumenical unanimity is a most welcome development."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 3 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 431.]

Unfortunately, that was not the end of the matter. Baroness Cox and Lord Thorneycroft were entitled to their view. It is now a matter of public record that they decided that they wished the word Christian to be written into the Bill as a requirement in respect of religious education and worship. We know that they had the support of Professor Brian Griffiths and the Prime Minister. Baroness Cox is entitled to her view. She at least has the merit of having been consistent in this matter, although many hon. Members may find Lord Thorneycroft's latter-day conversion on the issue of religious education and worship strange. Days were spent on this issue as Baroness Cox and Lord Thorneycroft sought to impose what I regard as an intolerant structure in the law and prescribe that worship should be Christian.

I respect their views but they have failed to respect the views of other people, including people of the Christian

[Mr. Straw]

faith. They have failed to take into account those of no faith, those of other faiths and those who may have begun to have doubts about their faith.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I have known for many years that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is most sincere in what he says. Is he aware, however, that he is taking an extremely dangerous line? Such arguments have almost led to the eclipse of religious education in schools. The argument that one should not teach Christianity for fear of offending people of other faiths has meant that there has been almost no Christian religious education in schools.

Mr. Straw: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I say that that is a complete perversion of the position that I have taken. It shows the danger of intolerance in this respect. I said at the outset, and I say again, that I accept the importance of religious worship and education in schools. I made that point clearly on 23 March as well. It does not raise a difficulty for me, because I am a Christian and I raise my children in the Christian tradition. The problem for those of us who wish for a tolerant society is how far we impose our views on other people. Some of us should think about that carefully. I also said then:

"We can have no understanding of our history and culture unless we understand that we have a Christian tradition." —[*Official Report*, 23 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 418.]

I accept that, broadly, included in religious education and worship ought to be an acknowledgement that we are a Christian country. The question is how far we write that into the law and when we do so, how we deal with people of other faiths—Jewish, Moslem or Hindu—or of no faith at all.

I do not accept the suggestion of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that Christianity has departed from religious education and worship in our schools. That is not my experience with my children in an ILEA school and it is not the experience of Her Majesty's Ministers. I quote again the Earl of Arran, speaking on behalf of the Government on 26 February. He said:

"Evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectors shows very clearly that, generally, Christianity is still at the core of general education in our schools."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 February 1988; Vol. 493, c. 1485.]

It is no good the hon. Member for Ealing, North saying that my views are dangerous, because those views were accepted by the House on 23 March. There is some ambiguity in the law, but there has to be because there is a fine balance between securing a curriculum which reflects our country's Christian tradition and going overboard and seeking to impose that on people who do not have that faith. On 23 March, the Secretary of State arrived at the correct balance and we already know—and I can give quotations in support of this—that the structure that has been agreed in the other place, and on which we are now having a short debate, is unsettling and destabilising to the 1944 settlement.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) Does my hon. Friend remember that in Committee, when this narrow approach was put forward by the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), I pointed out that we are a multi-faith society and that the narrow approach that he was suggesting would antagonise those of other faiths—Hindus, Moslems and so on—who in time would need their own schools? To his credit, the Secretary of State also opposed that narrow position. He did not use the language that I have used, because he was speaking to his own people, but he did not agree with it, and I see that he is not rising to say that he agrees with it now.

Mr. Straw: That is true. Both the Secretary of State and the Minister of State supported the approach that we are now taking.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Wyre Forest): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the provisions of the Education Act 1944 were such as to lead to the possible interpretation both that the standing advisory conference on further education should not contain any non-Christian beliefs and that the religious education curriculum should not contain any non-religious beliefs either? Specifically, Lords amendments Nos. 10 and 11 strengthen non-Christian religious education and the act of collective worship in schools for non-Christians.

Mr. Straw: I am not arguing about the strengthening of the role or the composition of the standing advisory council on religious education in each area—not the standing advisory conference on further education. I have already said that we support the arrangements that the Secretary of State flagged out when he spoke on 23 March. Our concern is about the Baroness Cox arrangements, which were forced on the other place, to write into the Bill that teaching should be Christian. That imposes a duty that many people who have to teach religious education in schools do not want of adjudicating and invigilating on exceptions area by area, class by class and pupil by pupil. I refer the hon. Gentleman to Lords amendment No. 15. Unfortunately, what was agreed—in this House after a sensible debate, in Committee, and, on 3 May, in the other place—was not the end of the matter. For days and weeks, Baroness Cox and Lord Thorneycroft waged a guerrilla campaign in the other place with the full support of the Prime Minister.

The final outcome is not as unsatisfactory as it might have been, and I pay tribute to the Bishop of London and peers on both sides who did their best to retrieve the situation. However, it is still unsatisfactory, and that needs to be made clear. A sign of that is that no one who was involved in putting together that compromise—for that is what it was—and to whom I have spoken has told me that that is a structure that they would wish. However, that is the best that they could get away with in the face of pressure from Lord Thorneycroft, Baroness Cox and those behind her.

5.15 pm

A subject as sensitive as this—the structure of religious education and worship that the country has to follow—should not be consequential on a deal struck in an unelected Chamber by people whom I regard as being over-zealous in their approach to religious education, to put it at its lowest. It should be unacceptable for such a change in the structure to be written into the Bill without any possibility of amendment in this House. We shall not even have the opportunity to vote amendment by amendment on what was decided in the other place. The House could approve of some of those amendments, but we wish to vote against some others. All the amendments are to be put by the Chair at one go, at 6.45, and we have literally to take it or leave it.

I have explained why the compromise is unsatisfactory. Lords amendment No. 10 says that religious worship should be

"wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character."

Lords amendment No. 15 says that the standing advisory councils should be given powers to allow exemptions of a school, class or group of pupils. The previous system was a little ambiguous, but it worked well. I have already quoted the view of the Earl of Arran in the other place. He quoted Her Majesty's inspectors. A week ago, we learnt from *The Guardian* that a report on religious education and worship by the inspectorate has apparently got lost or been suppressed. I offer the Secretary of State a chance to intervene to tell us what has happened to that report. Why was it not published? Why did the House not have the benefit of seeing whatever it said—good, bad or indifferent?

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The hon. Gentleman knows the constitutional proprieties. It is entirely up to the senior chief inspector to decide which report is published, at what time it is to be published and the content of the report. I do not interfere in that.

Mr. Straw: I know the proprieties, but surely it is possible for the Secretary of State to send a minute to the senior chief inspector to ask that the report be published. Could not the Secretary of State have asked for that?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that one of the great strengths of our system is that the inspectorate is independent. It can report on anything that it wishes in the school system. It can report on any school or on any curriculum activity. Ministers of the day do not interfere. That is the established position. They are Her Majesty's inspectors.

Mr. Straw: I understand the proprieties, but we are all grown up lads and lasses here. I also understand that the history of the publication of the annual HMI report on the quality of education, over the past seven years, shows that the date has been directly related to whether there has been a general election in the offing. Ministers have some control over the publication of such reports. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), the Under-Secretary, is giving us a rum smile. We should have had that report. The Secretary of State's explanation is not satisfactory.

The previous evidence, according to those who had bothered to look at it, was that the old system was satisfactory and had stood the test of time. It was a little ambiguous, but we need ambiguity if tolerance is to be preserved. The new arrangement, forced into the Bill without any adequate discussion in the House, may well be a recipe for local conflict. That is one reason why the arrangements in amendment (a)—I hope that the Secretary of State agrees that amendment (a) is acceptable —should be introduced by order, area by area, and after a long gestation period.

We are also deeply unhappy about the whole structure of this aspect of the Bill. If it was not appropriate to write "Christian" into the Bill in 1944, when the country was overwhelmingly Christian, it is surely even less appropriate to do so today.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Surely that remark is not terribly profound. In 1944 it was taken for granted that this was a Christian society. There have been many changes since then and if we wish to acknowledge that this is a Christian society and that our civilisation is based on Christianity, it is necessary to write it into the Bill.

Mr. Straw: On the contrary, we should not confuse churches and schools. Children should be brought up to recognise that we have a Christian tradition in this country and to recognise the importance and power of faith, but Christianity and individual churches will survive in this country only on the basis of what they do, not what they write into the law for schools to do. That is a profound difference. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent referred to the desperate trouble caused in England in 1944. What does the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) think that 1688 was about? It was about resolving a great religious conflict that had torn the country apart for two centuries.

Subsequently, in 1944, there was an understanding of the need to be careful and to provide some ambiguity in the law to prevent religious intolerance breaking out again. That view was accepted in the House just three months ago. What has changed, apart from the pressures that have been brought to bear by Downing street and Baroness Cox in the other place?

Mr. Spearing: Would my hon. Friend include the years 1900 to 1906 in his comments? At that time, people went to prison for refusing to pay rates and there was considerable community disruption as a result. Does he further agree that, contrary to what the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), whom I respect, said, under the amendments, all non-church and non-voluntary schools will produce Christianity as a state religion? Those who do not attend voluntary schools, where the Church of England may make what arrangements it likes, will now be subject to a regime to which they were not subject under the 1944 Act.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right, and I hope that the House will take note of his comments, as his devotion as a Methodist is well known.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): By agreeing with his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), does the hon. Gentleman not confirm that the Labour party wants disestablishment or denationalisation of the Church? I should like to hear what evidence Opposition Front-Bench Members have to show that there is any conformity with the 1944 Act, because, in York, that is certainly not the case. No school there currently complies with the Act.

Mr. Straw: First, I stress that I am speaking personally. The Labour party has no policy on this issue. We regard it as a matter of conscience. I hope that the Conservative party does, too, if there is any spirit of tolerance left in that party. Secondly, the comments of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) are confounded by what Her Majesty's inspectors said, which was quoted with approval by the Earl of Arran in February. Thirdly, if there is a lack of conformity in this area, that could be dealt with perfectly adequately through the arrangements agreed by this House on 23 March to strengthen the standing advisory council. The Secretary of State accepted that view.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Will my hon. Friend remind the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) that he is incorrect in his comments about the Labour party? Will he remind him that the Church in Wales, which is part of the Anglican communion, is already disestablished? The problem does not, therefore, arise.

Mr. Straw: I regard that as an inappropriate and unfortunate change. It has already unsettled and caused concern to Moslems. The National Moslem Education Council, meeting after the House of Lords had concluded its deliberations on 9 July, expressed concern about the changes made there and about what it described as a serious situation. It also expressed strong feelings about the need for other changes to be written into the Bill, which will not now be written into the Bill, if those changes were to go ahead.

We should certainly take note of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales because it has the job of delivering this part of the law. It takes the view that this is not the appropriate way to proceed. When it was asked to comment on the Secretary of State's consultative paper last July, it said that it would be better to leave the 1944 settlement where it was. Mr. Brian Gates, chairman of the council, has authorised me to quote him as saying:

"We are apprehensive about amendment (15) which makes specific requirements for Christian collective worship".

The council is also concerned about the standing advisory council's duty to invigilate and adjudicate upon applications to opt out.

This afternoon, we are asked to abandon a major plank of the 1944 settlement. When the House of Lords was considering the matter, it spent weeks on it. We are asked to secure that abandonment in less than two hours. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South expressing equal concern about that, whatever his personal views on the issue.

Mr. Cormack: I did not vote for the guillotine.

Mr. Straw: Such major and important changes should be made only after lengthy and careful deliberation. None of that has been possible here. For that reason alone, whatever hon. Members' views on the merits of the issue, we should reject the amendments from the other place and revert to a system that has, as the Secretary of State said less than three months ago, stood the test of time. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will join me in the Lobbies tonight.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I ask the House not to pass the amendment, but I appreciate that it has been moved to initiate a debate on this important group of amendments. I wish to explain the Government's view on the matter and where we stand now that the Bill and the amendments have come back from the other place.

Some hon. Members may recall that, in my Third Reading speech three months ago, I said that I could not recall a previous debate on religious education in my 20 years in the House. The fact that we have a second debate during the passage of the Bill shows the importance that hon. Members attach to the matter, and I welcome that.

The general inattention given to religious education and worship in past years has contributed to their decline in schools. The provisions contained in the Bill constitute a major step in reversing that decline and in ensuring that religious education and worship have a real value and meaning in schools.

Mr. Spearing: The Government cannot do it by law.

Mr. Baker: The 1944 Act did not seek to do it by law.

The amendments included in the Bill in another place have their roots in two separate, though linked, concerns. The first is to ensure that religious education is established as a central element in the basic curriculum of all maintained schools. The second is to secure that proper regard is paid to our nation's Christian heritage and traditions, in the content of both religious education and collective worship.

I strongly resist the implication of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that that leads to a degree of intolerance. There are many safeguards in the amendment that ensure against intolerance. No. hon. Members would support the intolerant imposition of one faith or one denomination in our schools or society.

5.30 pm

The Government have sought all along to ensure that religious education is not devalued or marginalised as a result of our proposals for the national curriculum. Measures were therefore introduced in the Bill from the outset to strengthen the position of religious education. The hon. Member for Blackburn implied that this had happened rather late in the day, but he was generous enough to recognise when the Bill was originally introduced as well as in Committee and on Report that we have sought to strengthen the position of religious education, placing an obligation on head teachers, local education authorities and governing bodies to ensure that it takes place. Following discussions with Church leaders, a famous agreement was reached earlier this year on a package of further strengthening measures, which I was able to announce to the House on Third Reading, and hon. Members were as one in welcoming the changes agreed. The changes, which were introduced into the Bill in another place by the Bishop of London, placed religious education firmly alongside the core and other foundation subjects but, in effect as primus inter pares. Religious education will thus be part of the basic curriculum for all pupils, alongside the national curriculum.

To oversee the provision of religious education in schools, the amendments provide for standing advisory councils for religious education to be compulsory in all local education authorities. Some already exist, having been set up following the 1944 Act, but some have fallen into disuse. Authorities will be required to review their agreed syllabuses for religious education when asked to do so by their standing advisory council. The amendments ensure that within the broad statutory framework the content of religious education will be determined locally. I emphasise that there is no question of imposition of religious education by the Government or from the centre. The amendments also preserve the existing local agreed syllabus arrangements which the churches and the Government value and wish to retain. It is important that these matters have been satisfactorily resolved with the agreement of all concerned. The House should be in no doubt that the Government now intend to ensure that the new statutory provisions are properly adhered to.

With regard to the Christian content of religious education and collective worship, the remaining amendments introduced in another place have addressed the nature both of religious education and of collective worship. Here I acknowledge that the debate has moved on. These are questions which raise fundamental issues of conscience and I fully recognise that hon. Members in all parts of the House will have strongly held views and will wish to vote as they see fit on these matters. Nevertheless, it is important to set out the Government's position. Our position is quite clear. We fully support the amendments introduced into the Bill by the Bishop of London. I have had extensive consultations with him in the past few months as well as with representatives of other faiths and religions in this country. In our view, the amendments confirm the intention of the 1944 Act in recognising the rightful place of Christianity within the religious education provided in schools.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): How extensive were the consultations with teachers, and is the Secretary of State satisfied that there are sufficient teachers to carry out the provisions? Will he explain the implications for the many agnostics and atheists who have been happy to carry out the religious education requirements of the 1944 Act but who are uncertain whether they are to be excluded from this area of education in the future?

Mr. Baker: It is difficult for an agnostic or an atheist to instruct children in religious education. I find that an extraordinary proposition, as an atheist does not believe in any kind of theistic philosophy.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I was present at a meeting of the Council of Christians and Jews at which senior rabbis expressed considerable concern about the proposals. Will my right hon. Friend say more about his consultations with representatives of other faiths and reassure Members such as myself who wish to support the Lords amendments?

Mr. Baker: I will come to that in a moment. So far, I have explained how the Bishop of London acted not just as spokesman for the Church of England but, in effect, as negotiator for the Catholic and Methodist churches and the Jewish faith as well as those who speak for the Moslem faith in this country. The proposals agreed in another place reflect the agreement of all those areas of the Christian communion and other denominations. I therefore assure the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) that the amendments emerge from a long process of negotiation.

As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said earlier, when Rab Butler introduced the 1944 legislation it was essentially a religious settlement which he had taken a great deal of time to negotiate with Archbishop Temple and others in the preceding two years. That is clear not just from the Act but from the memoirs of Rab himself and others who have written about that Act. It was implicit in the 1944 Act that religious education meant Christian education because at that time the only other religion represented in this country in any numbers was the Jewish religion. That is no longer the case, and many other faiths are devoutly held and strongly supported in this country.

As I have said, there was strong pressure from many individuals and groups for greater definition of the Christian content of religious education. Interestingly, the official Labour spokesman in the other House, Lord Morton of Shuna, did not vote against any of the amendments on Christian collective worship and Christian religious education. He said:

> "My Lords, we from this Front Bench support the amendment moved by the right reverend Prelate and congratulate him on achieving what I would regard as an almost impossible task of realising, in the main, a consensus." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 7 July 1988; Vol. 499, c. 435.]

I do not wish to make any political point about this.

Mr. Straw: The House of Lords had weeks of debate on this highly sensitive issue. We are being asked to agree the changes with only an hour and 10 minutes left to debate them. Does the Secretary of State regard that as satisfactory?

Mr. Baker: These matters have been well bruited about and well debated. They have been well covered in the press and in the general reporting of what happened in the House of Lords.

I repeat that many individuals and groups were pressing for a clearer definition of religious education and collective worship. Speaking on behalf of the Anglican Church, but with the agreement of the Catholic and Methodist Churches—I met representatives of both—and of representatives of the Jewish and Moslem faiths, the Bishop of London was able to reach a series of agreements. Negotiations were complex and difficult and in my many meetings with bishops of the Church of England and the Catholic Church in the past few months I have been constantly reminded that bishops move diagonally. Nevertheless, in all the discussions and debates I tried to find a way through those very difficult negotiations, and I believe that the outcome is satisfactory.

Many people felt that the Christian element in worship and religious education had been watered down and in some cases had virtually disappeared. Yet our society has developed historically within a Christian background. That faith was brought to these islands by Saint Augustine and has woven its way through our history. It is the weft and warp of our country and any understanding of our country without an understanding of that background is poor and inadequate. For example, as many hon. Members pointed out in the debate in March, it has had a profound effect on the development of our language and on the moral and social development of our country.

Certainly, fewer people now attend church and formally observe Christian traditions than was the case in 1944, as the hon. Member for Blackburn stated, but many who are not regularly practising Christians still turn to the church at solemn and important moments of their family lives, such as birth, marriage and death. Moreover, the Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun for many people have a meaning above that of merely another national holiday. Whether or not children come from a Christian background, it is right that they should receive a good understanding of the nation's Christian heritage and tradition. That point was made strongly by the Chief Rabbi in another place. At the same time, however, the amendments make very specific provision for agreed religious education syllabuses to take account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

[Mr. Baker]

The amendments specify that collective worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. But they also allow for the majority of schools to take account of the family background of pupils in deciding on the nature of such worship. The amendments also provide for schools in which Christian worship would be inappropriate. In such cases it will be open to the head teacher to apply to the standing advisory council to relieve the school of the duty to provide worship that is wholly or mainly Christian. I recognise that in some schools Christian worship would not be appropriate, and it is right that the Bill should acknowledge this.

The Bill also now re-enacts the provisions of the Education Act 1944 in ensuring that all parents will have a right to withdraw their children from religious education or collective worship should they so wish. There is no concept or intention that a specific type of worship or religious education should be thrust down the throats of children when they or their parents do not want it. There will be nothing to stop schools allowing or helping to arrange separate religious education or acts of worship according to different faiths or denominations in circumstances where children are withdrawn. That practice is quite common in many schools.

These provisions constitute a considerable improvement to the Bill as it left the House. As I have said, they are the results of detailed consultation by the Bishop of London, and he is to be complimented on his efforts.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. I should like to conclude my speech.

The bishop has gone to great lengths to seek the views of others with a direct interest, including not only the leaders of different faiths and religious denominations, but the local authority and teacher associations as well as parents' and governors' organisations. The amendments allow for flexibility in dealing with different local circumstances. I am confident that they will continue to encourage truly collective worship in schools, which the Government believe to be of such importance in maintaining harmony and bringing the school and pupils together. At the same time the amendments take full account of the needs and aspirations of different faiths. I hope that the House will recognise that the amendments are the product of very careful consideration in order to meet a variety of concerns, and that they will be of long-term benefit to schools and to society as a whole.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to be called immediately after the Minister because one factual matter must be correct. In view of the speed with which events have moved, perhaps I have misunderstood the matter. I do not dissent from the objectives outlined in the Secretary of State's speech. He spoke frequently about consultations by the noble prelate the Bishop of London. I hope that he will be precise about the parts of the amendments about which those extensive consultations have taken place. My understanding is that the consultations were about the non-controversial amendments that we discussed on Third Reading, especially those about the status and nature of religious education within the curriculum.

I understand that the consultations did not apply to the more controversial clauses, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) spoke, about writing in "mainly Christian" and "Christian", both of which terms were absent from the 1944 Act. Perhaps the Secretary of State will now tell the House about the degree of consultation in which the noble prelate and his friends participated other than with people such as Baroness Cox who introduced earlier amendments.

As I ascertained in a point of order, we are invited to take a single vote on both sets of amendments. I strongly support the retention of religious education in the compulsory curriculum of schools, but I dissent from the other amendments produced by the noble prelate. Perhaps the Secretary of State will now enlighten us about which set of amendments received very full consultation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: They all did.

Mr. Spearing: The Secretary of State assures the House that they all did. I find that almost impossible to believe, because the final version of amendments Nos. 8 to 16, to which I take exception, were not available in printed form until after Third Reading in the other place. I spoke only this week to the secretary of the Christian Education Movement and asked whether he had seen them. He had not. This morning I spoke to religious education officers in my local education authority and they had not seen them. They know the broad thrust and outline because they have seen them in the newspapers.

There has not been the time for negotiation and consultation on amendments Nos. 8 to 16 that there has been for amendment No. 2. If the Secretary of State wishes to say anything about that I shall gladly give way. Otherwise I shall move on, having made a fundamental and crucial point.

The difference between the Opposition and Conservative Members is fairly narrow. I must declare an interest which I never thought I would have to declare in the House. For 40 years I have been a member of the Congregational, now the United Reformed, Church. I attempt to be a practising Christian in every respect. For 14 years I was a religious education teacher, at least part time, as well as teaching other subjects in a London secondary school. Therefore, I start from the same start line as the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn. I hope that I am a practising Christian and that I shall develop in that way throughout my life. I have something in common with at least some Conservative Members.

5.45 pm

We are being asked to replace words in the 1944 Act that, up to a point, have stood the test of time with more specific words. Times are changing and we need to be reminded of our heritage and the extent to which religious belief has influenced and shaped this place and certainly our nation, its constitution and some of its public ways and benefits. Therefore, I understand the intention and appreciate the aims, but I disagree on the way in which this is to be done. Conservative Members wish it to be enshrined in law.

I intervened during the speech of the Secretary of State to say that the Minister cannot use law to reverse the decline in religious education. I did not mean that such an intention could not be put on the statute book. Of course that can be done. Religious education was put on the statute book as the only compulsory subject, but it has

been done shockingly badly. In that respect I attack my own Christian churches. They had a special place by law and did not discharge their stewardship and responsibility. As I have said, I did my bit to help.

After consultation, the 1944 Act offered some innate flexibility. I understand the aspirations of Conservative Members, but changing that Act will not achieve what they want. One of the reasons for that is that religious education is different from other subjects. Religion cannot be taught. It is caught and not taught and is qualitative and not quantitative. It is an offering, not something that is injected or taken.

I understand and share the great wish that we should return to some of the moral imperatives that made this country what it was. Some of the moral imperatives in our public life could do with a little more attention. I do not want to be party political about that, although I could be. Whether one can do that by compulsorily injecting religion into the bloodstream of people is questionable. The injection may result in inoculating people against the very thing that one wishes to offer. As religious education teachers will know, we often come up against people who have been badly taught religious education and are impervious even to a religious view of life, let alone any specific denominational view.

We cannot absolve ourselves of responsibility by taking the law into our hands. We have not provided for proper religious education even under the 1944 Act. I do not understand how we can do so with this measure. The Bishop of London acknowledged that everything depended on the job being carried out, and the necessary people are not available to implement the provisions that are set out in the 1944 Act. How are we to get the necessary people to carry out the provisions that we are discussing?

The problems that will be involved in implementation may wreck the objective that the Secretary of State has outlined. We are bringing definitions of Christianity into law—what is "mainly Christian"? We know that there have been court cases on issues related to religious education, and there will be more. We have before us seven pages of legal complexity, and these will provide a feast for lawyers.

Headmasters, especially in Newham, are battling to try to create corporate toleration in a sea of social and religious problems. Schools should have the chance to inculcate a degree of tolerance, understanding and unity. That chance should continue to be open to schools in the retention of the act of corporate worship, and among the other things in which I was involved in my teaching career was conducting and arranging religious assemblies. I know that it is a difficult task.

If the Bill is enacted it will lead to division, especially in multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious areas. It is true that under the 1944 Act, Jewish children in secondary schools can be separated from Christians. They have their assemblies at different times, for example. There has been pragmatism and understanding. We are now to proceed by law. I have spoken to teaching advisers, who have told me that there is alarm among head teachers about the additional problems that they will face. There is enough competition between members of different ethnic backgrounds as it is, and introducing legal requirements for assemblies and religious education may well exacerbate the problems. There are great risks. For that reason alone, I suggest that these provisions should not be written into the Bill.

Definitions of Christianity can vary greatly. I do not believe that there has been sufficient consultation with those who will have to do the job, despite the Secretary of State's assurances. It is wrong in principle for any hon. Member to agree to the amendments in the absence of proper consultation with those who will be involved. We are being invited to pass the amendments lock, stock and barrel. I am much in favour of amendment No. 2, but I disagree strongly with the views behind amendments Nos. 6 to 18. As you said in your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not have an opportunity in the Lobby to express my support of one amendment and my disapproval of others. It is all or nothing. I shall have to vote in the Aye Lobby because I am opposed to certain of the amendments and not because I am against compulsory religious education. In Newham and in other multi-cultural areas throughout the country, we shall be in danger of exacerbating existing problems.

In 1659, the then Chaplain to this place wrote a prayer. I believe that that Christian prayer has been read on every occasion that the House has sat since that date. Hon. Members who attend Prayers will know its words. It asks for wisdom from above

"to direct and guide us in all our consultations".

Our consultations are not confined to those that take place here and in another place. They include consultation with those whom we represent and those who will have to do the work that will result from the provisions that we are now discussing. The prayer continues:

"the publick wealth, peace and tranquillity of the Realm and the uniting and knitting together of the hearts of all persons and states within the same".

I am sorry to say that, in my judgment, the amendments will not achieve that. Therefore, we should not agree with the Lords amendment.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I suspect that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and I have a good deal in common in this area, although we may have differences in others. I disagree, however, with a significant part of his argument for rejecting writing Christianity into the Bill. He said that it would demoralise and do nothing to raise the standards, motivation, zeal and numbers of those committed to teaching Christianity by example, lifestyle and expertise.

Without sounding too partisan, I make my point by using the analogy of what is happening in the Labour party. If the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) succeed in becoming the leader and deputy leader of the Labour party, it will be because it is believed that the projection of clear and distinctive Socialist policies will encourage enthusiasm and abandon or torpedo the apathy that is currently the enemy of the Labour party. We believe that exactly the same principle applies in restoring Christianity to the centrality of the Bill. It will encourage and mobilise. It will give hope to those who are presently dormant and apathetic, who are waiting for a clear trumpet note to be sounded. The writing of Christianity into the Bill will do exactly that.

Mr. Anderson: If the right hon. Gentleman continues with that line, he may deter many of us who are determined to vote for the amendments.

Mr. Alison: I said deliberately that I would use an analogy. The hon. Gentleman is well enough educated to know what an analogy means and when one fails to amount to demonstrable proof.

I hope that the House will see fit to endorse the amendments. They are related to education, not indoctrination. They make ample provision for the teaching and practices of other principal religions which are represented in Great Britain. They uphold the traditional rights of parents to withdraw their children from religious education or worship. They have gained support from the Chief Rabbi, among others, as well as individual Moslems who are concerned with religious education. They accord with the wishes and aspirations of the great mass of British parents, both past and present. For all its secularism today, Britain remains, in my view, a Christian society. In T. S. Eliot's oft quoted words:

"A society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else."

The 1983 survey of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys concluded that the number of children in state schools whose country of origin disposed them to have a non-Christian cultural heritage was a little under 4 per cent. The comprehensive Bible Society-Gallup Poll survey of 1986 yielded the fact that 85 per cent. of the population liked to think of itself as Christian. I remind the House that the distinguished historian, Lord Blake, has written of the Christian religion as follows:

"It is quite impossible to understand its political and cultural developments unless one understands the nature of religion which under changing forms and differing institutions permeated the consciousness of men and women, conditioned their ideas, shaped their politics and inspired so much of their culture."

I conclude by reminding my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of a by-way of scripture that I fear will become tediously well trodden in the context of the Butler Act of 1944 and the Baker Act of 1988. There is a famous Old Testament story in Genesis, chapter 40, about Joseph in Egypt. Joseph was able to interpret the dreams of the Pharoah's chief butler and chief baker. One of them was lifted up to his former glory, while the other was lifted up on the gallows. I need not tell this well-educated House whether the butler or the baker was placed on the gallows. If any hon. Member does not know, that demonstrates the need for a greater emphasis to be placed on religious education.

Suffice to say that I believe that the name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be lifted up with esteem and gratitude for the courage, sympathy and dedication with which he has helped to negotiate and bring to fruition one of the most fundamental and significant improvements in the provision of education—above all, in religious education—in this country that we have seen for many centuries. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he has achieved and hope very much that the House will endorse the amendment.

6 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In the beginning, before God created heaven and earth, there was chaos and confusion. This Bill will have the same effect because it has not had the careful consideration that it requires to deal with religious education, which is one of the most sensitive issues.

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House because I believe that I am the only person here from a minority religion—*[Interruption.]*—at least, the only such hon. Member who intends to take part in the debate. I remember with great hurt, my suffering as a child, through having to take part in Christian assemblies in Canada during the war. I remember the fear that I felt as Easter approached each year. My school mates, who were normally on very good terms with me, accused me of having personally killed Christ. I remember how I loathed, feared and resented having to take part in those assemblies.

I fully appreciate that in the great and respected Christian tradition of this country, it is an enormous privilege for the grandson of four Jewish immigrants to represent a constituency in which there are practically no Jewish people, but where there is a majority of Christians, many of whom are non-practising, and a considerable minority of Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs. People are good enough to accept me for what I am and to allow me to attend their school assemblies, for what they are. I pay tribute to the teachers in so many of the multi-ethnic, multi-faith schools who try to make the children feel at home, whatever their religion. Some of the children greet me with Hebrew songs when I visit them.

Others submit Hindu children to Christian practices. I have always believed that that was wrong. It is true that people can opt out. It is also true that, two generations back, Jewish people did not know their rights, did not necessarily speak the English language, and often did not exercise their rights. I am ill at ease about the opting-out principle that permeates this legislation.

It was right for Lord Campbell of Alloway to seek to include an amendment

"to ensure that religious education, Christian or otherwise, shall promote respect, understanding and tolerance for those who adhere to other faiths".

I am sorry that that has been excluded. I am not encouraged by the statement that a circular will be issued by the Department which will confirm the intention. I have no faith in circulars.

Much mention has been made of my dear and respected friend and leader, Lord Jakobovits, the Chief Rabbi. It will not come as a complete surprise to hon. Members, who have heard that there are one or two dissenting voices within the Christian faith and some difficulty even in defining Christianity, to realise that possibly there are occasional difficulties in other faiths as not all accept everything that their leaders say. However, Lord Jakobovits was very careful to say:

"when I originally read the proposed new amendments in cold print, I was greatly perplexed, confused and in part considerably worried. But, having now listened to the exegesis of the right reverend Prelate, and particularly also the interpretations given by the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, the noble Lord, Lord Elton, and others, I feel immensely relieved and indeed, encouraged."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 7 July 1988; Vol. 499, c. 440.]

I hope that I will not be considered disloyal to my noble Friend the Chief Rabbi if I state that I do not feel that same sense of encouragement and relief. I believe in the printed word. As a lawyer and Queen's counsel I know to my cost and pleasure that courts interpret not what is said in exegesis by a noble Prelate, Baroness or Lord, but what is written into statute. I do not believe that what it is now proposed to write into statute provides the proper basis for what is now a multi-religious society, whatever polls referred to in this House may show.

In the country overall, the polls may be correct. However, Britain is spotted and dappled with areas of

religious minority interest. I speak not simply as a member of the Jewish faith, but as an hon. Member who proudly represents constituents of all faiths. I believe that the needs and interests of the newer religions should have the greatest attention paid to them in the Bill. That attention is lacking.

I pay tribute to the goodwill and intentions of the Secretary of State and his colleagues on this issue. I know that these provisions are not intended to do an unkindness. I appreciate that one of the glories of this great tradition of Christianity in this country is respect for the smaller religions and minority groups. I respectfully submit that they are not properly dealt with in the Bill. That is why I shall vote for the Opposition amendment and against the Lords amendment.

Mr. Gregory: The section dealing with morning assembly and religious education is one of the most important aspects of the Bill.

We do not today find the majority of schools following the tenet of the Education Act 1944, but teachers should appreciate that Britain is fundamentally a Christian country, as was said so eloquently by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison).

Parents and guardians expect a Christian ethic to be specifically manifested on a daily basis in the collective act of worship and less frequently in a programme of religious education. All young people should have the opportunity to learn the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. If they come from a religious background which finds it impossible to accept that at school, the Bill clearly allows them to opt out. It may surpise some people to learn that, sad to say, these clauses are required. Clearly we have moved a long way from the standards set following the Education Act 1944 which are not being upheld in many schools.

I was so concerned about that fact that I carried out a survey of schools in York funded by the local authority. Of those which responded, only one secondary school and 12 out of 26 primary schools held a daily collective act of worship. Clearly there is a case for much more inquiry by school governors and for monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

In a city with a strong Christian ethic and little evidence of other faiths, it is incredible that children, even of primary school age, can be confused by a syllabus that seeks to compare different religions before a good grounding has been given in Christianity. Yet that is the experience even in York primary schools. Some even deny visits by Christian ministers.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the hon. Member accept that one of the difficulties of delivering the Education Act 1944 is the shortage of available teachers and resources? It is a major source of concern to religious education teachers that we are passing legislation that is totally unworkable. The resources are not available, and they are unhappy about this legislation.

Mr. Gregory: I do not accept either of those tenets. Resources do not need to take the form of the most ultra-modern videos, and suchlike. If any school cannot provide teachers with a genuinely strong Christian background—and I have yet to find one that cannot—there are visiting ministers who, on a denominational basis, will be very happy to provide support.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*—

Mr. Gregory: I must move on, because of the hour. I know that a number of hon. Members wish to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) will understand.

The problems that I have mentioned are not confined to York. The law on collective acts of worship and religious education is not being complied with in Newcastle, on Tyneside, in Doncaster, and in many parts of southern England. With the passing of this Bill, it will be essential for the Secretary of State to issue a circular, to which the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) has referred, spelling out the terms and spirit of the Act in relation to both morning assembly and religious education. I hope that there will be an opportunity for my right hon. Friend to refer to that aspect, because there has been confusion in the past. With the passing of the Bill, we shall have clarity and certainty. Schools, and the vast majority of teachers, will accept and welcome that.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I spoke in the 23 March debate which related specifically to the place and status of religious education. As the Secretary of State has reminded us, the debate has since moved on. Even in that earlier debate, anxiety was expressed by both sides of the House about violation of the Education Act 1944. The House has just heard from the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) why there was concern. Worry was also expressed on 23 March about the content of religious education and about worship at particular schools, or where the multi-faith approach has been adopted to the extent that all faiths are trivialised, as was observed by the Chief Rabbi in another place.

There has also been consequential concern about the need to protect the integrity of Christianity and of other world religions. As a result—and it seems that this needs to be repeated, in view of what has passed in this debate—discussions have taken place with representatives of all the major Christian churches, representatives of other faiths, those representing local authorities, teachers' unions, parents' and governors' organisations, and educational organisations such as the Religious Education Council.

6.15 pm

The Bishop of London reported in another place that he and his colleagues received widespread support; none whom he and they consulted wishes to oppose the amendment. While affirming clearly the place of Christianity, the changes in the agreed syllabus provide for a flexibility of emphasis in areas where the vast majority of pupils are from other faiths. Similar provisions are made for worship. However, where the occasion requires—for example, in a school in which the family tradition is predominantly Moslem—the act of worship can draw on that tradition. The advice of the standing advisory councils and the use of the complaints procedure must be available in that respect. All that has been confirmed by the Secretary of State, but it is necessary again to place it on the record.

I cannot see where the charge of imposition made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) arises. His dissent falls into three categories. First, he is concerned about any disturbance of the 1944 Act. Secondly, he is concerned that the churches are being allowed to make

[Mr. A. E. P. Duffy]

their failure to reach the parents a reason for the statutory right to access to their children. Thirdly he is concerned about other faiths held, notably, by ethnic minorities.

I do not believe that those are valid objections. What went wrong after the Education Act 1944 was that the churches did not involve themselves in the teaching of religion in schools. That attitude is changing and there is a greater confidence among the churches today, and they will now take a positive lead. As the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) reminded us, we are now dealing with a fundamentally changed situation. Recently, our religious life has been enriched by those outside the Judeo-Christian religion. West Indian children, of course, have a Christian cultual tradition. The parents of children of the Hindu and Moslem faiths expect their religion to be transmitted in the home, and are content for their children to learn in school about the religion of the host country.

Over the weekend, I consulted yet again with the Moslem ethnic community's leader in the east end of Sheffield. He reminded me that nothing more insults him and his colleagues in their deep religious faith than the teaching of bits of alternative religions with no feeling for the depth of conviction of the faith of their adherents. We have—dare I say it?—an excellent relationship, and it is based largely on strongly held convictions on both sides. They do not reject the view that the story of Christianity should be told to their children, because they believe that their children cannot understand the nature of our country unless they are told that story. They join us in acknowledging that—as was said by the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison)—no one can understand our heritage in art, music and literature without having a deep knowledge of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Few if any of us believe that children can grow up with a genuine sense of moral purpose without a grounding in religion. However, I believe that in this country, the basic values of the Christian religion should also be known and taught. Morality, detached from its theological or philosophical foundations, would be no more than a series of arbitrary commands, with little claim on the allegiance of the heart or the mind. Furthermore, our parliamentary democracy owes everything to the teachings of the New Testament and to the Christian interpretation of the value of the individual.

We also built a welfare state on the basis that we are each other's keepers and that we are members of a family. That also comes out of the New Testament. The children of today are the beneficiaries of a society created by people who held such values. Our democracy, our institutions and our freedom are dependent on Christian insights. Therefore, it goes beyond morality, but we can see how moral education has traditionally been associated with religious education. As all my hon. Friends know, there is no such thing as a value-free education. There is no such thing as neutral education. Even state schools are expected to transmit the religious and moral values that are accepted by the nation. Those values constitute the common possession of society. They are the basis of civilised life within our community.

I go further. As I indicated on 23 March, I believe in the right of parents to have their children educated in their faith. That means more than being taught about their religion. It entails inculcation of a unified system of beliefs and values that shape behaviour and things great and small. That is my view.

I cannot see how the Lords amendments can possibly be regarded as evidence of a new move in the direction of Christian exclusivism. It is evidence, rather, of the seriousness with which many teachers of religious education now want to take a fresh look at the Judeo-Christian traditions that have contributed so richly to our western cultural heritage. It is evidence also of an increasing willingness to try to be clear about what Christianity is. It is evidence that most parents in this country want their children to be educated in the Christian tradition. The law grants them that right, and we are called upon tonight to see that it is observed honestly and efficiently. I therefore support the amendments.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I shall be brief, because many hon. Members wish to speak. Let me add that no hon. Member who has spoken so far has not spoken with absolute honesty and conviction, whatever the views expressed.

I think that many people believe that the structure and the strength of this country have been built up on an Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Christian society and its beliefs, and are greatly concerned that moral and ethical standards have declined and are still declining. If that decline is to be stopped, I believe that it can be limited only by a stronger return to religious structure. If we are indeed a Christian country, we should have the faith to do everything in our power to encourage that to be taught to our young people in schools. Surely it is right that they should understand the ethical structure of Christianity and the moral obligations that form the basis of a civilised society, and those, I believe, are best taught through some form of religious education.

We are not attempting to suggest that Christianity should be universal; the amendments make specific allowances for members of other faiths to opt out of any of the Christian structures set out in them. Nevertheless, I do not believe that ethnic communities who come here to benefit from all that we have should expect their faith or social structure to change what has been the greatness of our own society—although that does not mean that we must stop them believing what they want to believe.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Sir Peter Emery: I will not give way, because many hon. Members wish to speak.

The amendments spell that out. They urge that education should turn more to what I have been talking about than it has in the past. If, as has been suggested, there is a shortage of teachers, it is because we have not been urging that on the profession under the 1944 Act, as I believe Butler expected. The provision of the Act has been weakened. We need to strengthen it, and the amendments set out to do that. They will fulfil the wish of most parents, and for that reason they need the support of every hon. Member.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I think that I am the first non-believer to speak in the debate. This may be a good day for the Christians, but it is a bad day for the sense and sensibilities of the rest of us. It is extraordinary that a new religious settlement should have been reached in haste and in dark

corners between an unacceptable bishop and an unelectable peer. The result is impoverished, impractical and unprincipled amendments which ought to be assigned to the dustbin of ideology gone wrong.

We are being asked to enshrine in legislation unworkable and unrealisable pontifical nonsense which will cause chaos in our schools, dismay among pupils and divisions between all. Worse, I fear that we may inadvertently be introducing a charter for fundamentalists, bigots and zealots that will unleash forces of Byronic darkness in our schools. Perhaps I could tell the hon. Members a little more about Byronic darkness in a moment.

I do not want to be unkind, but I believe that our message to the Lords in general and the Bishop of London in particular can be summed up in the words of Coleridge, who said:

"He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all."

Coleridge, I am sure, would have said that the amendments had been produced by a bad bishop and a bad peer. I cannot say that, because it is unparliamentary.

Let me make it clear that I am not attacking Christianity per se, and that I am not sure that I agree with either Frank Harris or Balfour in their famous discussion about religion. I am sure that all hon. Members who have read Margot Asquith's biography of Balfour will recall the conversation. Frank Harris said: "The fact is, Mr. Balfour, all the faults of the age come from Christianity and journalism", to which Balfour replied delphically: "Christianity, of course, Mr. Harris, but why journalism?"

In my view, for Parliament to assert the primacy of the Christian faith in the teaching in our schools is a morally, intellectually and metaphysically bankrupt exercise. For rabbis and imams to have to go to some standing council to ask for their own daily act of worship—even as other religions, and indeed secularism, are rising in this country while their own religion declines—shows the arrogance of the Christian establishment. It also shows how the religions fail daily to inspire the people who back them and who cannot manage without compulsory ritual. For Parliament to insist on the teaching of Christianity in what will inevitably be a crowded curriculum—putting it above learning that involves knowledge, understanding and awareness of the physical, mental and material world, and at the expense of science, logic, truth and the development of the imaginative faculties—shows just how easily in the modern world we can retreat inside ourselves, our guilt and our helplessness.

The idea that a school can preach racial harmony at the same time as allowing two or three segregrated acts of worship to take place daily seems so foolhardy that it could only come from people who hear voices from the other world. As I watched the Secretary of State introduce the amendments, I was reminded of Parson Richards, a character in one of Shelley's ballads. Like the Secretary of State, Parson Richards is suave, well heeled and well fed. His greatest love was feeding his hound. He had also sired a bastard son. The mother of the child takes up the story:

"Priest, consider that God who created us
Meant this for a world of love—
Remember the story of Lazarus
You preach to the people of—. . .
And yet I cannot imagine how we
Can call him just and good,
When he sends a wretched woman like me
To a man like you for food.
Oh God! This poor dear child did I
At thy command bear and cherish—
Thou bads't us increase and multiply,
And our tyrants bid us perish!"

I am sure that the Secretary of State understands the metaphor. Let me ask him a simple question: what shall it profit a mother if under the Education Reform Bill she understands all the gods and loses her own body and son?

If I were God—and, in the words of the negro spiritualist, if there has got to be a God, then why not me? —I would make sure that the Secretary of State expurgated his sins in the after life, and that his colleagues did the same, for all the suffering that they have caused in this life.

When the other place debated these clauses, three journalists rushed into Westminster Hall and said to me that they were perturbed because Members of the other place and of this House were not prepared to stand up to the unwarranted claims that the bishops were making for the young minds of pupils. My reply was that we should consider Churchill's famous statement that we are all Socialists now, but in the modern world we are all cowards now and only too ready to accept the tyranny of the religions. It is a sure sign that we live in a country whose culture is in irreversible decline.

6.30 pm

The public know that a fair number of Members of Parliament are charlatans. They know the depths of hypocrisy to which Members of Parliament are prepared to descend and that often we preach morals that we do not practise, but they have a right to expect that on important matters of principle hon. Members should speak to the truth of their understanding and feelings. The public have a right to expect hon. Members not to give way to zealots and fanatics who demand the potential to bring darkness, even nemesis, into our schools. Byron wrote:

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came, and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light: . . .
And the clouds perished:
Darkness had no need of aid from them—
She was the universe."

We have no right to introduce darkness into our schools.

Mr. Cormack: Methinks that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) doth protest too much. One thing that he has certainly developed in an obviously most fascinating education is his imaginative faculty. I look forward to the anthology of verse that he will produce as a rejoinder to that recently produced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I suspect, though, that it will be less positive in its progress and a little more destructive in its impact.

I strongly agree with two points made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I deplore the fact that we are debating this extremely important subject under a guillotine and I hope that every hon. Member will regard the vote as a free vote. I personally regard every vote as a free vote. I received my little document saying that my attendance was essential, and I am here, but tonight I shall have absolutely no hesitation in supporting my right hon.

[Mr. Cormack]

Friend. What he said was just, right and fair and the alternations made to the Bill in another place were positive and sensible.

We have to recognise that the Education Act 1944 has not worked properly, and I speak as one who was a schoolmaster. In far too many schools the daily act of worship has been perfunctory, if it has been held at all. Far too often, non-believers have been given the job of inculcating religion. In the previous debate I pointed out to my right hon. Friend that I believe that, as far as possible, the teaching of religion should be restricted to those who believe in the religion that they are teaching. The law has been more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Now that we are looking for the first time for almost half a century at the content and direction of our education system it is right to consider what should be written into this Education Reform Bill. It is also right to recognise without arrogance and intolerance that we live in a society that has been moulded, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) said in a brave and positive speech, by the Judeo-Christian civilisation. Many people never go near a church, but most of them recognise that inheritance. I will give just one example. In a village in my constituency, where I happened to be church warden, we had to raise a lot of money for the church. We were out one Sunday and found that some 85 per cent. of the inhabitants of the village gave something towards their church, for they recognised what it stood for, even though many of them rarely, if ever, darkened its doors.

The law cannot impose morality or a religious faith but it can recognise the bedrock of society. If we pass these amendments, that is all that we shall be doing.

I fully understand and sympathise with the points made by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). One of the things that I am most pleased to have done in this House, together with him, is to found the all-party committee for the release of Soviet Jewry. We have worked together and we respect each other. I think we understand our respective points of view, but I am bound to say to him that I believe that the Chief Rabbi is right and that he is wrong. I can hardly be accused of great deviation from the joint cause that we espouse if I say that. The Chief Rabbi has recognised some great and profound truths. He has become one of the moral leaders of this nation, to whom we all look up, and I rejoice in his elevation to another place, of which he will be one of the most valuable Members and recognised as such in years to come.

Christianity should, above all, teach tolerance. The second of the great commandments exhorts us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Those who have come to this country to settle or who have been born in this country into another faith have nothing to fear from the amendment or from Christianity that is properly practised and properly taught. There will always be bigots, zealots, charlatans and rogues, but we have a duty to recognise one of the fundamental truths of our society: that we are the inheritors of a great tradition that has been moulded by a great religion. The amendment recognises that fact. It does no more. Those who do not espouse the Christian religion have nothing to fear from the amendments that I hope we shall pass this evening.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The real division in our society is not between Christians and non-Christians but between those who have faith and those who have not. The real division in our society is not between Hindus and Christians, Moslems and Christians and Sikhs and Christians but between those who need a place for the spirit. We should create in our schools a place for the spirit.

My fear about what lies implicity and explicitly behind the speeches of those hon. Members who support the Lords amendment is the suggestion that the balance of the Education Act 1944 has been removed because of demographic changes. That view is fundamentally false. The real changes that have altered the balance of the 1944 Act have nothing to do with race or demography but everything to do with the rising tide of secularism and materialism. We in this place should be seeking to carve out a place within the curriculum that recognises that fact.

The question is how best to do that. Do we do that by raising to a special position of prominence the faith to which I happen to adhere—the Christian religion—or do we recognise the real division that exists now between the faithless and the faithful, and say that we need to draw on the multiplicity of religious traditions that exists in our society? We should draw on the Hindu religion, the religion of the Sikhs and on Islam to enrich the spiritual body of our nation. Our challenge is to devise legislation to do just that.

I listened with a certain amount of trepidation to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that those who come new to this country have in some way to adapt to our "tradition." The reverse is true. We should recognise not simply the historical fact that when people from this country went to India they did not for one moment abandon Christianity; they took Christianity there. We should also recognise that we can draw on the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Moslems to enrich our spiritual pool. We should face that challenge, but I fear that the Lords amendments do not do that.

However, we are doing something that we may live to regret. The law will create a scenario in which people will be able to opt out of that spiritual pool. We shall lose the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Moslems and the contributions that they make, with us, as Christians, to carving out that place for the spirit that can be so attractive—we know and believe that it can be attractive because we are people of faith—to people who at the moment travail without faith, have nothing to cling to and, as a result, are exposed to the moral buffeting to which so many of our people are subjected.

Our choice is whether or not we enrich that spiritual pool. I hope that the House will make a choice for the spirit and reject the materialism, the secularism and, above all, the division that underlies the Lords amendments.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the Secretary of State have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Baker: I must say how much I agree with the initial comment of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). I believe that it is very important to open up to children the spiritual dimension of life. Education is not

just about the mental and physical development of a child. Children going through the education process should be aware of the spiritual dimension. I say at once that it does not necessarily have to be Christian.

However, I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's comments on the amendments. The amendments seek, first, to ensure that religious education is re-established and taught. Many people feel that since 1944 it has weakened. They also strengthen the Christian background and the Christian tradition. My hon. Friends the Members for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) have stressed how important that is to the framework of this country.

One cannot live in this country without being aware of that. That point was made very clearly in the comments of the Chief Rabbi in the other place. He was quoting another rabbi when he said:

"'From schools that had confidence in their Christianity, I learnt an answering pride in my Jewishness; and I discovered that those who best appreciate other faiths are those who treasure their own.'"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 3 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 420.]

That spirit infuses through the amendments moved by the Bishop of London in the other place.

The amendments contain nothing intolerant. There is no imposition; there is scope for those who do not believe at all or who wish to believe in other faiths. We believe that there must be a bedrock in the basic teaching of Christianity in our schools, in both religious education and worship, because in that way our society is strengthened in a tolerant, humane and spiritual way.

Mr. Straw: The issue before the House this evening concerns tolerance. We have to remember that within the memory of all right hon. and hon. Members there have been periods of great intolerance, not only against Hindus, Moslems or those of no faith, but against the Catholics, the Methodists and the Non-conformists.

We do not dissent from much that has been said on both sides of the House about the aim. We object to the method and to the way in which we are being forced to vote on a block of amendments without discrimination. We object to the structure written into the Act—a structure we all know the Secretary of State opposed on 23 March. I believe that, in his heart, the Secretary of State opposes it still, as do other Ministers, as it is an unworkable and unacceptable structure.

I commend amendment (a) to the House. Then we shall be forced to vote against the whole block of amendments, although we support some of them.

It being a quarter to Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 138, Noes 362.

Division No. 417] **[6.45 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*

Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coleman, Donald
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilshire, David

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr Tristan Garel-Jones

Question accordingly negatived.

Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question is, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Straw: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you explain whether we are voting just on Lords amendment No. 1, or on the whole block?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let me clarify the position for the House. I have put the Question on Lords amendment No. 1. Once we have disposed of that, in accordance with the motion approved earlier by the House, I shall put the Question on all the outstanding Lords amendments in the group. For the sake of clarity, I will put the Question again.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 1 agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Question put forthwith,

That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords amendments:—

The House divided: Ayes 372, Noes 108.

Division No. 418] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Ci't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coleman, Donald
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heyhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*

Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Loyden, Eddie
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Graham Allen and
Mr. Martin Flannery.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2, 3, 8 to 16, 147 to 186, 227, 476, 480 and 557 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 4 to 6 agreed to.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that the vote related not to Lords amendment No. 1 but to at least two major issues and more than 14 amendments, which were grouped in one Question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not for me to judge the importance of the matter which the House has just decided. If the hon. Member is in any doubt, perhaps I should explain that the House has just voted on Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 6 inclusive, 8 to 16 inclusive, 147 to 186 inclusive, 227, 476, 480 and 557. I hope that that helps the hon. Member.

Clause 4

Duty to establish the National Curriculum by order

Lords amendment: No. 7, in page 3, line 46, leave out subsection (4).

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Lords amendment No. 18, in clause 10, page 7, line 46, leave out from "apply" to end of line 47 and insert

"; or

(b) shall apply with such modifications as may be so specified;

in such cases or circumstances as may be so specified."

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, at end add

'and regulations made under this section shall in particular ensure that where the National Curriculum does not apply to a registered pupil or is applied with modifications in cases and circumstances specified in the regulations, the head teacher shall inform in writing the parent of the pupil of the effect of the regulations and of the parent's rights under section 21'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, at end add—

'( ) Regulations made under this section shall in particular provide that where the National Curriculum does not apply to a registered pupil, or applies with modifications in cases and circumstances specified in the regulations, the parent of the pupil shall be informed in writing by the head teacher of the effect of the regulations, of the provision that it is propose will be made for the pupil, and of his right to appeal to the governing body if he does not agree with the application of the regulations to the pupil, or with the provision it is proposed to make for the pupil.

( ) On any such appeal the governing body may—

(a) confirm the head teacher's action; or

(b) direct the head teacher to take such action authorised by the regulations as they consider appropriate in the circumstances;

and it shall be the duty of the head teacher to comply with any directions of the governing body under paragraph (b) above.'.

Lords amendments Nos. 19 to 25.

Lords amendment No. 54, in clause 30, page 27, line 3, at end insert

"(including, in particular, the number of registered pupils at a school who have special educational needs and the nature of the special educational provision required to be made for them)."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, leave out 'and'.

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, after 'them', insert

'having regard to the capacity of the local education authority to provide central services, including the schools psychological service, which may be relevant to such provision.'.

Amendment (c) to the Lords amendment, in line 3, after 'them', insert

'and the numbers and grading of staff required to produce that level of provision'.

Lords amendments Nos. 68, 187, 188.

Lords amendment No. 272, in clause 104, page 103, line 3, at end insert—

"(8A) In fulfilling that duty a local education authority shall also have regard to the requirements of persons over compulsory school age who have learning difficulties.

(8B) Subject to subsection (8C) below, for the purposes of subsection (8A) above a person has a "learning difficulty" if—

(a) he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of his age; or

(b) he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by the local education authority concerned in pursuance of their duty under subsection (1) above for persons of his age.

(8C) A person is not to be taken as having a learning difficulty solely because the language (or form of language) in which he is, or will be, taught is different from a language (or form of a language) which has at any time been spoken in his home."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 2, leave out 'also have regard to' and insert

'make adequate provision to meet'.

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, in line 2, leave out 'have regard to' and insert

'secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities suited to'.

Amendment (c) to the Lords amendment, in line 3, after 'age', insert

'up to and including the age of 19'.

Amendment (d) to the Lords amendment, in line 4, at end insert 'or special needs'.

Lords amendments Nos. 275, 278 and 537.

Lords amendment No. 538, in page 211, line 42, at end insert—

'74B. In section 8(1) of the 1981 Act (appeals against statements) for the words from "following" to the end there shall be substituted the words "against the special educational provision specified in the statement—

(a) following the first or any subsequent assessment of the child's special educational needs under section 5; and

(b) where the authority make any amendment to the special educational provision specified in the statement otherwise than on the making of any such assessment."'

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, at end of subparagraph (a) leave out 'and'.

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment at end insert

'and

(c) where the authority cease to maintain a statement for a child for whom they are responsible.'.

Lords amendment No. 539.

Mr. Dunn: A striking feature of the passage of the Bill has been the concern shown for pupils with special needs not merely by Members in both Houses but by Members on both sides of each House. I am glad to observe that the welfare of children with special needs is one subject that can be guaranteed to transcend party divisions and to unite both sides of the House. I am glad to see the many familiar faces of hon. Members who touched on this subject in Committee. Life would not be the same without the lugubrious features of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). Much of what we did was the result of the agreements and concerns of both sides of the Committee, and the Government gave a lead on occasions, although we were not always given credit for what was done.

That was also the case when we dealt with the application of the national curriculum provisions. Hon. Members, especially those who served on the Committee, will know that it has been our wish and intention from the beginning that the benefits from the introduction of the national curriculum should extend to pupils with special needs. That is why the provisions of chapter I of the Bill apply to special schools maintained by local education authorities. We realised, however, that there would need to be some flexibility in implementing the national curriculum pupils with special needs.

7.15 pm

In the consultative document which preceded the Bill, it was proposed that there should be provision for statements of special educational need to specify any requirements of the national curriculum which should not

[Mr. Dunn]

apply to individual pupils. That provision became clause 11. There was a need for a similar provision for pupils who were not the subject of statements; so clause 4 allowed the Secretary of State, in making orders about the foundation subjects, to specify modifications in respect of particular categories of pupil.

That word "categories" brought back memories of pre-1981 Act language, and we were criticised for it. It was also said that some parts of the national curriculum would be so inappropriate for the most severely affected children that what was needed was not modification, but exemption. It was also pointed out that the provisions we had made were aimed at pupils with permanent or long-term difficulties, and would be slow to bring to bear. There was sometimes a need for a school to be able to act quickly to meet a temporary change of circumstances.

I listened to these criticisms and, as I am not just a "listening Minister", we made some changes. We introduced clause 10 to deal with pupils without statements; we amended clause 11 to allow for exemptions from the national curriculum; and we introduced clause 12 to give head teachers powers to deal with temporary situations. The use of those powers will be subject to safeguards for the rights of the pupils and their parents.

The amendments made in another place build on our provisions and tidy them up. It became clear that the provisions in clauses 4 and 10 had much in common. Amendments Nos. 7 and 18 combine them. Amendments Nos. 19, 20 and 21 are drafting amendments to clause 11. Amendment No. 23 acknowledges the fact that a pupil whose statement of special educational needs already specifies a modification to the national curriculum may need a further, temporary, change while those needs are being reassessed—perhaps because of a change of circumstances. Amendments Nos. 22, 24 and 25 are consequential amendments.

Amendment No. 538 extends the parents' right of appeal under the Education Act 1981 to cover the case where a statement is being amended without a complete reassessment, as may be needed to write in modifications to the national curriculum. Amendment No. 539 requires the LEA to inform the parents of their right of appeal in such cases.

Amendment No. 537 is slightly different. It enables local education authorities to provide for any non-educational provision which is specified in a child's statement of special educational needs under the Education Act 1981. As the House knows from experience of the legislation, the responsibility falls on the appropriate statutory agencies.

The Government recognise the strength of feeling on this subject and we understand and recognise the uncertainty felt in many quarters about the provision of speech therapy following the Oxfordshire judgment in 1986. The fact that three separate attempts were made in the other place to secure an amendment on this matter is a tribute to the tenacity of their Lordships and an expression of their concern—and concern was expressed in this House as well. In that event, I am glad to say that it was third time lucky and the Government are happy to commend the amendment to the House.

Lords amendment No. 54—which has an air of familiarity for my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and others—is concerned with special needs in schemes of financial delegation. Concern has rightly been expressed that facilities for pupils with special educational needs should be safeguarded under schemes of financial delegation.

As we have made clear both in this House and in the other place, the Government fully share that aim. The draft guidance issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes it clear that local education authorities will be expected to take account of special needs in their formula for allocating resources between schools. Nor is this merely advisory. Clause 26(2) requires the local education authority to take account of the guidance in preparing its scheme, and my right hon. Friend will not approve any scheme that fails to do so. In addition, provision may be safeguarded by local education authorities excepting from delegation a number of key areas, such as the school psychological and welfare services, and provision for pupils with statements of special needs.

None the less, the Government recognise the force of the argument that there should be an explicit recognition of the position of special needs on the face of the Bill. Lords amendment No. 54 provides this by specifying special needs as a factor that may be taken into account in the resource allocation formula. Together with the clear requirement set out in the draft guidance, the amendment will ensure that local education authorities provide through their formula for variations in numbers and for the provision required for pupils with special needs. I hope that the House will welcome that as a further and explicit statement of the Government's aims.

The new clause inserted by Lords amendment No. 68 is designed to ensure that local education authorities have the flexibility, where they wish, to include special schools as part of their schemes. The existing clause 35 provides for the Secretary of State to be able to require delegation to special schools by regulations. But, as my right hon. Friend has made clear in his draft guidance, he does not intend to make such regulations until there is more experience of voluntary delegation by local education authorities. It is therefore desirable that local education authorities should have the freedom, where they consider it appropriate, to extend delegation to special schools voluntarily.

The provisions will allow individual special schools to be treated differently, in recognition of their widely different needs and characteristics. It would be open to local education authorities under the regulations to decide which individual special schools, if any, should be included in the scheme. The regulations would also serve to disapply requirements of this part of the Bill that would not be appropriate for special schools. In particular, we envisage that the application of the resource allocation formula will need to be different for special schools to take account of the specific nature of their needs.

These provisions are permissive. Regulations made under them will be made only after more experience of delegation and extensive consultation. I hope that the House will support the aim of providing more flexibility, and accept and endorse the amendments.

Lords amendment No. 187 requires the governors of a grant-maintained school who have published proposals under clause 77 for a change of character to the school or

enlargement of its premises to submit to the Secretary of State information on the extent to which the proposed premises would meet the minimum requirements of design note 18 on access to educational buildings for physically disabled people. The amendment will signal to governors the kind of detailed information that they will be expected to provide in such circumstances. It affords further reassurance and additional security for all those with special needs who will be users of grant-maintained schools. On those grounds, I commend the amendment to the House.

Lords amendments Nos. 272, 275 and 278 deal with further and higher education. We recognise the need for special provision to be available for students with learning difficulties after they have left school. The revised version of section 41 of the Education Act 1944, which will be inserted by this Bill, gives local education authorities a duty to secure the provision of further education generally for their areas. This includes a duty to secure provision for students with special needs. Lords amendment No. 272 puts it beyond doubt that local education authorities must have regard to the requirements of such students. It defines these students by references to "learning difficulties", words that parallel those of the 1981 Act. Lords amendments Nos. 275 and 278 empower the higher education corporations to provide facilities for disabled students.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): This is a happy occasion in many respects as the Opposition agree with the Government and with the Lords amendments. It has been good to see the progress that the Government have made in relation to special educational needs. Those of us who have taken a keen interest in the subject will recall that just a year ago, in the document "The National Curriculum —5 to 16", only one paragraph was devoted to this important subject. If ever there was an argument in favour of the Standing Committee's proceedings, it is the progress that we have made on special educational needs.

The Minister was right to say that concern was expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. No one can claim a monopoly of wisdom or concern on this subject.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): We should not forget the Lords.

Mr. Fatchett: I was about to praise the other place in this context as their Lordships certainly took a keen and effective interest in the matter. In Committee a key figure in our deliberations was my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) whose experience as the head of a special school enabled us to understand many special educational needs. He must take much of the credit for the progress that has been made, although that is not to detract from the contributions of others.

I am delighted that there has been a substantial shift from the initial view taken by the Government in the national curriculum document. The Minister knows that at that stage the Government were subject to severe criticism from all sorts of organisations, whose representatives said, "Hold on a minute. What about those youngsters with special educational needs? Let us draft the legislation to take account of those needs." To give him credit, as early as 17 December last, in Committee, the Minister said about provision for children's special educational needs:

> "There may be other aspects that the Committee has not discussed. If hon. Members are disposed to comment on them to me I shall consider them."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee J*, 17 December 1987; c. 248.]

We did that and we are delighted that the Minister has proved himself to be not only, in his own words "a listening Minister" but, on this occasion, an acting Minister. This must be unique because it is rare that the Government listen and, if they do listen and hear, it is rare that they act on what they hear, so the Minister has achieved a great deal more than many of his colleagues and we welcome that. We also welcome the explanation that has been given for the amendments passed in the other place, and we shall support those amendments. Therefore, it would be foolish of me to waste the time of the House going through those amendments. However, I shall raise with the Minister certain issues about children with special educational needs that I hope that he will comment on as they are issues that are still important in this debate.

7.30 pm

I welcome what happened in the other place and the way in which the Bill has changed. However, does the Minister still feel that there is sufficient flexibility for statemented youngsters? The Association of County Councils recently made the point that it is difficult to see how regulations can provide for all the different circumstances of children with special educational needs. It has told Ministers that there is a need for even greater flexibility. Would it be possible, if not through this legislation then through an order, to have some instruction or practice note from the Ministry so that schools can be more flexible about statemented children?

My second question is about non-statemented youngsters who are low achievers and who have special educational needs that relate to specific conditions or criteria but not across the board. There is a real concern about that group of low achieving youngsters, who will be above and beyond statemented children but who may nevertheless experience difficulties with the Government's notion of national curriculum attainment targets and all that goes with that. Those difficulties could make their role in the classroom awkward. The Warnock committee concept was that there was a need for a continuum on special educational needs and it related that continuum to roughly 20 per cent. of the school age population. Could the Government say whether it might be possible, not at this stage but in some other way, to recognise the needs of non-statemented youngsters who will fall into that Warnock 20 per cent., because those youngsters are important to us?

I have a third question. I apologise to the Minister if I seem to be setting him a test, but these are issues on which the House would be interested to hear the Government's response. The Secretary of State said on Report that the National Curriculum Council may want to establish a sub-committee to deal with special educational needs. There is a great deal of merit in that argument and I would be interested to hear what progress has been made on that.

Fourthly, I am concerned about youngsters in the post-16 age provision. Again, we note what the Minister has said and we welcome that because it has always seemed to me that there is a real danger that youngsters, having reached the age of 16, may simply fall off the edge in

[Mr. Fatchett]

education and training terms if they have special educational needs. There is a black hole—a vacuum—into which these youngsters disappear. We welcome Lords amendment No. 272, because, as the Minister rightly said, it places on local education authorities a duty and a responsibility towards those youngsters. There may be a need for extra resources to back up that duty so that the right training and education are provided. There may also be a need for much greater guidance and a better learning process between authorities so that we can see the good work that is going on, post-16, for youngsters with special educational needs, and can build on that good work.

The Minister, in speaking about Lords amendment No. 54, spoke about the definition of local financial management. I hope that he will recognise that now special needs will be incorporated into the formula for local financial management for schools. Is there any possibility of including reference to special educational needs in the local financial management formula for further education colleges? If that is not included, there is the difficulty that the words incorporated in Lords amendment No. 262 will not necessarily be implemented simply because there may not be the financial resources or the space to do so.

The House would like to hear the Minister's comments on those issues. They are part of the process that developed in Committee and through the proceedings on the Bill to advance the opportunities of youngsters with special educational needs.

Amendment No. 537 deals primarily with speech therapy. If the other place achieved a success, it was in this amendment. It is a success also for all those organisations that represent speech therapists and all those parents who have been arguing for this important change in the law. I wrote to the Secretary of State on this issue earlier this year and received the normal courteous reply from the Under-Secretary, who explained to me the bureaucratic difficulties in the provision of speech therapy. It is the responsibility not of the local education authority but of the local health authority to provide speech therapy. Unfortunately, that created a bureaucratic vacuum, or, as the Minister described it to me in an off-the-record conversation with me, a lacuna, into which these youngsters fell, with the result that their needs were not satisfied.

The Minister has moved from the explanation of the bureaucratic position that he sent me in a letter and from the comments that he made in Committee on 12 January, when he said:

"No plans are afoot to make the changes".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee J*, 12 January 1988; c. 398.]

Such is the power of the Under-Secretary that, while he was saying those very words, I have no doubt that he was planning these changes. He was not trying to resist—his words were carefully selected. We knew that the Minister, with his deep sympathy for all children in these circumstances, was planning vigorously in Elizabeth house the process that led to Lords amendment No. 537 and an effective conclusion to a difficult problem. We welcome this amendment, which is particularly important for those youngsters who need speech therapy. The Government's acceptance of the amendment will be welcomed by parents, who have fought hard on behalf of their children and other children, and by organisations representing speech therapists and others involved in this problem.

The House has made substantial progress in the Bill to help youngsters with special educational needs. As part of the rhetoric of education debates we often talk about providing greater opportunity for youngsters. There is no greater or more poignant example of youngsters who need opportunity than those to whom these amendments relate. If we talk simply about the 10 per cent. or the 40 per cent. or the 30 per cent., we do many children, our education system and our country a disservice.

In Committee and in the other place, we have succeeded in ensuring that the Government recognise the needs of the bottom 5 or 10 per cent., although I do not like the words "the bottom 5 or 10 per cent.". We have recognised the needs of all our children, including those with particular problems. That helps to extend opportunity, but more needs to be done. We shall continue to press for more, but we are grateful for what has been achieved so far.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The tone of the opening speeches in this short debate sums up the spirit throughout the Bill on this subject. Tribute has been paid to the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and to other hon. Members for taking forward the provisions step by step towards a better future for children with special needs and for their families.

The Committee brought together a number of people who had had experience in one way or another, through teaching, family life or knowledge of that occasion when the family suddenly finds itself with a new arrival who is handicapped in some way and will grow up with special needs, or faces a horrific accident or illness later in life which results in the child developing such special needs, or faces the learning difficulties that may emerge at various stages in life. We have an understanding of those needs and a common desire and determination to ensure that the Bill does its best by those children and their families.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) referred to the opportunities in educational life. The Bill is very much a Bill of opportunities. It says to parents throughout the country, "Let your children grow tall", but we know that, all too often, some children cannot grow tall on their own, for physical or mental reasons. Sometimes they are able to grow if adaptations are made to their learning establishment, if proper teaching facilities are provided and targeted on the children or if the families are given the necessary support.

Children with special needs can achieve and many of them can compete. We should never suggest that they are at the bottom of the pile or that they are different from other children. Their opportunities may be different, but they are children nevertheless and we need to consider every child within its own lights and see what it can achieve. We are doing that by accepting the Lords amendments and we welcome the Government's amendments and their attitude to the Lords amendments.

Many children can cope with integration into maintained schools, but others cannot be integrated. We want both categories of children to be looked after diligently. As a Member who represents an inner London constituency, I hope that the Government will pay special attention to those needs as the transfer of education to the boroughs take place. The boroughs are determined that they will do their best for the education of special needs children, but a watching brief from the Department is crucial and confirmation of that would be doubly welcome.

Hon. Members have a special responsibility for those children who need special help. When the Bill started its passage, we thought that the families and children perhaps felt left out. The Bill did not often refer to them and all hon. Members have pressed to ensure that it was made clear that special needs children are in the mainstream so far as the Bill and the Government's intentions are concerned. It is not the Government's intention to leave out such children and families, but it is important that their inclusion in the Bill is spelt out.

7.45 pm

All too often, where there was reference, the Bill referred to the exclusion rather than the inclusion of special needs children. Although exclusion is right in certain matters, I was interested to see that one of the amendments sought to ensure that those children who are excluded have rights of appeal to ensure that their cases are considered. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's comments on that because we must monitor progress when the Bill is enacted. We shall want to ensure that those rights and interests are safeguarded.

My hon. Friend the Minister was kind enough to refer to one of my amendments which has been incorporated in another amendment. Other amendments have also been incorporated, including that of the hon. Member for City of Durham, although I do not wish to argue the paternity of any amendment. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central referred to financial delegation and the need to ensure that local authorities have a responsibility to produce their plans for children with special needs and to state the number of children involved.

Amendment No. 54 is a step in the right direction. I might quibble that their Lordships saw fit to table the amendment to subsection 3(b) as opposed to subsection 3(a). We debated in Committee whether the word "shall" should replace the word "may". Their Lordships could have used either, but they appear to have opted for the word "may". I accept that with gratitude and we may one day make the obligation statutory, if it is thought to be necessary.

In London, we have a particular interest to ensure that each individual is looked after. The amendments and the Bill encourage cases to be considered individually. There is a great debate within the special needs community in London between those who wish to see greater integration and those who fear it. Both have a fair case. It is crucial that, where appropriate and where the parents want it, a child should be integrated into a mainstream school and, where necessary, the school should be adapted to welcome the child. Equally, however, many parents are concerned about whether the child could cope with that environment. We must provide the special schools to enable that child to develop and compete within its own lights.

I welcome the Government's proposals and the Opposition's welcome of them. These small steps underline the fact that those children are precious to the House and the fact that their opportunities to achieve and compete within their own capabilities are important to all hon. Members. We have often said during the passage of the Bill that such children will not be forgotten. This is the evidence that they have not been forgotten and I look forward to the implementation of these measures for the benefit of all children in this country, whatever their special needs may be.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that this is a short debate and speeches should be short.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): The difference between the Bill as it stands and as originally drafted is remarkable, especially in its treatment of children with special educational needs. The original Bill virtually ignored such children and mentioned only those subject to statements. It was as though 18 per cent. of the school population did not exist or had been forgotten. The Government had not taken into account the fact that 20 per cent. of the school population have special needs at some stage in their school life, although only 2 per cent. are subject to statements. In many cases, the 18 per cent. of children who were ignored were worse off than the 2 per cent. who were subject to statements.

All children with special educational needs need individual work schemes designed to meet their particular needs. To force the 18 per cent. who are not statemented rigidly to follow the national curriculum is plainly stupid. Anyone who has had any dealings with such children knows that they need individual tuition geared to their particular strengths and weaknesses. It was clear that whoever originally drafted the Bill had no experience of children with special educational needs.

Thanks to concentrated and successful debate and powerful arguments, Labour Members put great pressure on the Government to amend the Bill. I admit that we had some help from other quarters, but basically we shall take credit for the changes. I believe that we have forced the Government to see their own folly and the mistakes that they had made and eventually to concede that specific provision should be made for the 18 per cent. of the school population whom they had ignored. The Lords have attempted to make that provision and we fully support their efforts.

In particular, I am delighted to support Lords amendment No. 537, which seeks to amend the Education Act 1981. Many children are identified and statemented as being in need of speech therapy. That takes place in the educational setting—it is important to note that—but at present the therapy can be provided only by the health authority, so the education authority is entirely at the mercy of the health authority. Many children do not receive the necessary therapy and at present education authorities cannot provide it independently. It is nonsense for a statement to say that the child needs speech therapy but for the education authority to have no power in law to provide that service. The amendment would ensure that local education authorities could make such provision, possibly by buying it in from health authorities.

I should like to go further and allow education authorities to employ speech therapists. As a head teacher, I saw the desperate problems of children who needed speech therapy but did not receive it because the health authority could not deliver the goods. I wrote to the Minister recently about that, but his reply was downright unhelpful. I am therefore delighted to support the amendment and I hope that the Minister will be more sympathetic in future.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). He knows that I deeply admire him. He has personally campaigned for this change and I am sure that his efforts had a huge bearing on the success

[Mr. Gerry Steinberg]

that has been achieved. It is a magnificent achievement, but no more than one would expect from so talented a Member.

Children with special educational needs must have access to the best school environment and must receive full consideration in that respect, regardless of their disability. That is why I support Lords amendments Nos. 187 and 188. A child in a wheelchair has the same rights as an able-bodied child and must be able to attend the school of his choice. Schools must not be allowed to turn children away on such grounds. Nevertheless, I have seen it happen and I hope that the Minister will today give a guarantee that it will not happen in the future. It is even more important for a child with special needs to have more choice in education. Such children must not be denied acceptance because of their handicaps. There will be great pressure on schools to fill their places without accepting children with special needs and that will reduce the choice available to the parents of such children. The result will therefore be the opposite of the greater choice that the Government advocate.

With regard to financial delegation, children with special needs are again under threat. That is why I support Lords amendment No. 54 and the amendments proposed to it. When a mainstream school controls its own budget there will be untold pressure on it to allocate the vast majority of its finance in favour of academic children, and provision for those with special needs may be neglected. Such provision is already not too brilliant in some schools and the situation could worsen if the amendments are not accepted. Lords amendment No. 54, as proposed to be amended, would go a long way towards securing financial support for children with special educational needs.

Another point of great importance arises out of the draft consultative document, "The Education Reform Act: Financial Delegation to Schools". Educational psychologists are not covered by the mandatory services provided by local education authorities. In other words, the service could be delegated to the individual school's budget. That could have calamitous effects for children with special needs. Educational psychologists are an integral part of the team working with such children. The service would take a minute proportion of an education authority's budget but a huge proportion of an individual school's budget. If the service is delegated, there will be chaos in special needs provision. Special schools, in particular, will simply not be able to cope and their budgets will be drained if they have to pay for that service.

Mr. Dunn: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the draft guidance on financial delegation emphasises that, in addition, provision may be safeguarded by education authorities excepting from delegation a number of key areas such as the schools' psychological and welfare services and provision for children with special needs. Does not that meet the point?

Mr. Steinberg: It depends whether it is mandatory or discretionary. If it is mandatory and education authorities do not have discretion to delegate but are obliged to provide the service, I retract what I have said. If it is discretionary, however, some authorities—I would describe them as unscrupulous authorities—could pass the responsibility on to the schools, resulting in the problems that I have mentioned. If it is discretionary, therefore, I ask the Minister to reconsider the matter and to make it mandatory on local education authorities to provide that service. As the Minister has said, inspectors and advisers will be centrally provided. The educational psychology service should be centrally provided as well.

In support of the amendments to Lords amendment No. 272, it must be said that the provision made for pupils with special educational needs after the age of 16 is appalling. There is virtually nothing organised specifically for these youngsters. Parents are rightly demanding that their children should be able to continue in full-time education up to the age of 19 and that relevant courses should be organised for them. Before local education authorities can provide this extension they must be allocated the resources.

Staying on at school creates problems because no funds are allocated for that purpose. Some children go to adult training centres run by the social services, but those centres tend to offer places only to 19-year-olds and younger people find that the courses are filled up. Many handicapped people end up staying at home and doing nothing. That has to stop. Ten years ago we hardly saw a pupil with special educational needs staying on at school after the age of 16, but now many of them stay on until the age of 19. However, the training and education that they receive from the age of 16 to 19 is a waste of time because local education authorities cannot afford to fund relevant courses.

If it was a statutory requirement for pupils to receive education up to the age of 19, local education authorities would have to plan and organise fully-funded courses. That is why our amendments should be supported. I say again that, if it had not been for Labour Members, children with special educational needs would have been ignored. If the amendments are not accepted the Bill will be a recipe for disaster. To everything that the Government are offering we say, "Better late than never", or, "We told you so months ago."

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I shall not take much time, although the short time allowed to debate this issue and the fact that my party was excluded from the debate on the guillotine illustrate how fast the Bill is being pushed through. I regret that.

I am afraid that this group of amendments shows the House how little, in drafting the Bill, the Government thought about children with special needs. The Minister was rather overgenerous in crediting himself and the Government with the changes that have been put forward. The first draft of the Bill contained 147 clauses but had only four lines about special education needs. I welcome these amendments because they make modest, sensible changes and are a great improvement on the original rather shoddy drafting of the Bill.

We should not forget that the changes to the Bill came about as a result not of the Minister's deliberations but of lobbying, forceful argument and votes against the Government by all Opposition parties and by many Conservative Members. We should not ignore that because it is to be welcomed. It is regrettable that, initially, Ministers did not give as much thought to the matter as many hon. Members have given to it since.

In addressing the amendments I shall confine myself to three points. First, Lords amendment No. 80 is silent about how cases and circumstances will be specified. If, as

we wish, the permitted scope of the clause successfully addresses the varying needs of gifted children and those with learning difficulties, there will need to be sensitive professional judgments about whether and when a child could benefit from the clause. The Minister has just left the Chamber. Perhaps if he responds to that point he will elaborate on whether that will be the case.

Secondly, Lords amendment No. 272 deals with provision within further education, about which we have heard a great deal that I support. It is sad that we will not have a chance to vote either on amendment (b) tabled by my hon. Friends and I or on the similar amendment (a) to Lord's amendment No. 272 tabled by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), which would make it a duty to provide adequately for people with special education needs after their school years. Many hon. Members have made that point.

My authority in Cornwall has a policy of continuing support for special education needs in further education colleges. Because of pressure on resources to meet statutory duties first, that policy is not easy to implement. Cornwall county council has only today had to take a decision to use contingency funds to continue FE courses for young adults with moderate learning difficulties. The Lords amendments to the Bill will not help Cornwall immediately, because what we really need is more resources. We will get them only if there is a statutory duty.

I shall now turn to Lords amendment No. 537 and speech therapy. The Government are not fully meeting the needs of children because they fear the cost of doing so. Neither health authorities nor local education authorities can afford to provide as much speech therapy as is needed. We and other hon. Members certainly welcome Lords amendment No. 537, but it does not solve that important problem because it will press local education authorities to do more for children but will not give those authorities an extra penny.

The problem of speech therapy directly affects some of my constituents. For example, a speech therapist in St. Austell has gone on maternity leave, but there is no cash available to cover for her while she is away. I hope that the Minister will give a commitment on those points, and that the Government recognise and will meet the financial consequences of the amendments that they have accepted rather than simply put the burden on local authorities by giving them permission to spend but not the means to follow through.

Mr. Flannery I shall be brief and address my remarks to one point. The Bill will wreak havoc on our education system. It will fling into great difficulty practically everybody connected with education, including parents and children. However, it would be churlish of me not to say that there are some good things peering out of the Bill. I shall address myself to one of those things because, inadequate though it is, Lords amendment No. 272 is still an advance.

The amendments did not just appear. We have all paid tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), who was head of a special school. He taught us all a great deal, and Conservative Members learnt a great deal from him. The Warnock report was followed by the 1981 Act, and then a tremendous piece of research had to be curtailed because of the general election. It was carried out by the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, some of whose members went to other countries to look at special education needs. The impact that we had on Conservative Members is the product of many things, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham said, they have not quite noticed that impact.

All over the country there is now a demand for work with children with special needs. That is not only because such children did not receive proper provision, but because many people have now had their consciences seized by this idea. My hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham says that all these things depend on money. Of course they do. When they are left to a local education authority, which is probably rate-capped and is having great difficulty imposed on it by the Government and when things are discretionary instead of mandatory, there is always great difficulty, especially in the case of people who are often at the end of the queue, as is the case with children with special needs.

Lords amendment No. 272 says:

> "A person is not to be taken as having a learning difficulty solely because the language (or form of the language) in which he is, or will be, taught is different from a language (or form of a language) which has at any time been spoken in his home."

We know that in ILEA many West Indian children are stigmatised even though much wonderful work has been done for such children. That is because they were not grasping what they were being taught. That was not their fault. That was due to our not realising that they could not keep pace because they did not know the language properly. Prior to that, there were other difficulties. Between the ages of 16 and 19 years, there was little or nothing for these children. There will be something for them now, and we want the provision to be increased and intensified.

A fortnight ago I received a letter from a working-class couple on hard times with a daughter of 19 years who is inadequate but who can learn. Irrespective of whether there are special needs, the learning process goes on, and it is for us to ensure that it does. Sadly, education is halted at 19. I wrote to the Minister, the parents of the 19-year-old girl and the local education authority saying that the work that is being put in hand should be extended to include children—to an extent they are children—of 19 years who have difficulties. We have learnt something together, and featured in the amendments are good things that could be made better and that will stare out of what, in my opinion, is an appalling Bill.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The consideration of the Bill in Committee was exceptional in two regards, if not more. First, there was the quality of many of the debates. Perhaps some of the debates on special needs were among the most fluent and cogently argued. That fluency of argument was matched by the extraordinary openness with which the Government Front Bench team approached the issue, as with so many others that arose in Committee. There was an unprecedented willingness to respond to well-argued cases that were put before them.

It became clear on statementing and on many other matters that we shall be discussing that within the relevant clauses there were issues which were implied and understood by the Government, and which would be shown to be by the way in which the Bill, when enacted, would be interpreted. When we came to examine specific clauses, however, it was felt that greater clarity and

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certainty would be needed. That was true especially of our debates on special needs. The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) brought great knowledge and expertise to the Committee—I am not sure how fluent he was in his praise of members of the Opposition Front Bench—as a result of his experience in dealing with special need.

Mr. Steinberg: I hope that Conservative Members will stop praising me. I shall be deselected if I receive much more praise from them.

Mr. Batiste: Far be it from me to embarrass the hon. Gentleman.

There are two regards in which the case for amendment was made most strongly. First, it was said that a budget should be applied to individual schools to take account of the number of children with special needs within them. Secondly, there was the application of the curriculum to statemented children. The Government have responded fully to the proper and legitimate concerns that were raised. On behalf of Conservative Back-Bench Members who were Committee members, I warmly welcome the Government's response.

Mr. Dunn: I pay tribute to the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg). I hope that I will not cause him to be deselected if I say that he is a super, all-round decent nice guy.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) raised legitimate concerns about non-statemented pupils. Clause 10 provides for regulations on foundation subjects. It provides for modifications and exemptions in specified cases and circumstances. We shall be looking to the subject working groups and the National Curriculum Council to advise us on the way in which that provision can be applied to non-statemented pupils.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central talked about a sub-committee of the NCC. I am pleased to say that the shadow NCC is meeting for the first time today. It is a little too soon to speculate upon and about the decisions that it might take on the sub-committee structure. I note the hon. Gentleman's argument and I shall ensure that it is brought to the attention of those who matter.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central asked whether there was sufficient flexibility for pupils with statements. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern and advise him that clause 11 provides for a statement to specify modification or exemption for the individual pupil. This allows great flexibility in applying the national curriculum.

Lords amendment No. 23 amends clause 12—

It being a quarter past Eight o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 17 to 25, 54, 68, 187 and 188 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 272 agreed to. [Special Entry]

Lords amendments Nos. 275, 278 and 537 to 539 agreed to.

Mr. Steinberg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A number of questions were unanswered because of the time constraint. Will the Minister be kind enough to reply to the questions in writing?

Mr. Dunn: Of course I shall.

Clause 5

PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Lords amendment: No. 26, in page 11, line 31, leave out "and the results of their assessments under this Chapter" and insert

"(including the results of any assessments of those pupils, whether under this Chapter or otherwise, for the purpose of ascertaining those achievements)."

Read a Second time.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to move amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, leave out 'including' and insert

'together with a statement by the local education authority as to the social composition of the school and its area, and a statement by the governing body as to matters it considers relevant to those achievements and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 28 in page 12, line 2, leave out "under this Chapter" and insert

"(whether under this Chapter or otherwise)"

Mrs. Clwyd: Instead of standing at the Dispatch Box moving the amendment I should have been cheering on the House of Commons side in the tug of war, but fate has decreed otherwise.

The purpose of the amendment is to insert into the Bill the one major and outstanding recommendation of the task group on assessment and testing report which has still not been accepted by the Government. It deals with the publication of reports on the social position of the school by the local education authority and the governors at the same time as the publication of test results. The original consultation document on the national curriculum stated that national assessment would enable LEAs to be better placed to test the strengths and weaknesses of their schools "taking due account of relevant socio-economic factors." That would include cultural differences.

The thirtieth recommendation of the TGAT report states:

"the only form in which results of national assessment for, and identifying, a given school should be published should be as part of a broader report by that school of its work as a whole."

Recommendation No. 31 stated:

"Any report by a school which includes national assessment results should include a general report for the area, prepared by the local authority, to indicate the nature of socio-economic and other influences which are known to affect schools. This report should give a general indication of the known effects of such influences on performance."

The Government have repeatedly given assurances that they do not wish to create local league tables of schools resulting from the publication of raw data, and on both 3 and 5 May, in another place, Baroness Hooper repudiated any intention to create league tables. In the Bill, however, there is nothing to prevent the publication of such tables.

The Government may say that there is nothing in the Bill to prevent school governors and LEAs from producing statements on social indicators if that is what they wish to do. On 5 May, the Baroness Hooper said in another place:

"It may well best be left to local initiative within some general guidance rather than even spelt out in regulations."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 701.]

When pressed by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) in the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts last Wednesday on the issue of relative handicap in the tests at seven of children who have not received nursery education—and we have talked often enough about that particular problem, without having any effect on the Government's policy—the Secretary of State said that it was up to schools and LEAs to decide whether to publish the results, although earlier he had said that that was recommended and that schools could show the number of children with or without formal pre-school education in their reports if they so wished.

The lack of importance that the Government place on social factors is evident. The Government state that aggregated test results "must" be published for pupils at the ages of 11, 14 and 16. However, it is "recommended" that aggregated test results are published for pupils at the age of seven. That means that there will be unreal and artificial comparisons between schools and a comparison of like with unlike. We should not be surprised at that, because the Government have been completely insensitive to the effect of their policies on children and their families.

According to the Child Poverty Action Group, the number of children living in poverty, on or below supplementary benefit level, rose by 72 per cent. between 1979 and 1983. One in five families in Britain are now estimated to live on or below the poverty line. Recent changes in the social security system have had a severe effect on families throughout Britain. The new social fund provides loans in place of the single payment grants for items such as furniture, children's clothes and cooking equipment. That imposes a further hardship on families by requiring them to make repayments on those loans from their already inadequate levels of benefit.

I am sure that I do not need to repeat the elements that determine whether a person is classified as deprived. I simply remind Conservative Members that in my constituency—as in many of my hon. Friends' constituencies—nearly one in three men have no job and 61 per cent. of those working have incomes of £4,000 a year or less. There is absolutely no comparison between the circumstances of and opportunities for children who grow up there and the circumstances of children who grow up in the lush, leafy lanes of Hampshire, where privilege and plenty are taken for granted.

Children living in poverty are not evenly spread throughout the school system. If they were, there would be no need for my proposal. However, like it or not, social conditions have an enormous effect on performance in tests, as is shown by the work published by researchers at Sheffield university in an attempt to find a fair system of comparing examination results.

Despite what Ministers say, when the results are published, inevitably they will be used to compare schools. League tables will be drawn up of local schools, despite the protestations of Baroness Hooper, who, on 3 May, said in another place:

"It is not the Government's intention to create league tables in any event."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 3 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 501.]

She repeated that on 5 May saying:

"It is not true to say that the results would be given wide publication. It is certainly not intended to have a league table."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 704.]

What will prevent that? The Bill will not stop it. What did the noble Lady's colleagues mean, or did Baroness Hooper not understand? Was she simply groping in the dark? Was she as confused as everyone else about the Government's intentions? That includes the Secretary of State.

We all know what will happen. There will be a wide publication of league tables of exam results. Local journalists will vie with one another to be the first off the mark with shock horror stories of successes and failures.

If the Bill remains as it is, the results will be incomplete. They will provide a false impression of the performance of a school and its pupils. Without some form of adjustment, parents and policy makers will make judgments on the basis of incorrect information. Those judgments will perpetuate disadvantage because they will not examine the performance of the school and its children in relation to the surrounding conditions. Instead, they will ignore the factors that contribute to the results.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman—sorry, hon. Lady—give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: As the hon. Gentleman cannot distinguish whether I am a lady or a gentleman and since he will not lift the guillotine motion, I will not give way.

One of the Government's main arguments for the abolition of the Inner London education authority was its supposedly poor performance in exam results. Using the Sheffield study, ILEA was placed in an average position among LEAs once social factors were taken into account. In that study, the London borough of Bromley was given a very poor rating in exam results once its favourable social factors were taken into account. An under secretary at the Department of Education and Science, Mr. Barry Wakefield, was reported in the *Evening Standard* on 31 May as saying that it was vital to consider much more than exam results when rating a school's performance. Does that mean that the Secretary of State is out of tune with his own officials as well as with the Prime Minister?

Universal health care based on need is under severe attack. While individuals may not yet live or die according to their bank accounts or their employer's insurance, for many the quality of life is set from birth. The same process is now occurring in our schools where the size of parents' bank accounts increasingly determines whether there are enough books to go round or whether children learn to play a musical instrument. The hardship funds of many parent associations are overstretched for basic educational needs. That cycle of deprivation means that the children of the poor and deprived are condemned to become the parents of the poor and deprived. Our amendment will ensure that far better information about the quality and performance of schools will reach parents and LEAs than would result from the publication of the crude test scores that the Government plan.

The Government will claim that there is nothing to stop LEAs publishing a statement on the social composition of the school if they so wish. However, there is nothing in the Bill to prevent governors from publishing what they believe is relevant in achieving the results. They may even go so far as to promise that they will give guidance to governors and local authorities in publishing the statements. However, that is not enough. If a statement of

[Mrs. Clwyd]

the social composition of a school is purely voluntary, some schools and LEAs will not publish it. Unless all schools publish a statement, it will be a worthless exercise. People will still compare like with unlike.

We are asking the Government to accept the recommendations of the TGAT report in full. We believe that the implementation of the Bill without our amendment will result in the publication of test results that falsely indict a teacher or a school. To do that on the basis of the publication of incomplete and therefore unrepresentative inaccurate test results is completely immoral.

8.30 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The Lords amendments clarify the scope of the provisions covering the publication of assessment results, so that they might also cover, for example, GCSE and A-level results. Those are already covered by the Education (School Information) Regulations 1981, but it will be helpful to have them brought within the scope of the new provisions to ensure the consistent treatment of results of various assessments.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) seeks to add to those amendments an amendment dealing with the publication of aggregate assessment results. In a moment, I shall deal with our reasons for not wishing to accept that amendment, but at this stage I shall make certain general remarks about the assessment arrangements for which the Bill provides so that they may be set in context.

My right hon. Friend's statement in the House on 7 June, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), defined the main principles that the Government have decided should form the basis for a national assessment and testing system. First, the task group on assessment and testing endorsed the Government's proposal to test pupils at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16. It pointed out that age seven in particular represents the point of transition from one phase of schooling to the next, when children move from an infant to a junior school. If at that point a pupil's literacy and numeracy foundations have not been properly laid, he is more likely to fall increasingly behind than if assessed and tested at that age so that one can know exactly what progress the child has made. Age seven also comes at least two years into the first phase of schooling, so that pupils feel settled by that time and teachers will have an opportunity to know them better.

Secondly, we are not talking about a series of pass or fail examinations, as Opposition Members sometimes like to portray, consisting entirely of pencil and paper tests. We refer rather to attainment targets, set to establish what children should normally be expected to know, understand and be able to do at given ages. They will enable the progress of each child to be measured against national standards. Assessment will be by a combination of national external tests and internal assessment by teachers, moderated to ensure consistent standards. Both teacher assessment and testing will be curriculum-related, focusing on attainment targets for the core and foundation subjects.

At age seven, and also largely at age 11, the TGAT report sensibly recommended the use of topic-style tasks as the main form of test, in assessing attainment in the core subjects and in certain other key areas. At all ages, oral and practical—as well as written—means of assessment will be employed. In other words, the work that will be tested and assessed will be very much the kind of best practice that one sees currently in our schools.

Assessment results will be used formatively to help better teaching and guide teachers' decisions about a pupil's next steps, and summatively to inform parents about their child's progress; in other words, to answer those frequent questions from parents which are often considered simplistic but the answers to which indicate to the parents, if to no one else, how much progress their child has made.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the Minister give the House a guarantee that adequate resources will be available to help those children who are found to be falling behind to catch up—in particular, educational psychologists who may be needed to discover the specialised problems that children have? Testing is all right, but the key is whether the resources will be there to help children catch up, if they are found to have problems.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is obvious that in taking on the task of trying to ensure that children reach a certain level of attainment, children who have fallen behind will be encouraged—as I hope happens at present—to have extra tuition or other help. I remind the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that such help is consistently given already in a variety of different ways. One would certainly expect schools, through their financial delegation, to allocate sums of money that will ensure that teachers and parents are satisfied, particularly at the child's early age, that any falling behind can be dealt with.

Different levels of attainment and overall pupil progress will be registered on a 10-point scale, as also recommended by TGAT, covering all the years of compulsory schooling. Therefore, at a given age the level reached on the scale for a particular subject area will indicate whether a pupil is making satisfactory progress; whether special help is needed to enable him or her to overcome any apparent weaknesses; or whether such help is rather required to ensure that exceptionally rapid progress is sustained.

At age 16, the GCSE will continue as the main form of assessment, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils not taking the GCSE in all the foundation subjects will be assessed in those subjects at an appropriate level under the national assessment system. That assessment framework has been widely welcomed and it will play a key part in maintaining and improving teaching and learning standards in our schools. We are satisfied that it is both practicable and affordable. With SEAC and other appropriate bodies, we shall as a matter of urgency determine the most cost-effective means of providing the necessary organisational and teacher training arrangements to underpin the new framework, with a view to its implementation alongside the national curriculum from September 1989.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley spoke about the difficult issues raised by the publication of assessment results. I remind the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends that individual pupil's assessment results will not be published as raw material, but that, as she said, aggregated results at ages 11, 14 and 16 will be. That needs to be done so that the wider public can make informed judgments about attainment in a school or local education authority.

Parents cannot make a judgment about a school unless they have information about the way in which that school's pupils perform in general, particularly at the key ages. There is no legal requirement for schools to publish results for seven-year-olds, although we strongly recommend that they should do so in the interests of consistency, as well as in the interests of the public's right to know. The importance of that is to enable parents to be informed at that crucial and critical stage about the performance of the primary school they are choosing for their children. We shall not expect or encourage schools to include results of children having special education needs as part of their aggregate figures.

We are aware of the danger of such results being interpreted in an over-simplistic way and will take into account TGAT's advice that they should be presented only in the context of a full report on a school's activities, and with reference to any relevant socio-economic and other factors. However, it would not be appropriate to write into the Bill a detailed description such as that proposed by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley.

Mr. Straw: Why not?

Mrs. Rumbold: Because the Bill is a framework, and it is not designed to describe in detail every process for which it makes provision. The exact form of the regulations governing publication of assessment results will be decided following expert advice and after lengthy consultation—which I hope will be welcomed by Opposition Members, as they seem greatly to depend on consultation, and masses of it—and to pre-empt that by making the proposed amendment would be wrong.

I know that many people have been concerned lest children with special education needs or with temporary problems, perhaps caused by trouble in their homes, are neglected under the new arrangements. For example, the needs of children whose first language is not English must be taken into consideration. Where appropriate, the Bill provides for exemption from, and modification to, the national curriculum and assessment arrangements for children with temporary difficulties as well as for those with special education needs. However, I emphasise that, so far as possible, we want all children to have attainable goals, to encourage their development and to promote their self-esteem.

It is a mistake for people to assume that, because some children do not, as the hon. Member for Cynon Valley described them,

"grow up in the lush, leafy lanes . . .where privilege and plenty are taken for granted",

they will not have potential at some point or another. That depends just as much on the quality of the school and its provision as on the child's background. It is a great mistake to make an assumption that will be detrimental to many children simply because they appear to suffer from a social disadvantage.

The test developers will be asked to have in mind the requirements of children with special education needs when devising suitable tests to cover the range of attainment on a 10-point scale, and, where appropriate, TGAT has recommended that pupils having difficulty with English should be tested orally in their own language, except where the assessments relate to progress in English.

I believe that any possible problems are outweighed by the need for schools, local education authorities and the public at large to have a better indication of how schools are performing in relation to others, both in similar localities and across the nation as a whole. We shall certainly consult widely before deciding how results should be presented.

Ms. Armstrong: As with other parts of the Bill, there are different reasons why different parts of the Government are interested in publishing results from schools. There is the "rational" reason put forward, as always, by the Secretary of State—and today by the Minister of State—and by some of his civil servants; and there are the atavistic gut feelings of the Prime Minister and her few friends.

Let us pretend that the Secretary of State has won the debate—for the Prime Minister will presumably let him keep some aspects of the Bill for himself. Why would he be interested in publishing these results? In the first place, he argues that they will tell us which are the good schools and which are the bad, and that that knowledge will force schools to do better. Let us take him at his word, and argue the rational case for data about deprivation to be added to the information that he has already said is important.

In the first place, any private enterprise company will only make sense of its output—in this case exam results—in relation to its input—in this case the children and their backgrounds. The DES would, I am sure, admit that all the research on educational attainment demonstrates that different children from different backgrounds have different chances of success in the education system. That is not to say that every child from a certain background will not get on or will inevitably end up taking a particular route, but the research tells us that background has some effect.

I know that the Prime Minister thinks that all those facts are worth nothing when weighed against her corner-shop certainties, but even her friend Ronald Reagan has recognised some elements of the equation and reaffirmed his commitment to Head Start as a means of ensuring some compensatory work on background and deprivation. The Department of the Environment recognises it when it distributes rate support grant. Why cannot the Government recognise it in providing information about schools?

If we fail to do this, it is inevitable that—given the educational knowledge that we have—some bad schools will appear good, favoured as they are by a certain sort of intake but failing to add much to it, or to "stretch" and "push" pupils in the way that we know is possible. I suspect that the few Tory chairs of local education authorities who are still talking to the Secretary of State would readily confirm that to him. By simply publishing outcomes, without the consequences of incomes, we shall lose the possibility of judgment.

Some may argue that it is very difficult to sort out the criteria that matter from those that do not. That is true, but if the Government find it so hard, I suggest that they turn to the Department of the Environment, which has considerable expertise in deciding the different indicators for its distribution of rate support grant. If the Secretary of State has no faith in his colleague the Secretary of State for the Environment—which I might understand—perhaps the Government will listen to eduationists who have worked out a series of educational priority indicators.

[Ms. Armstrong]

8.45 pm

We are not short of information and knowledge, although we are very short of politial understanding from some. If the Secretary of State has won the argument with the Prime Minister, he will accept our amendment and follow up the debate with his senior officers. If he has lost, however, we shall inevitably be left with a series of meaningless tables that will allow the Prime Minister and the friends in the gutter press whom she has honoured to pillory schools and localities.

One statistic may help the Minister to understand what I am trying to say. Last year's general household survey demonstrated that the daughter of an unskilled worker had a 1 per cent. chance of obtaining a degree, while the son of a professional worker had a 54 per cent. chance. Some would say that those statistics lead us to believe that class and gender bear some relationship to educational opportunity. The Government may be happy with the statistics, but do not let us pretend that they have anything to do with a sensible educational policy or that real parental choice can be provided on the basis of such silly information. We cannot be expected to believe that it has anything to do with increasing opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Opposition Members are interested in giving parents real choice and real information, and in giving real opportunities to children from disadvantaged as well as advantaged backgrounds. If that is what the Government are interested in, they will accept the amendments.

But perhaps all this is just a bad dream. Perhaps this is the Bill of a civilised and intelligent person, and perhaps the civilisation in him will allow him to accept the amendment and provide a proper method of understanding the performance of our schools.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am delighted to take part, for the first time, in a debate on the Education Reform Bill, albeit a debate on Lords amendments.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) was in a quandary. I remember from the days when I was doing my postgraduate certificate of education that Socialist educationists always claimed that one of the reasons for having comprehensive schools was that it was the environment that shaped children's futures. Conservative Members accept that it is a mixture of environment, heredity and intelligence, and that intelligence is both innate and developed by circumstances. It is therefore important for parents to have the opportunity to see how schools operate to judge whether their children are receiving education appropriate to their intelligence and aptitude.

I cannot understand why, every time we put forward a measure to increase the amount of information available to parents, Socialist Members vote against it. It was true in 1981, when we put forward the Education (School Information) Regulations. At that time we argued that O-level and CSE results should be made available. We heard then from the predecessor of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) the same objections that there would be league tables, that parents would make the wrong decisions and that the press would get the wrong end of the stick. After seven years' experience of the school information regulations, we know that that has not happened.

It is important to look at academic information and research. It shows clearly the effect that schools can have on a child's progress. One returns to Neville Bennett's report 'Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress" published in 1976. After he had looked at 871 primary schools in Lancashire, he said that the results formed a coherent pattern and that

"The effect of teaching style is statistically and educationally significant in all attainment areas tested."

He said that teaching style clearly had a more powerful effect on progress than does pupil personality, since most pupil types show better progress under formal teaching. Mr. Bennett continued:

"The central factor emerging from this study is that a degree of teacher direction is necessary, and that the learning experiences provided need to be clearly sequenced and structured."

Michael Rutter, writing in 1979 a research paper "15,000 Hours" into secondary schools in the inner London education authority, said that, although they served an inner city area of chronic social disadvantage, some of the schools seemed nevertheless to have provided a positive influence on their pupils' development, while others had been less suecessful in doing so. He continued:

"In general, schools performed fairly similarly on all the various measures of outcome. That is, schools which did better than average in terms of the children's behaviour in school tended also to do better than average in terms of examination success and delinquency."

The latest research is by Peter Mortimore, a former ILEA officer who was a member of ILEA's staff when I was an ILEA member but is now professor of educational research at Lancaster university. Writing in his book "Better Schools" this year, he said that he looked at 50 ILEA junior schools and that reading progress and the quality of school that a child attended was four times as important as a child's age, sex or background. In maths, he said that the school was 10 times more important. He also said that there is a vast difference between the best and the worst schools. Children in the best schools were 28 per cent. above the average in reading, while those in the worst were 19 per cent. below the average. In maths, pupils at the best schools were performing 21 per cent. above the average, while those at the worst were 21 per cent. below average.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: No. Peter Mortimore said:

"The quality of school that children attend has more effect on their educational progress than their social background. The essential factor influencing pupils' progress is the quality of the school."

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: Those are three quotations——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Two hon. Members cannot be on their feet at the same time.

Mr. Bennett: Those are three quotations from three different academic works, published in the last 10 years, that show the importance of the school on the child's progress.

If parents are to make decisions about whether a child's progress is being hampered, they have to have information. Knowledge is power. What disturbs me is that Opposition Members adopt the same attitudes as have pervaded the educational establishment for the last 40 or 50 years. In the past there was the secret garden of the

curriculum. Only the teachers' unions had the key to that garden. Parents were excluded. The educational progress was described by writers on education as a black box: children walked into it at one end and walked out of it at the other and what happened in the middle was nothing to do with the parents or the wider community. Those days have gone. We are determined to have open government and open management of schools. Assessment testing at seven, 11 and 14 is vital. We cannot say to parents, "We shall not allow you to see how your child is doing against national standards." The results must be published and parents must be able to see which schools in an area are not doing as well as others.

The time has come when we should trust the people to make sensible decisions on the information that is made available. It is time that the Socialist attitude towards parents of not trusting the people should end. I have been a teacher. I have also been an education officer with responsibility for writing the annual reports of the education committee on the performance of schools and their examination results. I know, therefore, how important it is for parents, councillors and everybody who is involved in education to see exactly how schools are performing.

Therefore, I advise my hon. Friends to reject the Opposition's case. They do not trust the people of Britain. They believe that educationists are the only people who are capable of making decisions and that we should continue to have a secret garden from which the public are excluded.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: There are two essential issues. First, how close are the Secretary of State's proposals to the TGAT recommendations? Secondly, how close are they to the wish of the Secretary of State's rival, the Prime Minister, for straightforward, crude testing? The Minister of State offered no reassurance. She offered a softly, softly approach. She said that the Government accept TGAT but that they reject the social factors that are needed to make it work.

The alternative to crude testing is to work with the teaching professions and with educational experts to implement not just the theory but the letter and spirit of TGAT. That will be achieved only with proper resources and only if we are prepared to shoulder the practical difficulties of publishing meaningful background information to illuminate the test results.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) ignored the substance of the Opposition's case, which is to give parents the information that they need and to give them the ability to see what is going on in schools. The Prime Minister will not let her Secretary of State for Education and Science do what he knows is right. Anybody who believes that the Government mean to make TGAT a reality must be worried by what is happening in the school branches of the Secretary of State's Department. The assessment of performance and public examinations used to be part of schools branch 3, in common with curriculum policy under the same Under-Secretary of State. All assessment testing and examination policy has been taken away from that branch and given to the new schools branch 4.

Will the Minister explain why assessment policy in its new home has been put alongside the highly political promotion of city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools? It illustrates that real control is in the hands of the political bosses in Downing street, not in those of the educationists in the Secretary of State's Department or the profession. I hope that the Minister can reassure us on that point. Then the hon. Member for Pembroke might look for genuine, real and full information, not for the kind of phoney, half information that he peddled earlier on.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided Ayes 193, Noes 314.

Division No 419] **[8.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*

Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Nine o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendment No. 26 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 26 to 38 agreed to.

Clause 42

DUTY OF SECRETARY OF STATE TO MAINTAIN CERTAIN SCHOOLS

Lords amendment: No. 89, in page 36, line 22, after "Chapter" insert

'and the granting of approval to proposals submitted under section 52(2) below in accordance with the provisions of that section'

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

Lords amendment: No. 113, clause 52, in page 46, line 31, after "majority" insert

'of parents eligible to vote'

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 45, line 9, leave out from 'is' to 'is' in line 10 and insert

'eligible to vote in the ballot'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 45, line 19, leave out subsection (4).

Amendment (c) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 46, line 11, at end insert—

'(7A) Where in the case of any ballot held in repect of a school in accordance with this section other than one held by virtue of this subsection ("the first ballot") the total number of votes cast in the ballot by persons eligible to vote in the ballot is less than fifty per cent. of the number of persons so eligible, it shall be the duty of the governing body to secure that another ballot ("the second ballot") is held before the end of the period of fourteen days beginning with the date immediately following that on which the result of the first ballot is determined.

(7B) In any case to which subsection (7A) above applies—

(a) the result of the first ballot shall be disregarded for the purposes of section 52(1) of this Act; and

(b) subject to subsection (7C) below, the provisions of this section shall apply as they apply in a case where the governing body of a school is under a duty by virtue of section 50 of this Act to secure that a ballot is held in accordance with this section.

(7C) In any such case—

(a) those provisions shall apply with the omission of subsections (3)(a) and (5); and

(b) subsection (5A) above shall be read as if the information there referred to were the information given for the purposes of the first ballot.'.

Amendment (d) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 46, line 28, at end insert—

'(10A) For the purposes of this section, a person is eligible to vote in any ballot held in respect of a school in accordance with this section if he is—

(a) known to the governing body to be a parent of a registered pupil at the school; and

(b) named as a parent of such a pupil in the register kept in accordance with the requirements of the 1944 Act in the case of the school, as that register has effect on the date immediately following the end of the period of fourteen days beginning with the date on which the relevant resolution or request was passed or received oy the governing body.

(10B) For the purposes of paragraph (a) of subsection (10A) above, it shall be for the governing body to determine any question whether a person is a parent of a registered pupil at the school; and in paragraph (b) of that subsection the reference to the relevant resolution or request is a reference to the resolution or request (mentioned in section 50(4) of this Act) by reference to which the ballot is required to be held or, where the ballot is a second ballot under subsection (7A) above, by reference to which the first ballot was required to be held.'.

Amendment (e) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 46, line 31, after 'majority', insert

'of votes cast in the ballot by persons eligible to vote in the ballot (within the meaning of that section)'.

Amendment (f) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 62, line 16, at end insert—

'Where section 51(7A) of this Act applies in the case of any such ballot, the references in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) of paragraph (b) above to the result of that ballot shall be read as references to the result of the second ballot required by that subsection.'.

Amendment (g) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 90, line 40, leave out from 'given' to 'and' in line 41, and insert

'for the purposes of the originating ballot to persons eligible to vote in that ballot (within the meaning of section 51)'.

Amendment (h) to the proposed Lords amendment, in page 206, line 26, at end insert—

'50A. In section 80 of that Act (registration of pupils at schools), after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, the prescribed particulars shall include particulars of the name and address of every person known to the proprietor of the school to be a parent of a pupil at the school."'.

Mr. Baker: As my noble Friend, Lord Trefgarne, said in another place, we see no need for amendment No. 89. No school may become grant maintained unless it has followed all the procedures set out in the Bill. The amendment adds nothing to these requirements. However, if the House wishes the amendment to remain, I do not intend to press the matter. The substantive amendment is

[Mr. Baker]

amendment No. 113. I am asking the House to agree not with that Lords amendment but with the amendments that we have tabled.

We have spent many hours in the House and in another place debating the proposals for grant-maintained schools. Curiously, perhaps, the Opposition have used much of that time not to consider the concept of grant-maintained schools or their financing and staffing but to concentrate on the proposed testing of parental opinion. They have argued about who is a parent, although we have stated the Government's position many times. They have tried to invent fancy franchises that would ensure that few applications come forward, and they have implied that the ballot of parents somehow decides whether a school becomes grant-maintained instead of simply being part of a process whereby an application is submitted for my consideration.

What has all the fuss been about? It has been about our proposal that a simple majority of the parents voting in a ballot should determine the outcome of that ballot. Our system of democracy has surely survived on the principle that the majority derives its legitimacy from voting. Any other approach will always be open to challenge. A simple majority of those voting is a clear, comprehensible and straightforward way of testing opinion. The arrangements for a secret postal ballot—which in these circumstances will be organised by the Electoral Reform Society—and for the distribution of fact-sheets with ballot papers will ensure that every parent has the chance to cast an informed vote.

Mr. Cormack: My right hon. Friend will remember that when the House dealt with referendums for Ireland, Scotland and Wales it built in certain requirements for majorities.

Mr. Baker: I am aware of that point. Someone reminded me of the Division record on the qualifed majority on the Scottish referendum. Apparently I was not present in the House. If I had been, I probably would have supported it. On the European referendum, there was not a qualified majority but a straightforward majority.

Mr. Straw: What about a qualified majority?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman asked me that question in Committee, and I shall answer it in exactly the same terms as I did then. I do not favour a qualified majority. A better way of solving most of these matters is with a simple majority, as I have said consistently.

Mr. Straw: As the right hon. Gentleman does not favour a qualified majority, will he explain why in the Employment Bill 1982 he voted for what was not just a qualified majority but an overwhelming majority of 80 per cent. before a closed shop could be accepted?

9.15 pm

Mr. Baker: The answer is straightforward. I voted that way because that ballot was very decisive and men's and women's jobs were at risk. There is no risk of anyone's job being put at risk as a result of these ballots.

In another place the view has been expressed that a majority of those eligible to vote should endorse the making of an application. In other words, if 1,000 parents are eligible to vote, 501 must be in favour of an application before it can go forward. To put it another way, if 499 vote and they are all in favour, no application results. The prime effect of this approach would be to enfranchise apathy and to give the abstainers equal weight with the opponents in blocking changes which others want. In my example, the 501 parents who chose not to vote would be assumed to be opposed to an application for grant-maintained status. I see no reason why that should be so. I therefore invite the House to disagree with Lords amendment No. 113.

I accept that those who supported the amendment in the other place were not all totally hostile to the concept of grant-maintained status. I accept that in some cases there were worries that a well-organised minority group from one or other end of the political spectrum might, so to speak, hijack a school before the majority of parents fully appreciated the importance of what was happening. That point was made not only in the House but by several speakers in the other place. I think it most unlikely that parents will have the wool pulled over their eyes in that way, but, as the concern is such a real one for some people, I have given considerable thought to ways of meeting it.

I am willing to build in some further safeguards, and that is why I have tabled the amendments to the proposed Lords amendment. Those amendments will ensure that the process by which an application for grant-maintained status is initiated will be fully legitimised by the involvement of the whole parent body. With the permission of the House, I shall explain my amendments in more detail.

The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that all parents enjoy every possible opportunity to express a view on the proposition that their child's school should become grant maintained—whether that view is for or against. Not one parent should be able to say, once the dust has settled, that he or she did not fully understand that it was important to vote in the ballot. Not one parent should be left feeling that he or she had been misled into thinking that the ballot was somebody else's business. As I have said before, I am confident that there will always be tremendous public debate and parental interest in the run-up to a ballot. I do not believe that parents will not bother to vote. I am sure that many LEAs will campaign strongly against the proposal and will urge a big turnout. Just to be quite sure, I propose to introduce a new dual-ballot arrangement.

The arrangement will operate in the following way: a ballot will be held and, if 50 per cent. or more of the registered parents vote, the results will be determined by a simple majority of those voting. That is a straightforward ballot. If less than 50 per cent. of parents vote in the first ballot, a second ballot will have to be held within 14 days of the result of the first one being declared. Once again, all the parents will receive ballot papers from the Electoral Reform Society, this time with a statement explaining why the second ballot is necessary and reminding them what they are being asked to decide. The result of the second ballot will again be determined by a simple majority of those voting, but this time it will be conclusive, irrespective of the turnout.

Mr. Straw: I wonder whether the Secretary of State can answer an important point of detail. The first ballot might be held in mid-December—say, on 18 December—in

which case the 14 days would fall in the Christmas and new year period. That is perfectly possible. Is there any provision to take account of that?

Mr. Baker: We intend to issue guidance and we shall try to encourage schools and governing bodies not to hold ballots on the last day of term. It is most unlikely that that will happen. The hon. Gentleman is looking for extreme cases. If that is the best criticism that he can find of our proposals, it is a pretty poor effort.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My right hon. Friend has clearly stated that it will be a simple majority, but I cannot find specific reference to that in the amendment. Does the amendment specify that it will be a simple majority?

Mr. Baker: I shall give my hon. Friend the exact phrase when it is brought to my attention, but I assure her that I am satisfied that it will be done by simple majority.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Perhaps my right hon. Friend will clarify another matter. After all the procedures have been gone through, including the second ballot, if necessary, will the decision remain his? Will he be able to overturn the second ballot, if necessary?

Mr. Baker: Let me remind the House of the procedures for obtaining grant-maintained status. First, the governing body must meet to consider whether it wants to proceed. If it decides that it wishes to proceed, it must meet again within 28 days so that the governors can reflect upon the decision, as it is clearly an important matter. They must then ask the Electoral Reform Society to organise a postal ballot along the lines that I have described. The postal ballot will then be held, and on some occasions there may be a second postal ballot. However, the ballot itself does not determine whether a school becomes a grant-maintained school. It merely triggers the third process. The governors then have to put forward a proposal and publish it just as they do with a proposal under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 for the amalgamation, closure or expansion of a school. The proposal has to be advertised and will be the subject of public meetings. It will then be submitted to the Secretary of State, who has to decide whether it should go ahead. That is the procedure.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): The Government believe in the concept of parent power. Interpretation of parent power is up to the individual. I presume, however, that it implies a decision by a large proportion of parents. Under the Government's amendment to the Lords amendment, it would be possible in the first ballot for 25 per cent. of parents plus one to decide the future of the school. If the second ballot had to be held it would be possible for 1 per cent. of parents, or even one parent, to decide. If I am right, does that not mean that the Secretary of State, rather than the parents, is making the decision?

Mr. Baker: It has always been implicit in the arrangements that the Secretary of State must be the person who decides whether a school becomes grant maintained, just as the Secretary of State decides about school closures or expansions. That has not changed. It will always be the Secretary of State who decides. Under the dual-ballot procedure, a second ballot will be held if 50 per cent. of the parents do not vote. If more than 50 per cent. vote—whether it is 51 per cent. or 80 per cent.—the first ballot is conclusive and the next stage is triggered. If the turnout is lower, a simple majority is sufficient in the second ballot, and the second ballot will determine whether the trigger is pulled for the application.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): As my right hon. Friend knows, I was reluctant to accept the Government's original proposal. I still find it difficult to understand how this convoluted and possibly expensive system of two ballots is preferable to the normal procedure for changing the constitution of an organisation, whether it be a cricket club or a building society. My right hon. Friend will recall from his time at the Department of the Environment that 75 per cent. of members' votes are required before the constitution of a building society can be changed. I cannot understand why a simple proposition of the kind which requires a majority at least of those eligible to vote should not be sufficient to determine this matter.

Mr. Baker: I am afraid that I disagree with my hon. Friend. There are many constitutional issues, not least election of local authorities, which depend not on qualified majorities but on simple majorities. The argument that I have put forward consistently—in Committee, on Report and around the country—is that a simple majority is the right and appropriate way to do it. In these amendments, I have tried to recognise the views that have been put to me, specifically by some church members, and the anxiety that a small group of parents could hijack a school and rush through the change. I have met that anxiety by these changes.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My right hon. Friend has accepted an important principle, for which we have been arguing. Will he make it clear that he would be unlikely to accept a decision taken by a simple majority of a 50 per cent. turnout on the first ballot? That would mean that about 25 per cent. plus one would carry the decision when the original trigger is 20 per cent., which would put him in a dilemma.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is tempting me a little too far, as that would fetter not only my discretion but that of any holder of my office. I am sure that, legally, I would not be allowed to do so. In the same way, I cannot fetter the holder of my office by making commitments on grammar schools, comprehensives or reorganisations of schools. The extent of the turnout will be a material factor—material both to the parents and to the future of the school—and is bound to weigh heavily with the holder of my office. Before we had this dual system of 50 per cent. on the first round and then a conclusive decision on the second round, my argument was that if there were a derisory turnout—I do not accept that that would happen because, when the future of a school is at stake, parents are tremendously involved, as all hon. Members will know, and there is a huge turnout—and the holder of my office had taken a decision approving grant-maintained status, that may be a reason for setting aside that decision on judicial review. That is one of the factors that has to be taken into account. The reasonableness of the decision taken by the holder of my office would have to be apparent and patent. I have tried to explain, by question and answer, how this would be dealt with.

I emphasise that, in the procedure that I have outlined, no small group of committed parents would be able to bounce a school into an application for grant-maintained

[Mr. Baker]

status, but those who are determined to be apathetic, however many opportunities they might be given to participate, will not be an obstacle to those who believe that grant-maintained status is right for the school, and are prepared to put their energies into making it a success.

Once again, I emphasise that the ballot procedure is only the start of a statutory process—a point that I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). The holder of my office will still have to look at the resulting application on its merits, taking account of any objections that may be made, whether by parents or others concerned. The introduction of this two-stage procedure should put paid, once and for all, to anxieties about hijacks by well-organised minority groups.

The remaining amendments in this group are consequential. They may also clarify some points that have exercised hon. Members on both sides of the House. They establish once and for all that the electoral roll is the list of parents held on the admissions register at the school, and that it is for the governing body to make a determination in any case where a question is raised about a person's claim to be a parent. They also provide that parents should have 14 days to check that they are on the list once it has been formally decided that a ballot should be held—that is to say, the governor's second meeting. Amendments to the later clause clarify references to first and second ballots.

The amendments demonstrate that we have listened to concerns expressed to us and done our best to meet them. I believe that these amendments finally remove any possible risk that a small group of parents could seek to determine the future of a school without the consequences being fully appreciated by all the parents.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): When the local authority is acting in loco parentis, because a child is in care, will the authority have a parent's vote for each child in care?

9.30 pm

Mr. Baker: That was made clear in Committee. The head of the home will be able to exercise the vote in the case of a child in care.

I have tried to make it clear that the amendment proposing a dual ballot is an attempt by the Government to meet the anxieties that have been expressed. It meets those anxieties, but I have no intention of yielding ground on the principle that a simple majority of those voting should determine the outcome of a ballot. That concept is well understood and conveys legitimacy. It has served us well over the years and will do so in the future.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State made clear, in the closing seconds of his speech, that the amendment is a concession without substance. The Government's original policy was to provide for a scheme by which a simple majority, however small the proportion of those voting, could trigger an application for opt-out status. That remains the position under these amendments, the only difference being that, where there is less than a 50 per cent. turnout in the first ballot, there may then be a second ballot. However, as the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) spelt out, there could, arithmetically, be a 1 per cent. turnout at the first ballot and a 1 per cent. turnout at the second ballot, which would still trigger an application for opt-out. As the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said, this is a convoluted and expensive arrangement written into the amendments which is designed to provide a veneer of democracy and legitimacy around a bad scheme.

The Secretary of State, wanting, as ever, to have it both ways, said in an answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson)—I am glad to see a wry smile on the hon. Gentleman's face—that the extent of the turnout would be a material factor to weigh in his mind when he came to decide whether to accept an application. If the extent of the turnout is to be a material factor in the mind of the Secretary of State when he comes to weigh up whether to accept or reject an application, is it not appropriate that it should be a material factor in the mind of the House in establishing the scheme of voting in the first place? We should not just leave it to the Secretary of State—not just this Secretary of State, but any Secretary of State—but should meet the legitimate concerns of all hon. Members and state what should be a minimum proportion before which an application could be triggered.

The Secretary of State sought to brush aside a history of complete inconsistency on the matter of his votes on franchises by dismissing any suggestion, from anyone who was seeking other than a simple majority on any turnout, that we were in favour of fancy franchises. The Secretary of State's history in this House is that of a man who picks a franchise to get a result. I would not mind that argument from the Secretary of State if, every time an issue of the franchise had come up, he had said that the simple majority of those voting is inviolable and fundamental to our democracy.

The Secretary of State admits, however, that in relation to the referendums for Scotland and Wales he supported the requirement for a 40 per cent. minimum vote in favour of assemblies in those countries before such powers could be triggered. On the Employment Bill, he voted with many of his right hon. and hon. Friends for a scheme requiring that before a closed shop could be established there must be an 85 per cent. majority of those voting or an 80 per cent. majority of those eligible to vote. The then Under-Secretary of State for Employment—the right hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), now the Government Patronage Secretary—justified that proposal by the argument that the closed shop must have the overwhelming support of the work force because of the "immense importance for individual rights."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 30 March 1982; c. 775.] I do not agree with that argument, but I understand it. The present Secretary of State for Education and Science reflected that statement when he said that men's and women's jobs would be at stake in a closed shop. That may be so, but is not something quite important at stake if a school opts out of local authority control? Many parents will believe that their children's education is at stake when they consider the possibility of transfer from the local education authority to state nationalised education by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Pawsey: In that case, they will vote.

Mr. Straw: We used that argument in relation to the closed shop, but it was not accepted by the Minister in charge or by the present Secretary of State for Education and Science.

The Housing Bill has been going through the House at the same time as the Education Reform Bill. On the very

day when the Secretary of State for Education and Science was asking the Standing Committee to accept this fancy franchise whereby a minority of parents could force a ballot through and trigger an opt-out application, he supported in the Cabinet what was then clause 96 of the Housing Bill whereby the absolute reverse obtained and tenants on a council estate could not prevent a private landlord from taking over their estate unless a majority of those eligible voted against the application. Were I outside the House, I should call that hyprocrisy. As I am in the House, I shall call it a double standard—the most excruciating, excoriating double standard on the part of a Government who do not understand the meaning of morality.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does the hon. Gentleman realise how synthetic his indignation sounds—*[Interruption.]* I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) would not shout at me like some shrew. The Labour party supported unions which for more than 100 years had leaders elected to positions of great power and authority by less than 10 per cent. of their membership. The hon. Gentleman's party never complained about that.

Mr. Straw: If the hon. Gentleman is making a serious point, I should point out that there is a distinction between elections for office when someone has to be elected because otherwise there will be a vacancy and elections which determine major changes in the status quo of institutions when, as the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green pointed out, it is important to have the consent of everyone concerned.

I do not like low turnouts in any election. I want a high turnout in every election because that is how one achieves the maximum legitimacy for the decision reached. Incidentally, I remember hearing the Secretary of State pontificating in the House on the subject of challenging the legitimacy of local authorities on the basis of low turnouts in elections. There was no suggestion that, because local councillors had been elected on a plurality of the vote regardless of the turnout, somehow their position was not legitimate.

In respect of a closed shop, of tenants on a council estate or of members of building societies, or in respect of something that Conservative Members understand rather well, the status quo of shareholders of a company, there must be what the Secretary of State would call fancy franchises—arrangements for which he has always voted in the past. For example, there might have to be a 75 per cent. majority at a special general meeting of a company in order to change the articles of that company or to do other things that could affect minority rights. Sometimes a substantial turnout with majorities larger than 50 per cent. has to be written in to respect the rights of minorities. That is the key issue here.

Under these arrangements there will be two ballots. The hon. Member for Devizes has already blown a hole in the arithmetic of those two ballots. What is more, this is so ill-thought-out that the Secretary of State has not even given the parliamentary draftsmen time to draft amendments so that the 14 days runs through the school term and not through school holidays.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I can give guidance.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State shakes his head and says that he can give guidance. He should know enough about the law to know that his guidance is not above the law or even equal to the law. If a ballot is held on, for example, 14 December—and that is not impossible to imagine—and turns out to be unsatisfactory, the next ballot has to be held within 14 days.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State says that he will give guidance. What happens if that guidance is not accepted? It is possible for a ballot to be held at Christmas, and ballots could easily take place at Easter or in the summer. The Secretary of State might have given himself guidance last year when he chose to consult teachers and parents over the six weeks of the summer holidays, but he did not. He knows that it is perfectly possible for a group of parents who want to achieve a particular result to fix a ballot so that many parents are not able to vote. In that event, his guidance would not count for a row of beans.

The Secretary of State spoke about the definition of parents. That matter was rightly subjected to great debate in the other place. Under the definition that the Secretary of State is applying, which I understand is section 114 of the 1944 Act, which is the bedrock definition, a parent of

"any child or young person includes a guardian and every person who has the actual custody of the child or young person."

I think that the Secretary of State acknowledges that. That means that the number of votes that can be cast in respect of a child can be anything from nil to four or five.

One third of marriages end in divorce. Some children live with grandparents during the week and with their parents at the weekend, or with one set of parents one week and another set the next week. We all know that such people exist: that is reality. In such cases four votes could be exercised on behalf of one child. At the other extreme a single parent mother, perhaps with three children at the same school, is able to exercise only one vote.

Mr. Cormack: Is that true?

Mr. Straw: It is true, but if the Secretary of State thinks otherwise I shall readily give way to him.

The mathematics are quite horrendous. Some children could have 12 times as much voting weight exercised on their behalf as other children. A single child at school may have four effective parents, staying with one set one week and another set the next, and all have custody of the child and can exercise four votes on his behalf. On the other hand, there might be a single parent who is the only parent with custody of the child. He or she may have three children in school. The child with four parents and no siblings will have 12 times the voting weight exercised on his behalf than the child with one parent and two other siblings in the school.

9.45 pm

Dr. Hampson: This is interesting and important. I do not read the provision in the same way as the hon. Gentleman. Surely there has to be a registered parent. It does not only matter how many parents, in theory, there

[Dr. Hampson]

might be. Only one will be registered with the school, and only he or she can vote. The governors have the final say on who the registered parent is.

Mr. Straw: Yes. There is a registered parent. It is within my knowledge, however, that there are children who have two sets of parents. All of them will be registered—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Let the Secretary of State deny this if he wishes. Section 114 provides the bedrock definition of the 1944 Act. The Minister of State referred to and quoted this passage:

"'Parent', in relation to any child or young person, includes a guardian and every person who has the actual custody of the child or young person."

The issue was argued out in another place over some weeks, and, as I understand it, it was acknowledged that the arithmetic to which I have referred could apply. That was acknowledged also in Committee. There has never been any dubiety about this. I am sorry that it has taken until the closing hours of our consideration of the Bill for Conservative Members to appreciate the profound unfairness and arbitrary nature of the proposed arrangements. We proposed that the system should be one child, one vote. The interest of the parent arises out of the interest of the child. That seemed to be a simple, straightforward and fair arrangement which would be fairer between children and fairer between parents.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: On the definition of parent, the position is that which I have outlined. It is no different from the position that governing bodies have to resolve on the election of parental governors. They have to determine who the parent is. There are usually two parents and there might be one parent. In a few cases the courts have decided that there should be four parents. As I have said, the system is the same for parental governors.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has said that the Opposition favoured the system of one parent to have one vote per child. That is a crazy system. How do we determine which parent votes when the mother and father think differently?

Mr. Straw: Every advantage has a disadvantage. Our proposal is much less crazy and much fairer than the Government's, under which one child could carry forward four votes.

Mr. Flannery: I intervene on a kindred point, not exactly the point that my hon. Friend has raised. Will my hon. Friend deal with the problem of feeder schools to a secondary school when it is the secondary school that will vote to opt out? There will probably be three or four feeder schools.

Mr. Straw: I take my hon. Friend's point entirely.

In the ILEA ballot there was one vote per child, and in many families there were two votes.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What a fiddle.

Mr. Straw: No, it was not a fiddle. The only difficulty for the Secretary of State was when the result went the wrong way for him. There was no fiddle and there was no problem. The Secretary of State is wrong to draw an analogy with elections for parent governors. My experience—I think that it is shared by all my hon. Friends who have been involved in this process—is that the elections are informal and often take place by acclamation. They raise none of the deeply divisive issues——

Mr. Kenneth Baker: What of September?

Mr. Straw: Many local authorities have had parent governors for years. Some areas have had so many parent governors that they will have to reduce the number of parent governors this autumn, not increase it. There has been no problem so far because this has not been fundamentally divisive to the interests of the school or the community.

Mr. Latham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I will not give way, because I want to draw my remarks to a close. We are considering a different circumstance that might be deeply divisive to a school's interest.

I want to ask the Secretary of State about the register of the list of parents. He said that the list of parents would be drawn up by the governing body and that parents would have 14 days to check on the list after the election had been announced. If the Secretary of State wants a fair election, would it not be far better after the governing body had decided to trigger a ballot—if these are to be fair elections, and if there is to be a clear register—for the register to be published at the beginning of each academic year because it could be used for other purposes, for example, the election of parent governors and so could be checked, than for it to be made available in a period of considerable controversy, in the 14 days before a ballot takes place?

Throughout the debates there has been intense argument about what should be a legitimate vote to trigger an opt-out ballot. An opt-out ballot through which a school removes itself from local authority control and becomes a nationalised school is probably the most important decision that a school could make. We believe that, for that proposal to go forward, it must require the majority of the support of every parent in the school.

In the previous debate the Secretary of State was happy to praise the Bishop of London for what he had done in respect of religious education. Our amendment, which the Secretary of State wants to overturn, was proposed by the Bishop of London and supported by a majority of the Members of the House of Lords, who were in favour of the simple democratic principle that a major institutional change of this kind should be supported by an absolute majority.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I want very briefly to define my attitude towards opting out, because this is a short debate. Opting out is an excellent scheme, particularly bearing in mind what has happened to education in certain parts of Brent. Many parents in Brent are waiting for the proposal to come into action. The sooner and easier it comes into action, the better.

I should have liked the Secretary of State to go further with a full voucher system which would have revolutionised education in the way that we have revolutionised industry by making the consumer stronger than the producer. I welcome the present proposal as a stepping stone to that glorious time and praise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's move along the line.

If we start these fancy franchises, where do we stop? Will people be elected to this House only if they get 51 per

cent. of a 98 per cent. poll? If so, hardly any of us would be here. If we stipulated 51 per cent. of the poll, two thirds of us would not be here now. Such a rule would obviously disfranchise the winner of the by-election in Kensington last week. Will we not allow the winner of that election to enter this House because there was only a 51 per cent. poll? Once we begin on this road, where do we stop?

In council elections, the turnout can be less than 30 per cent. That is often the case in Labour areas, although I hate to say so and risk upsetting Opposition Members. It is important to keep the few Labour Members there are in the Chamber. It is interesting to compare how many of my hon. Friends are present against the number of Opposition Members. Where is the Labour party's enthusiasm for opposing this measure? The fact is that Opposition Members know that their constituents will like it, and that parents will be going through the voting lists to see whether they will be free to do what they wish.

The more responsibility we give to parents, the better a society we shall have. In education, I have always supported the view of the parent against that of the so-called expert, who will always have a theory to defend and his future before him. The parent is the only person in education who is concerned purely for the education of his children. The more we put parents in charge, the better. There has been much talk recently about irresponsibility, and the only way to achieve responsibility among parents is to give them power. The state takes more and more power away from the family and then attacks parents for not doing their job.

I commend my right hon. Friend on the amendment. He is being very courageous and generous. Others might have ignored this aspect and would have driven on, saying that a 0·5 per cent. majority rather than a 1 per cent. majority should be sufficient. This is an act of great generosity, and I am amazed that any Opposition Member should oppose it. It just shows how much the Opposition are out of touch with the men and women of this country.

Mr. Morley: We should be clear that in this debate we are dealing with nothing more nor less than a form of institutionalised ballot rigging. The Secretary of State introduces this measure into the Bill and then makes an amendment that is of no credit to him or to the House. Every argument made by Conservative Members in support of this measure has been shot down by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

One point that has not been covered is that concerning the ballot for the closed shops, where there must be an 85 per cent. majority. Somebody commented, "It's a question of freedom". There is also a question of freedom in this respect. I refer to the freedom of parents with children in the feeder schools, but who will not be given a vote on the question of opting out. Nevertheless, the result of that vote may have far-reaching effects on those parents and on their children when they reach the school concerned.

Let us assume that in the first ballot, with 40 per cent. of parents voting, the majority goes against the school opting out. However, under the new amendment, because that percentage will be less than the majority of those eligible to vote, there would be a second vote, when 20 per cent. of eligible parents may vote to opt out. Which decision will influence the Secretary of State? He may argue that the ballot itself is simply a trigger mechanism. The argument against that is that the system will set parent against parent, will divide the community, and will drive a wedge between the schools and the local authorities. At best, it will cause confusion, and at worst it will be a constant, running sore that will disrupt the children's education and the schools themselves, and they will be the losers.

I turn to the definition of "parent". My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is right in saying that there could be four parents with a right to vote. In another place, Lord Trefgarne, for the Government, said that the education Acts

"define a parent as including a guardian and every person who has the actual custody of the child or young person, so there may be circumstances where a child has more than two parents."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 1326.]

That confirms that, in some situations, four people may have a vote in respect of one child. Lord Trefgarne went on to say that there might be court actions to resolve who actually has the vote and the custody of the child. Do I take it that court actions could be triggered off simply to decide who is the registered parent, and who has the vote?

Such examples are not uncommon. I know of one family in which one child is living with its grandparents, who have custody. In another family the children have gone to a sister, who has custody of the children within her own family. That can cause all sorts of problems and potential humiliation for stepfathers and stepmothers, who may find that the natural parents argue with the governors that they too have the right to vote in the registering process.

10 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the rather tortuous example that he has given would apply whatever the system of voting? Is it not about time that we started to live in the real world? If there is a contentious issue in a school, a large number of parents will become involved; it will not be a case of a small number coming in silently one night to vote clandestinely. Why should the votes of those who want the school to opt out be worth any more or any less than the votes of those who want it to stay in local authority control? Why should they not be of equal strength?

Mr. Morley: My point concerns the confusion and dissent that will result from the Secretary of State's amendment. I do not think that Conservative Members appreciate that in many institutions it is written into the constitution that any major constitutional change will require a majority of, say, 75 per cent. or two thirds of those eligible.

Once the vote is taken, it is irreversible. Once the school has opted out, the parents cannot vote to opt in again the following year. That makes it all the more important that the decision is made by the majority. If the Government truly believe in parental involvement, and if they are genuinely concerned about the quality of education and the involvement of parents rather than with simple political doctrine, they will support the Lords amendment.

Dr. Hampson: Having started all this in Committee with a couple of attempted amendments that suggested either 50 per cent. or 40 per cent., let me first comment briefly on a couple of myths. It is a pity that my right hon. Friend continues to perpetuate them.

One myth is that this is somehow like a local government or parliamentary election. It is not an

[Dr. Hampson]

election; we are not in the business of 30, 40 or 50 per cent., as was suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). We are talking about an expression of opinion about something of tremendous and fundamental importance which has the potential to cause an upheaval in the entire structure of education established in the 1944 Act.

Secondly, it is asked why 499 parents out of 1,000 should be denied their view. But we are talking about a vibrant, living community. The personal chemistry of parents, teachers and pupils is what makes it work, and if well over 50 per cent. support cannot be achieved the school will be torn apart. The figure of 499 parents out of 1,000 essentially means that the decision will be taken by the parents of roughly 500 out of 2,000 pupils. If this is about the education of the children, as it should be, should we be changing the direction and future of the school on the basis of what the parents of 500 out of 2,000 would like to happen to their children?

As the Government have acknowledged tonight, the issue is about turnout. We seem to be saying that it does not matter what the theory is or what the legislation will be: in practice it will turn out all right; because a highly controversial decision is to be taken, many people will turn out to vote.

Educationists and parents are essentially conservative. Many of them will not want to take this tremendous leap into the dark, but when that happens there will, I agree, be a tremendous row and the local authority and the newspapers will weigh in. But that does not justify putting my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his successors into an embarrassing position. He has acknowledged tonight that the courts may be asked to decide whether he is acting reasonably. Despite the compromise that my right hon. Friend has offered, it will ultimately be his decision.

These are just trigger mechanisms. Are we suggesting that on one occasion the Secretary of State should approve a vote that is tantamount to 40 per cent., while on another occasion he should say no to a vote that is tantamount to 36 per cent.? If the figure for one school is different from that for another school, parents who are determined to opt out will challenge my right hon. Friend's decision. Furthermore, the teachers' unions may not want a school to opt out and they, too, will challenge the decision. The purpose of my amendment in Committee was to establish a clear yardstick so that potential uncertainties and consequential judicial review were eliminated. My amendment would have meant that, if the number fell below a clear proportion, opting out would not be considered.

We have to decide whether the compromise is acceptable. If the principle of opting out is to be accepted by the public—I believe in it and I have advocated it for a number of schools—the Government must be seen to be acting fairly. Until now I did not believe that the formula made it look as though the Government were being fair. If we had nothing to worry about because there would be a huge turnout, what on earth did the Government have to lose by having a proportion enshrined in statute? It made it look as though we were deliberately trying to shove through any proposal that was put forward, regardless —in other words, as though we were trying to gerrymander the system. Therefore, I accept generously my right hon. Friend's proposals. He has tried to meet the central point of fairness having to be perceived.

I do not agree that the proposals are a recipe for a turnout on the second ballot that would be even smaller than the turnout on the first. If a second ballot has to take place, it will stimulate much more interest in the community and a very much larger turnout. That is at the heart of the compromise and I accept it.

As for the criteria, it might be better if my right hon. Friend were to extend his powers so that he could decide whether there are circumstances that warrant a second ballot. Only 51 or 52 per cent. may vote in the first ballot, which means that only 25 per cent. or 26 per cent. of the parents will carry the day and change the future direction of the school. As the process is initially triggered by 20 per cent., it is unacceptable that a school should be able to opt out on the basis of 25 or 26 per cent. If the vote is just over 50 per cent. in the first ballot, my right hon. Friend ought to have the power to ask for a second ballot.

I accept the spirit in which my right hon. Friend has offered the compromise. It meets the central problem and therefore should be accepted.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): One cannot understand the Secretary of State's attitude to the voting procedures unless one understands the background to opting out. It has always been a confused proposal. The Secretary of State saw opting out as a safety valve, and a number of Conservative Members supported that view. However, the Prime Minister saw the opt-out as a kind of revolution, such as the proposal to buy council houses in the first and second Tory terms of office, and she overruled her Secretary of State.

Those Conservative Members who supported opt-out as a safety valve realised that it was important to ensure that a minority of parents did not hijack the proposals. They saw, too, that to bring about such a change they needed overwhelming support among parents. That is why in Committee and on Report Conservative Members tabled amendments to write such criteria into the Bill. They were very sensible proposals, but unfortunately they were defeated.

In another place, an amendment was carried against the wishes of the Government but with the backing of a number of Government supporters. It was moved by the Bishop of London. It is worth quoting a few points from his speech, as it was an excellent speech, and perhaps the Government have not taken it into account sufficiently. The bishop said:

"If the Government intend to establish the means by which schools are allowed to opt out of the local authority system, then it must be a fair system and one which serves the majority of parents . . . Why then are the Government not willing to accept the principle that the majority of those eligible to vote should be required to make the decision for a school to opt out? If the Government wish to provide parents with a choice in the education of their children, logically this should mean a greater choice for the majority of parents; yet the Bill does not ensure that choice for the majority in the opting out."

The bishop also pointed out the parallel with the Housing Bill. He said:

"How can it be logical that where it is acceptable for a minority of parents at a school to decide its future, it is necessary for a majority of council tenants to decide to remain with the local authority? I am afraid one is driven to the point . . . that one purpose of the minority is to encourage schools to opt out."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 May 1988; Vol. 496, c. 1225-26.]

That is basically the case. This Government suit the franchise to whatever case they have in mind. In the Housing Bill, they wanted to make it easy for things to happen and in this Bill they want to make it easy for schools to opt out, hence there will be just an ordinary majority.

The Secretary of State was faced with a dilemma, such as he has faced throughout the Bill. On the one hand, the Prime Minister would not allow the Secretary of State to accept the Lords amendments. On the other hand, he had to persuade the Conservative rebels and those in the other place. He had to come up with what he thought to be a clever wheeze which would be enough to disarm the rebels —after listening to the speeches that have been made I suspect he may have achieved that—without provoking an explosion from No. 10, and we have not heard that. Therefore, the Secretary of State might just have got away with it. However, the parents will be faced with a convoluted, cumbersome, confusing dual-ballot fudge which will still allow a well-organised minority to push through a grant-maintained school.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) rightly said, it is a concession without substance. I believe that it should be rejected and that instead we should accept the Lords amendment.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): It is indisputable that there has been a fair amount of unease about the qualifying procedure for opting out. I certainly welcome my right hon. Friend's willingness to make concessions. His concessions are not particularly radical, but they are helpful. However, I still wonder exactly how easy it will be to establish exactly who has the right to vote, and, even at this late stage, I wonder whether there is another way of looking at the matter.

Clause 50(2) seems to leave it to governors to decide which parents are to decide, and apparently that is the situation in other respects. My right hon. Friend's amendment to Lords amendment No. 113 confirms that. It says that the voter has to be

"known to the governing body to be a parent"

and must be named as a parent in the register.

10.15 pm

Having listened to the debate and thought about it, I am still bemused about exactly who can or cannot be a parent. Obviously, there are what one might call the natural and married parents and there would usually be no difficulty about that. However, what is the position of step parents? In what circumstances are they regarded as parents? What is the position of natural parents who are named on the birth certificate but are involved in a union where there has been no marriage? What is the position of natural parents who are not named on the birth certificate? How do we find out about that? In the world as we know it, it would be extremely difficult in many cases to compile a list of parents. It has been pointed out already that in many parts of the country there is a growing proportion of one-parent families. Will it be the duty of the governors to try to find out who the father is when a child is living with its mother? It will be a difficult process. To say simply that it is a matter for the guardians of a child or those looking after it does not seem to answer the case fully.

I want to press my right hon. Friend to explain things more fully and to ask him whether at this late stage there might be a different approach to the matter. My proposal to my right hon. Friend—if there is a chance to consider it in the other place when the Bill returns there—is to require that those voting for the proposal are equal in number to more than half the number of pupils registered at the school. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take some interest in that proposal. That would mean that in a school of 1,000 pupils, at least 501 parents would have to vote for the proposal. There would also have to be a majority.

It would be easier to peg the qualifying number to the number of pupils rather than the number of parents. I am not arguing—my right hon. Friend has referred to this already—that there should be only one parental vote for each child. I am simply saying that there should be a minimum. If more than one eligible parent votes, so be it. If we were to ensure that the total number required to achieve the qualifying stage was equivalent to one for each child, we would have a practical proposal. That is a way of facing a difficulty in my right hon. Friend's proposals as they stand and the difficulty in the proposals from the other place. I hope that my right hon. Friend, if he has a chance to think about the matter again, will follow my proposal.

Why have I not put my proposal forward as an amendment? The answer must be that I thought of it too late for it to be put on the Amendment Paper. I sent it for consideration but it arrived too late. Whether we adopt the proposal from the other place or my right hon. Friend's proposal we are still left with the difficult problem of defining who are the parents and in drawing up a list—there has to be a list to establish the qualifying majority. I hope that there will be a chance to look at the alternative approach. Having said that, I reiterate that I am pleased that my right hon. Friend has shown willingness to make a concession at this stage.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: We have been opposed to schools opting out. [HON. MEMBERS: "We?"] We work as a team —a relay perhaps, but as a team.

We are not opposed in principle to greater diversity in the provision of schools, but the Government's proposals are a charter for small groups of people to wreck a county's network of schools. Cornwall has relatively few schools—most of which are scattered with one per community—with shared arrangements for post-16 education. The loss of any one of those schools because of the interest of a temporary passing group of parents would be a permanent loss to the community that the school serves.

I represent a fast-growing county. As population pressures operate, schools that have opted out will have to take decisions about who can attend them. To take those decisions, they may ask for contributions, test pupils' ability or, given the nature of my county, decide them on whose family has been in the county for three generations. Whatever decision is taken, certain children will be prevented from attending the school in their community. There should be a county-based education structure—not one that depends on the whims and fancies of the community—which should not depend on a tiny minority of parents taking a decision that will affect not only children attending the school at that time, but all those who will attend it in the future.

Lords amendment No. 113 is a small but essential safeguard to ensure that there is a level of support for opting out before the proposal goes to the Secretary of State for his decision. It would have been better if the other

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

amendments debated in the other place to require more widespread consultation with the community and feeder schools had also been carried. It is surely right to require in law a minimum level of parental support before allowing politicians to exercise a political judgment. The Secretary of State said that his vote on a closed shop would be different because it would affect people's jobs. These proposals affect the future of the community's children and those children's children and make a far greater impact than the closed shop ever could.

I hope that we will have time to debate the other amendments, including amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 111, which would help with the problem of defining a minimum level of parental support and would define who is a parent for the purposes of the ballot by setting an upper limit to the number of people who can participate in the ballot. We have already heard—the Secretary of State could not deny that this could happen—that 12 times as many votes could be cast on behalf of some children as of others. That is what my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) called a block vote.

Amendments (a) to (h) to Lords amendment No. 113 break away from the essential principle outlined in the other place about the minimum stated level of parental support, and should be rejected for that reason. That should not be forgotten, especially as the Bill will not and cannot contain a balancing provision for a school to opt back in again. The Bill provides only for a one-way street. Therefore, most demanding requirements should be met before an irreversible decision is taken.

The Government's proposals, which have been brought forward at the last moment to fend off an embarrassing defeat, are inadequate. The Secretary of State has not accepted the essential point that was carried in the other place, and the Bill is the worse for that. Hon. Members should stand by Lords amendment No. 113.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): This was always going to be one of the most controversial parts of the Bill, from the time it emerged in the election campaign, and so it has proved. Guidelines by the Secretary of State still remain. Clause 51(7) states:

> "The Secretary of State shall publish any guidance given by him for the purposes of this section in such manner as he thinks fit."

Under subsection (8), if it appears to the Secretary of State

> "that the governing body of any school have acted unreasonably in the discharge of their duties",

he can declare the ballot void. I assume that the power to declare a ballot void for that reason applies also to the second ballot. The Secretary of State has those reserve powers. I was glad to hear, following the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), that the final decision on opting out remains with the Secretary of State. In the light of those two factors, there are plenty of safeguards against any unreasonable behaviour.

We do not know when the Bill will become law. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has on his desk a number of cases of possible school closures. People ask what will cause a group of parents or governors to wish to opt out. There are some overwhelming reasons: constant threats of closure or clumsy attempts to reorganise education in such a way as would render a school a candidate for closure.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has probably guessed the point to which I am coming. Four calendar months ago, on 18 March, he kindly saw me and a delegation. For the third time in six years we have been trying to save Queensbury upper school in Dunstable from closure. Today I learned from his Department that Bedfordshire county council has demanded that it should see my right hon. Friend to argue the case for the closure of the school. If the Bill does not become law until the autumn, will my right hon. Friend take into account the results of a consultative referendum of parents on the future of their school? In the knowledge that the Bill is about to become law, that school and others under the threat of closure may try to opt out of control by the LEA, because the LEA has been trying to close them. Will my right hon. Friend take into account the results of a consultative referendum to be held early next term—I would not advocate such a ballot during the school holidays—among parents and governors on Queensbury's future if that is what those governors and parents want?

I feel that it is appropriate to raise this matter now. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State knows how contentious it is in Bedfordshire. It is my constitutional duty to raise it on behalf of Queensbury upper school, the parents, teachers and governors.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Government's amendments are an attempt to put a cloak of respectability over an act of political cowardice. During the general election, the Secretary of State made it clear that he thought that this would be a minority sport for parents. He was drawn up abruptly by the Prime Minister, who made it clear that she thought that parents would adopt the opting-out procedure in droves. If the Secretary of State is so confident about the interest of parents in the opting-out procedure, why does he not, instead of adopting a two-ballot procedure to quell rebellion among his party, state that a clear majority of parents of children attending a school should vote to opt out of the LEA's control and care?

10.30 pm

It has already been pointed out that for council tenants to exercise the right to stop a private landlord taking over their estate, more than half of them have to vote. For the closed shop, it was 80 per cent. At the time of the devolution debate, it was at least 40 per cent. However, under this proposal the decision can be made by the majority of those voting. Under the double ballot procedure, it is hoped that further interest will be excited and additional votes cast. But what will happen if neither ballot produces a clear decision, although a small majority are in favour of opting out?

The Secretary of State has been at pains to emphasise that the ballot procedure will not necessarily result in the opt-out provisions being made. He says that he will take account of the number of parents who vote and the majority that is achieved. He could have saved himself the pain of all this decision making. He has repeatedly told us that the Bill is not about taking powers to himself but about giving them to other people. Why did he not have the confidence to say that he would not decide whether a school should opt out but would leave that decision to a majority of parents who sent their children to the school? He has not done that.

Conservative Members have pointed out that we do not insist on such a procedure at general or local elections. We do not do so because we know that such elections are held regularly and that every three, four or five years the electorate has the opportunity to make a judgment on its previous decision about who to put into power. In this case, the parents will have no further opportunity. A school may be returned to local authority control and care only if there is a disaster in the management of the school, in which case the local authority will have to pick up the pieces.

I appeal to those Conservative Members who from the beginning have had doubts about the proposal that a majority of those voting should be sufficient not to accept this facade of a double vote to encourage parental interest but to stick to their guns and be honest about the need to provide that a majority of parents must be prepared to vote for such a proposal.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am a supporter of opting out, and the remarks of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) have not dissuaded me from that view. He seemed to me to be running around the periphery and pushing as hard as he could.

I support opting out for two reasons. First, it will shake local authorities' monopoly. They will never again be so complacent about educational standards. The second, associated, reason is that it will offer the parents of ordinary children a choice of education for the first time.

I know that the time is getting on, but I have three brief points to make. I have watched with interest the evolution of the Opposition's argument. They began by saying that parents would regard the very existence of the choice of opting out as so scandalous and unacceptable that there would be an overwhelming movement against it. The Opposition now say that the turnout might be too low to justify opting out. I invite Opposition Members to contemplate that contradiction.

I do not accept the argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) that we are involved in constitutional changes that have no connection with the position of local authorities.

Let us take, for example, Lancashire—the hon. Member for Blackburn will know what I am talking about —where the turnout in the last county election was 43·6 per cent. I am discussing not monopolies or closed shops, but education. In effect, there is, for those children in Lancashire, one education authority all of the time based on a less than 50 per cent. turnout. I am concerned about educational reality, and I want the children of Lancashire, like the children in other counties, to have a real choice in their schooling.

My third point relies on a bit of amateur sociological research. I looked carefully at the educational background of those in the other place who voted against my right hon. Friend's original intention. It is surprising that a large number of them had a de facto choice in their educational careers. They went either to opted out schools—by which I mean private schools—or to grammar schools. In other circumstances, our noble Friends are keen on the sporting interest. They should be encouraged to give a sporting chance to ordinary children, and let them have an educational choice as well.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Many people would be much more sympathetic to the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) about giving people choice if there were a choice of both opting in or opting out. He is saying that it must be a once and for all decision. The decision should be agreed by more than 50 per cent., because it cannot be reversed. The paradox of this debate is that Parliament is evading its responsibilities for education. The Bill should really be called the Evasion of Responsibility Bill, because we have spent a great deal of time talking about the opting out of schools when that has little relevance to what is going on in education. One finds that few teachers are concerned about opting out, so it is amazing that we should have spent hours in Committee and in the House dealing with that rather than with the real problems in education.

I went to a function on Friday night at the school at which I used to teach to mark the retirement of two excellent teachers. I thought that I would be inundated with comments about the Bill, but almost all the conversation that I had with other teachers with whom I had worked, and who I knew to be excellent teachers, was about how lucky these colleagues were to be retiring, and how they were looking forward to getting out of teaching as quickly as possible because they did not want to have to implement the proposals in the Bill. They did not go into the details of it—they simply wanted to opt out. That is the real opting out—the opting out of teachers. The Secretary of State should have been using this legislation to build up the morale of those who work in the schools.

Opting out will mean 12 months of uncertainty for the schools involved. That is the worst possible thing for education. Instead of getting on with improving the quality of education in a school and being concerned with what is going on in the classroom and with the individuals, people will be talking about the organisation of the school next year or the year after. As a former teacher, I know that when things are going wrong in the classroom, it is easy to start thinking about how one will plan things next year. The key point in education is to bring home to people the fact that the quality of teaching now is important, not future planning.

What a mess the Bill has got us into. There is now an extremely complicated problem with franchise. We start off with 20 per cent. support to request the ballot. There are then the two governors' meetings, which are useful for a cooling off period, and then there are the two polls. I wonder whether the Secretary of State has worked out how the voting will take place. It cannot happen in December, because, of the two following ballots, in one at least it would be difficult to return the forms over the Christmas period. It would also be difficult to have a vote over Easter, not just because of the problem of contacting parents over the holiday period but because some pupils leave school at Easter, so it will have to be decided whether those people remain on the electoral list between one date and the next. The same thing applies at Whitsun, when all the summer leavers come off the register, and there will be a problem with the franchise. There is a problem in August, because a new group comes on to the franchise. The Secretary of State now has a cumbersome procedure.

The number of parents who could be involved came as a surprise to Conservative Members. The simplest procedure is one vote per child. The Secretary of State asked us how parents decide. From his experience, he should realise that one of the responsibilities of being a

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

parent is that one must take joint decisions. One has to decide which school the child attends. I am sure that he can think of many other examples. I assume that the Secretary of State manages to take such joint decisions in his household. Most parents have to make decisions. That may sometimes be a painful process, but parents have to take joint decisions, and it is ridiculous to suggest that that is impossible.

In the last few seconds available to me, I want to ask the Secretary of State how quickly he will carry out his part of the function. The procedure involves going through the school and holding two parents' ballots and the matter then returns to the Secretary of State to make a decision. How quickly will he make that decision? He said that he would have to take into account, for example, the number of people who voted. Presumably he will also have to take into account the views of local Conservatives in the area. He should give the House an undertaking that, within a month of his being asked to give a decision, he will do so. If he does not do that, uncertainty will continue in schools. We shall have a measure that will divide a school for over 12 months into those who want to opt out and those who do not, to the detriment of the education of children in the school. I ask the House to support the Lords amendments and to throw out the Government's proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This has been an interesting, short and important debate. I have always been aware that, while Opposition Members have opposed the concept of grant-maintained schools, some Conservative Members have expressed anxiety about the legitimacy of the voting. That is why I have proposed the changes. I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) who moved amendments in Committee and has argued strongly for the amendments that the Government have now tabled. I hope that he will recognise that we have tried to meet the anxiety that has been expressed and I am grateful to him for his support.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) raised the question of a different way of defining the electorate. That comes late in our deliberations and I cannot incorporate those changes, although I shall consider them carefully. It may be possible to take on board some of my right hon. Friend's points in the guidance that we shall issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) raised an important constituency point. He will know that I cannot comment on a proposal concerning a particular school, but I shall explain the general position to him. If there is a proposal before me concerning the closure of a school, when the Bill receives Royal Assent, that decision will be put on ice for a time, probably for two or three months, so that the governers can decide whether they wish to proceed with grant-maintained status. If so, I must make the decision on that before dealing with section 12 closures.

We then had a contribution from the spokesman for the Liberal party. It was a typical Liberal contribution. In general, the Liberals are in favour of freedom of choice. They go up and down the country saying that they are in favour of choice, but when it comes to specific examples of choice for parents they run away. They then have the effrontery to talk of a qualifying majority. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) is engaged in the leadership election of his party, but he is in favour of a simple majority. Will we have 40 per cent. for the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and 40 per cent. for the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)?

The most extraordinary thing about the debate has been the absence of Labour Members. Opting-out is one of the main issues of the Bill. Labour Members were against that at the election. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that he was against that. There are scarcely any Labour Members here. The entire speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was devoted to the technicalities of voting, not the issue of grant-maintained schools. After a year in post, supposedly determining Labour party policy, he has no policy save on one issue—for ballots, it is one vote per child. What a crazy idea that is. The hon. Gentleman has devised an electoral system that is likely to be in breach of the Equal Opportunities Act and will certainly divide husband and wife. After a year's constructive thought, the hon. Gentleman has no policy at all—

It being a quarter to Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Lords amendment No. 89 agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendment No. 111: In page 44, line 48, at end insert—

"(7) Subject to subsection (8) below, it shall be the duty of the governing body of any school which is eligible for grant-maintained status, at the request of any parent of a registered pupil at the school, to make available to the parent for inspection (at all reasonable times and free of charge) at the school, and to supply the parent with a copy of, a list containing the name and address of every person who is known to the governing body to be such a parent if the request is made—

(a) in connection with any proposal that a ballot should be held in accordance with section 51 of this Act; or

(b) where the governing body are under a duty by virtue of this section to secure that such a ballot is held, in connection with the holding of the ballot.

(8) A governing body shall not disclose to a parent under subsection (7) above the name and address of any person who has requested the governing body in writing not to disclose that information under that subsection; and accordingly the name and address of that person shall be excluded from the list there mentioned.

(9) A governing body who in pursuance of subsection (7) above supply copies of the list there mentioned may charge such fee as they think fit (not exceeding the cost of supply) in respect of each copy so supplied.

(10) For the purposes of this section, it shall be for the governing body to determine any question whether a person is a parent of a registered pupil at the school."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the proposed Lords amendment: (c) in line 10, at end insert

'or section 51(7A) of this Act'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Lords amendment No. 111, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 112, in page 46, line 4, at end insert—

"(5A) Where the governing body of any school are under a duty by virtue of section 50 of this Act to secure that a ballot is held in accordance with this section they shall make available to every person employed to work at the school for inspection (at all reasonable times and free of charge) at the school a document containing the information required by subsections (3)(a) and (5) above to be given to parents of registered pupils at the school."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the proposed Lords amendment: (a), in line 6, leave out

'parents of registered pupils at the school'

and insert

'persons eligible to vote in the ballot'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Lords amendment No. 112, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 113, in page 46, line 31, after "majority" insert

"of parents eligible to vote"

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 334, Noes 198.

Division No. 420] **[10.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*

Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments (a) to (h) made to the Bill in lieu of the Lords amendment last disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 135, 136, 138 to 141, 143, 144, 189 and 191 agreed to. [Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 90 to 110, 114 to 134, 137, 142, 145, 146, 190 and 192 to 226 agreed to.

Clause 18

INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER 1

Lords amendment: No. 39, in page 13, line 42, at end insert

'and "foundation subjects" includes "core subjects"'.

Read a Second time.

11 pm

Mr. Fatchett: I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 2, at end insert

'(notwithstanding that "core subjects" shall be mandatory for all pupils in accordance with any Order made under section 4(2)(a) or (b) above, and that the other "foundation subjects" shall be advisory for the purposes of enabling teachers and headteachers to implement the National Curriculum having regard to any attainment targets or programmes of study specified under that section.)'.

The background to the amendment is of particular interest. The original intention according to the Secretary of State was to have the national curriculum of a grammar school type. The argument was that that curriculum would be common to all parts of the country. We heard from one Minister after another that the major purpose was to ensure that if a child moved from Devon to Durham the curriculum would be exactly the same.

During the life of the Bill in Committee, in another place and outside this House, that original notion of the national curriculum has been subject to heavy criticism. In his book "Take care, Mr. Baker!" Julian Haviland made the following comments on the Secretary of State's original concept of the national curriculum. He said:

"I cannot recall one response that endorsed without reservation the structure for the curriculum which the Government was proposing."

That criticism from outside was echoed in the Chamber and in Committee. In Committee and on Report, hon. Members on both sides of the House expressed concern about the original concept of the national curriculum—its inflexibility, its inability to take account of cross-curricular activity, its inability to take account of innovation and to satisfy the needs of those who advocated particular subjects.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the autumn last year we had a very interesting late-night Adjournment debate on the role of Latin in our schools and whether it should form part of the national curriculum. That reflected a debate, not just on the Opposition Benches but on Conservative Benches, about the composition, nature and structure of the national curriculum. Legitimate points were made about the flexibility of the original proposals.

When the Bill reached another place, that process was strengthened by several contributions, not least that of Lord Joseph who argued very strongly that he was worried about the Government's national curriculum. He argued not that he was opposed to the Bill, but that he felt that the national curriculum was too prescriptive and was run in a way that was contrary to educational and political experience in other countries. He argued that it was contrary to his White Paper, "Better Schools", published two years previously in which the Government argued not for a national curriculum but for a core curriculum.

The next point is crucial in terms of the chronology of events. In the debates in another place, the Government seem to have recognised the need for change from a curriculum that is tight and prescriptive to one that is a good deal more flexible. Baroness Hooper suggested—and this reflects the purpose of the amendment—that there should be a three-tier national curriculum with different characteristics for each tier. It was said that there was to be a core curriculum of mathematics, English and science, and that within it there would be tight attainment targets and work projects. Outside the core curriculum, there are to be foundation subjects, in which the attainment targets and the proposed work will be less tightly prescribed and more flexible, leaving teachers with the initiative to develop work fitted to the needs of their schools and pupils.

There will be a third area of subjects comprising music, art, physical education and—I would argue—religious education, where there will be even less prescription and content in terms of attainment targets, and even more flexibility for individual teachers. What we have is not the national curriculum that the Secretary of State introduced to the country a year ago, and which he said would be taught in all our schools. He gave the impression that it would be totally tight and totally prescriptive.

We have now seen emerge from the House of Lords a wholly different animal, which suggests that the Government have learnt a great deal from the criticism they received from the House and those outside it. According to Baroness Hooper, the Government are now proposing a flexible, three-tier national curriculum. Tonight, we want to hear from the Minister of State whether she agrees with her ministerial colleague, and that the nature of the Government's curriculum is as her noble Friend described it.

If it is, and if the Government have arrived at a nationally-determined core curriculum, could they not have saved themselves a great deal of trouble, and the House a great deal of time, if they had pursued their proposals in a different way, instead of refusing to consult teachers, local education authorities and parents? The Government had a unique opportunity to devise a nationally-agreed core curriculum, for which there was support from both major political parties, from the teachers' unions, and from parents. We now want to know whether the Minister has learnt from experience and agrees with us that this country needs a consensual, core curriculum for our children. That is the question that arises from these amendments.

We are still awaiting an indication from the Government of the national curriculum's detailed time scale. They still like to believe, and to create the image, that there is a national curriculum ready to be taken off the shelf and delivered to parents, to schools and to children. That is far from the case. We want to hear from the Minister what are the nature of the time scales.

We want to hear also how the Government will deliver the national curriculum. Where are the teachers? We now know that fewer and fewer youngsters are entering teacher training and that the Government will face acute embarassment in providing teachers of science and modern languages, and of other subjects as well. Where are those teachers to come from when we have a teaching profession that has been demoralised by the Government's actions?

Finally, we want to know where the money will come from for the national curriculum. Time and again, we have been told that it will be easy to finance, but the truth is that the Government are spending more money this year on

promoting CTCs than they are on promoting the national curriculum for all of our children. That is a measure of the Government's priorities.

When the Association of County Councils, which is not Labour led, told the Government that it needs £600 million of additional resources to implement the national curriculum, the Government responded not with money but with a deafening silence, which suggests that they have no interest in ensuring that our national curriculum is adequately resourced. The Government refused to give adequate time and resources to the GCSE examination, and thousands of children up and down the country have suffered as a result. Will they do the same with the national curriculum?

Finally, let me raise a question that has already been raised by a number of people outside the House. Reliable sources suggest that the teaching of the languages of the European Community and of Russian, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese will be acceptable for the national curriculum. The Joint Council of Language Associations has written to me, and, I suspect, to other members of the Standing Committee. The letter says:

"We are worried about the discrimination implicit in the very idea of listing languages. The above proposals would mean, for example, that a child with an Italian or Chinese background would be perfectly entitled to continue the study of their language at school and achieve examination recognition, whereas one from an Indian background would not."

What have the Government in mind for foreign language teaching?

What has happened to the national curriculum in the Bill's passage through the House is an indication of the effective opposition led by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). That opposition has allowed us time after time to put forward constructive criticism of the Government's proposals. We have been able to show that the Government's initial approach was too prescriptive, too inflexible and simply unworkable. We welcome a new flexible approach and a greater reliance on teachers and their expertise.

The Government have learnt from Labour: they have learnt from our arguments and our criticisms. That learning process will not help the Secretary of State with some of his Back Benchers who wanted dogmatic, centralised control, and it may not help him with the Prime Minister, but it will certainly improve the national curriculum and the Bill. What now stands on the curriculum is a victory for the Opposition.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is nothing really new about the statements made by my colleague in another place about the national curriculum. It is obvious from what the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has been saying that Opposition Members have been labouring under serious misapprehensions during all our debates. Let me make it clear that Lords amendment No. 39 was not a Government amendment. We believed that the Bill was clear in including the three core subjects among the 10 foundation subjects as set out in clause 3. But the point caused some discussion in Committee and in another place, and we are therefore happy for the clarification to be included in the Bill.

The amendment gives us an opportunity to consider the final shape of our national curriculum provisions as they have emerged from Parliament's consideration. They are, in essence, unchanged. The concept of a national curriculum backed by statute has been generally accepted and, indeed, welcomed by all concerned, but there have certainly been some improvements as a result of extensive debate and consultations outside the House. The most important changes have increased the flexibility in the application of the curriculum. We debated many of the relevant issues in our earlier discussions on special educational needs, but we have seen off all attempts to increase flexibility to a point at which the curriculum's objectives would have been at risk. We have rejected the notion of schools opting out of a broad and balanced curriculum, and that of limiting the curriculum to a core of three subjects, which—as we have said on a number of occasions—would offer little improvement on the present position in schools.

We have secured a framework within which all pupils, of all abilities, can be treated in accordance with their needs—needs which will be much better identified as a result of the new assessment arrangements. Schools will continue to have the opportunity to offer pupils a range of additional subjects in their later secondary years, and there is no question of subjects being under threat because they do not form part of the national curriculum. All we are saying is that such subjects cannot replace the elements of the national curriculum.

11.15 pm

The national curriculum is therefore central to our policies for improving standards. The Bill sets the framework, and what matters now is that all concerned should work together to implement the best possible curriculum for all pupils. I have been encouraged that, as more has become known about our practical proposals —for example, acceptance of the main TGAT recommendations—the more they have been welcomed. They have been welcomed by the teaching profession, by parents and by the outside world generally. I am confident that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State puts the formal proposals on maths and science to the new National Curriculum Council next month, which will be based on the working group's final report, they, too, will be recognised by all teachers as reflecting good practice and as helping, not constraining, the classroom teacher.

The NCC and SEAC are now established in shadow form. They are ready to get to grips with their important roles. The NCC is preparing to carry out the wide consultations that will be required on my right hon. Friend's statutory proposals. The timetable for this, and for the work on the assessment system that SEAC will carry out in parallel, is fairly tight, but I am confident that the new bodies will rise to the challenge.

We shall be keeping up the momentum, with a view to introducing the first programmes of study and attainment targets in September 1989 for maths, science and primary English. We shall also on that date require that pupils in the first three key stages are offered the full range of foundation subjects.

There is much to be done before September 1989 and thereafter as the national curriculum is implemented progressively for other subjects and age groups. We shall be keeping the education service and parents fully informed as the various requirements come on stream and helping the local education authorities and schools to meet their new responsibilities through the education support grants and in-service grants. But the next steps are very much in the hands of the local authorities, the schools and

[Mrs. Rumbold]

the teachers who, I know, share our aim of offering a better education to all pupils. I hope that they will be prepared to seize the opportunity that we are offering them to do so much more effectively.

I was asked during an earlier debate about the relationship between TVEI and the national curriculum. TVEI does not embody a specific curriculum. It is about the delivery, through a wide range of curricular frameworks, of a practical approach to learning. It is true that, as its name implies, schools in particular that participate in TVEI will be expected to bring out the technical implications, where that is appropriate, but anybody who has had any contact with this initiative will know that it allows room for a broad range of approaches to the curriculum and that it is one of the reasons why it has been such an outstanding success.

As TVEI has developed, it has become increasingly clear that one cannot say that specified portions of the curriculum are or are not within the initiative. TVEI is something that, in the best examples, pervades the whole curriculum for pupils of all abilities.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is the Minister aware that in a document entitled "Checklist for scrutinising proposals," by education authorities for the TVEI extension, two questions are posed for education authorities? They are asked whether the technology time slot is 10 per cent. in the entitlement of core curricula and whether there is a balanced science time slot of 20 per cent. in the entitlement of core curricula. Added together, they mean that the TVEI extension will lead to local authorities expecting 30 per cent. of the core curriculum to be devoted to technology and basic science. The Secretary of State has made the point that 70 per cent. is the limit to cover all foundation and core curriculum subjects. If that is so, how can teachers be expected to cram all the other subjects into the remaining 40 per cent.?

Mrs. Rumbold: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman on that point. The working groups are making recommendations to the National Curriculum Council on what is contained in science and technology and on the practicalities of what they consider, after a great deal of consultation, to be the right amount of time that shall be spent by children in schools on those subjects. Whatever has been said by other bodies, the definitive statement on that will come when the recommendations are made to my right hon. Friend by the National Curriculum Council.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister has just made an important statement. May I assume that the Training Commission document, and particularly its checklist for scrutiny, has no real authority and certainly does not override the many other studies taking place with the National Curriculum Council and that it is not the definitive definition of how a TVEI scheme will be extended or how education authorities will qualify for those extensions?

Mrs. Rumbold: In relation to what happens with TVEI, what the Training Commission has suggested will obviously be considered by the working groups on science and technology, but that will not be the definitive statement. We shall have to wait until both those working groups have produced recommendations about the amount of time that they consider to be right and proper for pupils to spend on those subjects in conjunction with the rest of the timetable that has to be set out for the national curriculum subjects and other subjects.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister has raised a number of important points. Will the working parties be prescriptive on the amount of time in the school timetable to be taken on core subjects and on foundation subjects?

Mrs. Rumbold: The task of the working parties and the groups on specific subjects is to set out for the National Curriculum Council attainment targets and programmes of work that they suggest youngsters should be able to reach at specified times during their school careers. All those recommendations from the working parties will go to the National Curriculum Council, which will consult widely with teachers and others who have a legitimate interest before it comes back to my right hon. Friend, who will take into account those consultations, make his orders accordingly, go out to consultation yet again to make sure that the time recommended to be spent on specified subjects is right, and finally lay orders before the House.

That will allow the National Curriculum Council to continue to examine what is being taught, to update and progress the curriculum as it considers right, and to make proposals to my right hon. Friend, so that, if necessary, he can make amendments to what happens in schools.

Mr. Fatchett: I am interested in what the Minister says about how the procedures will work. I understand what she was saying about the consultation period, but she said that at the end of the consultation period the Secretary of State would decide how much time on the timetable would be necessary for each subject, taking into account the comments made by the working parties and after consultation. Will the Secretary of State be prescriptive in that way?

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The Secretary of State is unlikely to be in that position. It is not anticipated that there will be anything more than a broad outline of how much time youngsters will be expected to spend on certain subjects.

Clearly, one could go round this particular mulberry bush indefinitely, because in a school curriculum, as everyone well knows, periods are allocated each day throughout the school week for certain subjects. I anticipate that most children will have an English lesson, a maths lesson and a science lesson at least once a day during the week if they are satisfactorily to conclude the work that they will need to do to fulfil the terms of the national curriculum. Similarly, other subjects will require a certain amount of time, but not so much as the maths, English and science, and possibly one or two other subjects. However, at this stage it is not for me or my right hon. Friend to make suggestions, because we have not yet received the recommendations from the working groups and certainly the National Curriculum Council has not had an opportunity to make its recommendations.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister has said that it is not a matter for her or for the Secretary of State. Therefore, it is certainly not a matter for the Training Commission. Will the Secretary of State write to the Training Commission to establish the authority and basis upon which the criteria are to be used? As I understand it, they are being used now to decide whether a TVEI extension scheme will be applied to an education authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman's worries are somewhat premature because the National Curriculum Council has not yet fully started its work. As soon as it is established, it will take on board the recommendations from the working parties. Nothing that the Training Commission may have suggested to schools can override the National Curriculum Council's conclusions. That must be the reassurance for which the hon. Gentleman is looking.

I have been pressed, particularly by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central, about teacher numbers. The hon. Gentleman was concerned about that. Pupil numbers in secondary schools are still declining. In England, secondary school numbers will fall by 280,000 between now and 1991. That constitutes a drop of 9 per cent. The recovery in numbers will be much slower than the fall. It will be the year 2000 before the current year's level of secondary school numbers is reached again. At present the ratio of pupils to teachers is at its lowest ever level, and it is still falling. Our expenditure plans are framed on the assumption that it will fall as low as 17:1. That will provide local education authorities with scope to redeploy teachers and to make the most effective use of the collective skills and expertise of the teaching force in order to prepare for and implement the national curriculum.

Some teachers will require further or new in-service training. We are preparing to make grants available in order to implement the possibility of teachers preparing for the specific requirements of the national curriculum.

Ms. Armstrong: The Minister talked about falling rolls. That will mean fewer children leaving school at 18 and training as teachers. There will be fewer people available for recruitment. How can the Government estimate how many teachers they need, given that there is now such confusion about the amount of time that will be spent on each subject? How can the Government reassure parents and children that there will be sufficient teachers to be trained to deliver the curriculum?

Mrs. Rumbold: The confusion is confined to the hon. Lady's mind. Falling rolls will have a considerable effect on the availability of teachers for retraining or for returning to the subject in which they were first trained. It is well known that there are some teachers, particularly in our secondary schools, who are not teaching their first discipline. It is also true that demographic changes will have some effect on the recruitment of people into teaching. It is for that reason that we have taken steps to undertake high profile recruitment at universities and among those who might return to teaching. It is also why my right hon. Friend has suggested that there may be a new form of teachers with licensed-teacher status to ensure that our children are provided with the best teaching force available.

Under the orders listing foreign languages we can provide that a child cannot satisfy the national curriculum requirement by studying his or her mother language. We have not yet set up the working party on foreign languages. It will be for that working party to take into consideration the matter that has been raised with me.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): When considering the supply of teachers, will my hon. Friend also consider the supply of ancillary staff and technicians, who are just as important for the successful teaching of subjects?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend makes an important point about ancillary staff——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Amendment negatived.

Lords amendment No. 39 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 40 to 53, 55 to 67 and 69 to 88 agreed to.

Clause 104

FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES WITH RESPECT TO HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Lords amendment: No. 266, in page 102, line 4, leave out "subsection (3) below" and insert

"the following provisions of this section"

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Lords amendment No. 267, in page 102, line 6, leave out from "education" to "and" in line 8 and insert

"for persons over compulsory school age (including vocational, social, physical and recreational training);"

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, after 'training', insert 'and adult education'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, at end add

'in association with the provision of youth service facilities'.

Lords amendment No. 268, in page 102, leave out line 1 and insert—

"(2A) In this Act 'further education' does not include higher education."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, at end add 'but does include adult education'.

Amendments Nos. 269 to 271.

Mr. Jackson: The amendments relate to higher and further education, and the most important are those tabled by the Opposition on adult education and that tabled by the Government, which provides for statutory sub-committees of the Universities Funding Council for Scotland and Wales.

The Government were defeated in the other place on amendment No. 292, which required the UFC to establish an advisory sub-committee for Scotland. We continue to believe that such a provision is not necessary because a committee for this purpose would have been established. In view of the strength of feeling expressed in the House and the other place, we are prepared to give statutory expression to a Scottish committee and, because the arguments are similar, to a Welsh committee. That is the purpose of the Government's amendment.

At several stages during the Bill's passage it has been suggested that the Bill does not do enough for adult education and that specific refererces to adult education should be inserted in the Bill. The amendments now proposed to Lords amendments Nos. 267 and 268 have the same purpose. The Government do not oppose those amendments—I emphasise this most strongly—out of a feeling that adult education is not important; quite the

[Mr. Jackson]

contrary. The Government set great value by adult education. It provides many people up and down the country with enormous benefit and pleasure.

The Government recognise the value and importance of adult education, but that does not necessarily mean that there is a need to make specific mention of adult education in the Bill in the way the amendments to the Lords amendments propose. Further education is already defined to include adult education. Clause 104, as amended in the other place, defines further education as including all full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age other than higher education. In this, it follows closely the 1944 Act. Further education is not defined as being only for 16 to 19-year-olds, or only for those up to the age of 21. It is for all those over the age of 16.

It has been suggested that, because there is no specific mention of adult education in the Bill, there is therefore no statutory duty on LEAs to provide adult education. That concern is misplaced. The duty which clause 104 places on LEAs is to secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities for further education as a whole. It therefore already carries within it a duty to secure adequate facilities for further education for adults. Adult education is already part of the statutory system of education, and has been since the 1944 Act.

There is a problem about definitions. Clause 104 defines what is meant by "further education" and "higher education." If we were to make specific reference to adult education in the Bill, we would first have to define it, because it would be different from further or higher education. That would get us into difficulties. At what age exactly is someone to become an adult for the purposes of these amendments? What sort of courses does adult education include? Does it include a middle-aged man on a professional, industrial and commercial updating programme course updating his skills in engineering? Does it include literacy and numeracy provision? Does it refer only to non-vocational liberal evening classes? I guess that we could find the term used in all those senses and more.

We all recognise the value of adult education, but it would be a great mistake to believe that by inserting references to adult education in the Bill in the way that these Opposition amendments suggest we would in some sense be supporting adult education. I have to say bluntly that we would not. The sort of amendments that have been proposed would do adult education no favours at all. They would only introduce confusion and divisions where none now exist. I therefore hope that they will be withdrawn.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I am grateful for the fact that the Minister was allowed to refer to Lords amendment No. 292 and amendment (c) thereto. We are glad that the Government have bowed to all the pressures to establish in statute a Welsh and a Scottish sub-committee. That is an important concession. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Before I hear too many cheers from the Opposition, especially from Scottish Members, I point out that it would have been helpful if the Minister had told us a little about Scottish loans. There must be people in Scottish universities who have four-year degrees and who are fearful that the introduction of a loans scheme will discriminate against universities that offer four-year courses in favour of those that offer three-year courses. I am sure that Scottish Members would have preferred to hear not just that there is to be a Scottish sub-committee but that there is to be a guarantee of resources for that sub-committee to allocate, especially to many of the hard-pressed universities in Scotland, and a guarantee that a student loans scheme will not discriminate against them.

Like the Minister, I had better move on and return to amendments Nos. 266 and 267—the first to be considered in this short debate—and to adult education. It is extremely disappointing that, every time Labour Members —whether in Committee, on Report or in the other place —have argued for adult education, the Government have come out with the lame excuse that further education includes adult education. We would have had much more sympathy for the Government's view if they had talked about the necessary resources.

Because adult education and the youth service—another aspect that the Government have resisted doing anything about in the Bill—get little mention in legislation, far too many local authorities and the Government feel that it is not important to allocate resources to them. The House should spell out the fundamental importance of adult education and the youth service if we want high-quality education for all. If we want to ensure the future prosperity of this country, we must spell out to people that education should not finish at 16 or 19. We must offer the educational opportunities to them throughout their lives.

If we want Britain to be a peaceful country and a democracy, we should spell out the educational opportunities. We should accept that if we want to give people more than just a token of a vote, we must give them skills, knowledge and the ability to use information to make choices. We must encourage people to have the self-confidence to put their points of view. If we want Britain to be a democracy, good, adequate adult education for the whole community is fundamental. If we want to give people the opportunity to enjoy their leisure, we must look at the opportunities provided through good adult education.

Many hon. Members wanted to talk about the need for religious education in schools. Surely every adult has the right to think about his or her existence and to develop an understanding of the universe. The opportunity to do that should not be restricted to the fortunate few who go on to higher education; it ought to be available to everyone. We should all be able to thirst after and obtain knowledge and be able to use it. We should make it clear in the Bill that we want to give people the opportunity to enjoy good-quality adult education.

I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to put the arguments about adult education and about higher education in Scotland and Wales, so I shall conclude by suggesting to the Government that the failure to have a statutory youth service means that the money is not provided. Given that we do not provide the money, it is not surprising that we have so many disaffected young people who end up behaving destructively rather than constructively. The Government should accept that if they fail to provide the resources to channel youthful energies into useful activities, they will bear a great deal of the responsibility for that.

In this short debate, we should record our regret that the Government have not committed themselves to providing any resources. In this respect, as in so many others, the Gerbil ends up as a great evasion of

Government responsibility. Opposition Members regard the Bill as a wasted opportunity. The Government have failed to address the problems of expanding education and youth opportunities. They have failed to provide resources for higher education. They should have spent far more time examining resources rather than advancing sterile arguments such as the one that we have just heard from the Minister, who suggests that the further education provisions are a simple way of including adult education and says that that is all that he has to offer the adult education lobby.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I pay tribute to my hon. Friends, both here and in another place, for succeeding in forcing the Government to concede this very important principle. We in Scotland greatly welcome the setting up of a separate sub-committee of the Universities Funding Council. That is a tremendous victory, but a word of caution is needed because I fear that even a separate sub-committee in Scotland will have minimal impact without proper resources.

As recently as 28 June my hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and I tabled a motion commenting on the grave threat posed to Scottish universities by Government underfunding and by a £12·5 million cut in recurrent grant since 1986. We pointed out that Scottish universities faced deficits totalling £5·5 million. In Edinburgh, the deficit is £3 million; in Aberdeen, £1 million; in Dundee, £312,000. Glasgow university has a deficit of £500,000, as does Heriot-Watt, while Stirling has a deficit of £300,000 this year.

The sad fact is that up to 500 academic posts are threatened. That has a horrific impact on the university in our capital city, which is threatened with the loss of 170 posts by the end of the decade. At Aberdeen university the situation is hardly less serious. The number of jobs threatened—academic posts alone—is 130. Across in the west of Scotland, Strathclyde university is threatened with the loss of 56 academic posts; at Dundee, 45 posts are threatened; at St. Andrew's 39 and at Stirling, 25. At Glasgow and Heriot-Watt, too, posts are severely threatened.

Such cuts threaten the viability of Scottish universities and with departments such as that of the international Soviet expert, John Erickson, at Edinburgh threatened with cuts, the impact is severe. It is ironic that, having had four universities at a time when England had only two, Scotland should now be faced with such severe cuts. I welcome the creation by this amendment of the sub-committee, which will highlight and, I hope, go some way to protect Scottish universities.

11.45 pm

Today, I received a letter from a doctor in the Edinburgh school of agriculture. The letter sets out why we need a properly resourced sub-committee. It says:

"The treatment by the Department of Education and Science of University Staff, postgraduate students and of Universities in general, is extremely worrying. It bodes ill for the future of science-based industries in the UK . . . The result has been that even those of us who have strong scientific groups have very great difficulty in attracting applicants . . .The treatment of Universities such as Edinburgh which are successful in obtaining research grants and contracts is deplorable. The more successful we are, the more we are effectively penalised . . . Despite the early US lead in Biotechnology, which is in part my own area of expertise, the UK has made many notable advances. If the present disregard for science continues, we shall be unable to maintain any momentum in developing new technology etc. in this area. In the longer term, the effect on our balance of payments and on our general science base can only be disastrous."

It does not stop there. On Saturday, the principal of Edinburgh university, Sir David Smith, warned new graduates that Government plans to strip the UGC of responsibility to train doctors and to transfer them to Government health departments threatened the very basis of the training of doctors, which would become separated from the advancement of medical knowledge and research, which is a key function of universities.

The universities in Scotland, and elsewhere, have taken a hammering from the Government. The public, who believe in university education, have seen any faith they might have had in the Government betrayed. I began by saying that this is an important victory. Let us hope that it is not a Pyhrric victory.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Because of the shortness of time, I shall be brief, especially as the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who is my namesake and is also left-handed—we have a lot in common—has shown that, while we welcome the Government's response to pressure put on in this House and in the other place to have a separate sub-committee for Wales and Scotland, we feel that they are ungracious in the way that they are conceding this to us, saying that it is not necessary.

The way in which the cuts have been administered to the universities on the Celtic fringe shows, without going into details of the Welsh universities, that the reduction in funding in Wales was marginally worse than the reduction in funding in Scotland. In each of the Welsh universities there is a trail of destruction and cuts, with the prospect of 400 to 500 further job losses as a result of inadequate funding. I hope that the separate sub-committee for Wales will result in a return to extra attention being paid to the resources that are desparately needed for higher education in Wales.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I agree wholeheartedly that the amendment is welcome. However, is it not important that this sub-committee has teeth, and the resources necessary to do the job? If it is only window dressing, it will not be enough. It is important that we see a change in policy that gives the University of Wales new hope.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman echoes the sentiments of myself and of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South. I hope that the Government will be able to provide more funding for the universities on the Celtic fringe.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In a article sent to us by the vice-chancellors, the Minister's political friend, Professor Beloff, describes the Minister as lecturing the universities on Gibbonian slothfulness. During those lectures, did the Minister ask whether the funding councils or any sub-committee would be able to do anything to mitigate the pressure now that universities have to pay off many senior, experienced members of staff? Many of us have great reason to be grateful to often elderly teachers at

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

universities who, under the present set-up, will have their services dispensed with. Will the funding councils be able to tackle that problem?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Like other hon. Members for the Celtic nations—unlike the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), I refer not to the Celtic fringe, but to the Celtic nations—we welcome amendment (c) to Lords amendment No. 292 because the establishment of sub-committees of the UFC for Wales and Scotland recognises not only our distinctive cultures, histories and education systems, but the innovations and challenges that lie ahead for our universities in Wales and Scotland. We welcome that very much.

As an hon. Member who spoke on Report for a UFC for Scotland, I particularly welcome the extension of the idea to Wales. Here I wish to pay tribute to the work of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) who served as a member of the Committee and put forward a strong argument.

It was interesting to note that the Minister, in his opening remarks, said that the Government had thought that it was not necessary to write in specific sub-committees for Scotland and Wales, but they opposed it when the amendment was passed in another place. One wonders why they are now conceding. Is there a firm commitment behind the Government's concession tonight? That is what worries me. When we talk about advisory committees, I am worried that the Government may be paying lip service to the idea of Scotland and Wales having separate organisations. For example, what would be the role of the advisory committees in the problem that now faces Dundee in its fight to retain its dental school? Would it be overruled by the UFC? Would the committee have any strength in its arguments? That particular closure was described by Principal Hamlin at the graduation ceremony last weekend as "a scandal".

I think also of the threat to Aberdeen university, which serves my region of Grampian, where six departments and 150 academic jobs are under threat. What would be the role of an advisory committee representing Scottish interests? We do not want to see ourselves, either in Scotland or Wales, being placed in a subsidiary position whereby lip service is paid to the idea of consultation and advice, but numerical strength overrules that at the end of the day.

The Government must make it clear that this is more than a concession in the context of listening to what one or two people might say, ensuring that the sub-committees in Scotland and Wales have genuine strength and can argue the case for their universities on a geographical, research and development, cultural, historic and educational basis. They must not be dismissed as being peripheral; they must reflect the demand for national recognition.

It has always seemed strange to me that the universities in Scotland have been separated from the rest of the education system. We firmly believe that they should be integrated. Until such time as we can achieve that, I wish to hear a clear commitment from the Government tonight that advisory does not mean dismissive, but means that strength will be given to our representatives to ensure that the well-being of our universities is safeguarded.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Those of my colleagues who have managed to catch your eye in this short debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have laid great stress on the fact that there is no point in the Government's claiming that they intended to make a concession, which was then forced on them in another place following a debate which began in this House, if the bodies set up for Scotland and Wales are denied the ability to exercise their functions due to lack of finance.

With all due respect to my colleagues in Wales, I believe that in Scotland the differences in the university system are so great as to require a full and clear statement from the Minister today that due regard will be given to the special features of the Scottish system. In all the discussions that Labour Members in Scotland have had with the University Grants Committee it has come over loud and clear that the UGC does not appreciate the significant difference in the four-year courses of Scottish universities. Unless the Minister makes a clear statement today that he recognises that and will ensure that it is taken on board by the UGC, the special advisory council for Scotland will not mean a great deal.

My hon. Friends have referred to the severe cuts suffered by Scottish universities, especially Stirling, Aberdeen and Dundee. I am sure that if my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) had managed to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he would have made it clear that Aberdeen university will continue to face difficulties unless the UGC and the Minister accept the plans that it has submitted. Dundee university in my constituency is also anxiously waiting to hear whether its plans will be accepted by the UGC so that it can start to plan not just for the year ahead but beyond that into the 1990s.

This has been a useful debate, but unless the Minister makes it clear that the proposed bodies will not be merely advisory but will be supported by real powers, the concessions will not mean much to universities in Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) made much of resources for adult education. Local education authority spending on adult education has been rising steadily. On the national level, the Government have shown a strong commitment.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How much?

Mr. Jackson: We are spending directly almost £30 million this financial year in support of initiatives for updating and for the adult unemployed. Our plans for next year include specific grant for expenditure by English local authorities totalling nearly £6 million for the expansion of educational guidance services for adults, for adult literacy schemes and for open learning opportunities. The hon. Gentleman confuses words in a Bill with the reality that resources are being provided on an extensive scale. We do not defer to the hon. Gentleman in any way in our commitment to adult education.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: I have no time to give way. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will have to wait for something further on that.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) mentioned an article in which my noble Friend Lord Beloff referred to "Gibbonian slothfulness". I found the adjective

strange in that context as Gibbon was certainly not slothful. He completed "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire".

The Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council will have to live within the means that are provided. Those means will be generous. Britain spends a higher proportion of its national product on education than any other western European country. The institutions that will come under the umbrella of the funding councils will have to live within the means that are provided. Hon. Members have mentioned the funding councils and the sub-committees for Scotland and Wales. I am grateful to the Opposition for the congratulations that they offered to the Government for our graceful concession about the establishment of the sub-committees. We always accepted that they would be set up.

It being Twelve o'clock MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [18 July] to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Lords amendment No. 266 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 292 disagreed to.

Amendment (c) made to the Bill in lieu of the Lords amendment last disagreed to, in page 191, line 23, at end insert—

'Scottish and Welsh Committees of Universities Funding Council

9A. The Universities Funding Council shall establish committees under paragraph 9 above for the purpose of advising the Council on the exercise of their functions in relation to universities in Scotland and universities in Wales, respectively.'.

Lords amendments Nos. 271 and 291 agreed to.

[Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 267 to 270, 273, 274 and 276 to 290 agreed to.

Further consideration of Lords amendments adjourned —*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

To be further considered this day.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION

That the draft International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (1988 General Capital Increase) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved. —*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

Paul Cleeland

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

12.2 am

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate this debate about a miscarriage of justice. I should like to draw the attention of the House and the Minister to the case of the brother of one of my constituents, Paul Cleeland, who was committed to prison 16 years ago after being convicted of shooting a friend, Mr. Terry Clarke. Mr. Clarke was shot dead while he was returning home with his wife in their Jaguar. Clarke was shot first in the back and then in the chest. His wife did not recognise the killer. She thought the killer was 5 ft 8 in and dark, whereas Paul Cleeland, the accused, was 6 ft and fair.

The case was fraught with irregularities from the outset. Paul Cleeland took the unusual step of dismissing his barrister who, in Cleeland's opinion, was not critical enough. He went on to conduct his own case. It was a complex case with many contradictions, and much of the evidence put forward by the police was discredited much later. The police attested at one stage through witnesses who were known criminals that they had sold the murder gun to Paul Cleeland. That later was conclusively refuted and it was established in fact that they had given it to the murdered man.

The whole complicated process went through a trial and a retrial at which Paul Cleeland was found guilty. That disturbed many people who had followed the case, as much of the evidence had never been fully pursued. These disturbing facts have had the attention of many people who followed the case, people such as newspaper reporters and politicians, and they have requested the Home Office to carry out a further review and redress what they believe was an unjust conviction. Until that is brought about, it means that a murderer walks free and has been free for 16 years while Paul Cleeland languishes in gaol.

The most recent representation of a lengthy period of representation was made by Paul Cleeland in petition form. Because of the limitations of time I shall put before the House a condensed version of that petition. On 11 March, 1986, PA Stanton, C3 division criminal department, informed B. M. Brimburgh and Co. that he was in receipt of a petition submitted by Jonathan Caplan, QC on behalf of Mr. Paul Cleeland. The petition was supported by written statements from an analytical consultant chemist, Dr. Grant, and a firearms specialist, J. G. J. Rothery. The brief of Mr. Rothery was to examine the murder gun, to establish the validity of the evidence concerning the shot pattern that was used to convict Paul Cleeland, and to comment on the shot penetration.

The tests were carried out in the presence of inspector Ratcliffe, Mr. J. McCafferty, Mr. R. Jennings, Mr. Bartlett and Mr. Stevens. Inspector Ratcliffe provided the dead man's jacket and the weapon which Mr. McCafferty, the trial forensic witness, claimed was the murder weapon. An examination of the jacket established that the shot pattern matched the wounds on the dead man's body. Internal measurements of the internal bores of the gun established that, when fired at the same distance, they would produce the same size pattern. The tests were carried out in a manner conducive to the circumstances that existed when the murder took place. At their conclusion Mr. Rothery

[Mr. John Hughes]

stated that if the firearm that he had tested had been fired 18 ft from the victim, as described by the prosecution forensic witness, Mr. McCafferty, far more damage would have been done to the car and to the back of the victim. The conclusion must therefore be drawn that, if the gun that he tested was the murder weapon, it was fired from a distance in excess of 38 ft. Alternatively, if the range was 18 ft, the gun that he tested was not the murder weapon. Mr. Rothery's statement was that if a frontal shot was fired at a distance of 18 ft, as attested by the forensic witness, Mr. McCafferty, material from the cartridge wadding would have remain affixed to the victim's jacket.

There is much conflicting evidence. Mr. Rothery's tests established conclusively that the firearm which was defined as the murder weapon by the prosecution in the trial was not used to kill the victim. That positive declaration was further endorsed by tests conducted by R. H. Jennings and Dr. Rufus Crompton, who Dr. Grant referred to in his statement. In that statement he draws attention to the alarming major discrepancies of 18 to 20 ft between the distances calculated by the prosecution forensic witness, Mr. McCafferty, and the distances calculated by the other three firearm specialists. Dr. Grant also refers to erroneous prison records, which were admitted by the prison authorities. There are five falsified records for which the Home Office has never given an explanation. This is important information. It is of such major significance as to warrant a reopening of the Paul Cleeland case.

There is more information which raises many doubts about the creditability of Paul Cleeland's conviction. It defines emphatically that a miscarriage of justice took place. As well as the tests on the guns having been contradictory, there was more police information which comes under the same classification. There is information that two days after the murder one police officer stated that he had delivered the murder weapon to a police laboratory. In contradiction, another officer swears that on the same day he had the murder weapon 30 miles away, taking photographs of it and cartridges. Both officers have stuck to their stories.

There is also the evidence of particles of lead on Paul Cleeland's clothes that was used to convict Paul Cleeland. That forensic evidence would not be accepted now. It has no credence as it failed to differentiate between environmental contamination and lead from firearm residue.

Many of those who have followed the case, and specialists referred to in Dr. Grant's report, have discredited the prosecution evidence. They have proven that Mr. McCafferty was not qualified to act as a prosecution forensic expert at Paul Cleeland's trial or any other trial as an expert for the department of public prosecution.

That important qualification was not attained through the generous committed co-operation of the prison authorities, the judiciary or the Home Office—quite the opposite. It would never have been brought to light but for the tenacity of Paul Cleeland and newspaper reporters who assisted him. Their endeavours eventually sparked an inquiry conducted by assistant chief constable Boothby whose report was finalised just prior to 1979. In normal circumstances, that report would have affirmed that Paul Cleeland was guilty or that his case should be reopened or, most importantly, it would have questioned the competency of the forensic witness Mr. McCafferty and most alarmingly bring into question the justice of every sentence passed at every trial at which McCafferty had given evidence.

That report would bring to light the fact that innocent people had been convicted unjustly. For example, James Hanratty was hanged for a murder which many people believe involved MI5. The suppression of the report in addition to covering up the incompetence of Mr. McCafferty also covers up the inadequacies of the judiciary and the police. It has the most serious implications because over time the people involved have moved on to more esteemed positions to make bigger errors. As serious as the consequences may be for those individuals, the report must be made available to the public in the interests of Paul Cleeland.

Paul Cleeland's circumstances demand publication as the injustice surrounding his trial has been compounded by his treatment in prison where he has fought against attempts to certify him as insane and attempts to administer drugs to him. He has been threatened like a political prisoner in Russia. He has been forced to fight the prison authorities at every step, otherwise he would have suffered the same fate as Des Warren, a member of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians, who, following the building workers' strike in 1973, was forced to take habit-forming drugs in prison—a tranquilising medication known to prisoners as the liquid cosh. That medication was addictive and left Des Warren with severe health problems for which the Home Office has accepted responsibility.

But for the strength of character of Paul Cleeland, that would have been his fate. He too would have finished up a malleable prisoner offering no problems to the prison authorities or threatening the stability of the police or judicial hierarchy who were involved in the trial and many, many more—even MI5.

The three Home Secretaries who many people have approached to make available the report on Paul Cleeland's case have failed to do so. Tonight I add my name to the list of people who have made that request. If people are locked up, they should be properly in prison for the crime that they have committed. In Paul Cleeland's case, many questions remain unanswered. If it is simply a question of guilt or innocence because of evidence, the last word has not been said in this case.

The circumstances surrounding the case demand that the report produced by Mr. Boothby be made available. The whole concept of justice demands that. There is no greater sin against humanity than the detention of an innocent man in gaol for 16 years. That sin against humanity is of a greater magnitude if anyone at ministerial level deliberately withholds a report that would prove an individual was innocent because publishing it would incriminate important people or Government Departments. Because of the irrefutable evidence——

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in relation to the prosecution case that he has outlined so well in his argument, there is a need for a judicial review of Paul Cleeland's case even though the Minister will almost certainly say that he cannot reveal the report to which the hon. Gentleman has referred? A judicial report would go over all the evidence. Mrs. Shirley Williams and I have pursued that aim for

some time. I have pursued it since 1979 and Mrs. Williams since before that, when she represented Hertford and Stevenage. We believe that that is the right way to proceed for justice to be seen to be done in the Paul Cleeland case.

Mr. Hughes: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention, and I agree that a judicial review would assist Paul Cleeland. Nevertheless, I still believe that the Home Secretary should make the Boothby report available. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who is in the Chamber, has also been asked by my constituent to support that representation.

Because of the irrefutable evidence and substantial fresh issues in this case, the question cannot be asked too many times: in the interests of justice, will the Home Secretary make the Boothby report available to enable a just assessment to be made and a judicial review to be undertaken?

12.15 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I have a relatively short time in which to reply to the complex case marshalled by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes). I agree with him that there can be nothing worse than the wrongful imprisonment of someone convicted of a crime that he or she did not commit. I wish to assure both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), to whose intervention I listened with great attention, that the Home Office exercises considerable care in examining alleged miscarriages of justice. That is a tradition that goes back to the days when we had the death penalty in this country, and when the greatest and most scrupulous care needed to be taken by all who advised the Home Secretary of the day.

I listened with considerable care to everything that was said by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East, and I shall read and carefully reflect upon his remarks, as I shall reflect on my hon. Friend's suggestion of a judicial review, but I thought that the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East was wrong to suggest that any prisoner in this country is treated like a political prisoner in Russia. That does not help the hon. Gentleman's case, and when he reads his speech in *Hansard* tomorrow he may reflect that that remark does not help his case.

There are a number of threads to this complex case, which has been subject to continuous public scrutiny by a number of former and present hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford, who has done so much in this case.

It may be best if I begin by summarising the basic facts. Mr. Cleeland was convicted at St. Alban's Crown court on 25 June 1973 of the murder of Terence Clarke, for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment. That was on a second trial, when the jury's verdict was unanimous. Mr. Cleeland subsequently applied to the Court of Appeal for leave to appeal against his conviction. That application was refused on 26 February 1976.

It is important that the circumstances of the offence are before the House tonight. Mr. and Mrs. Clarke were returning home with a friend in the early hours of the morning of 5 November 1972, in Stevenage. As Mr. Clarke got out of his car, he was fired at twice and fatally wounded by a man with a shotgun, who had presumably lain in wait for him. Neither Mrs. Clarke nor the car passenger was able to identify the assailant, but at the scene police found distinctive wadding of a kind used in a particular make of cartridge known as Blue Rival. I am advised that the wadding used is particularly distinctive and allows clear identification.

Later that day, 5 November 1972, in the same area children found a shotgun containing two expended cartridges and, lying nearby, a discarded box of unused Blue Rival cartridges. Later, tests carried out by Mr. McCafferty of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory established that the Blue Rival cartridges, when fired from the abandoned shotgun found by the children, produce firemarks matching those on the spent cartridges found with it. Those were important findings. Further police inquiries produced a number of witnesses whose evidence linked Mr. Cleeland with the acquisition of both the shotgun and the cartridges shortly before the murder took place. The forensic evidence was formidable.

Mr. Cleeland's defence at his trial was based on an alibi produced by his wife for the night in question, on evidence from another ballistics expert and on allegations against police officers concerned with the case and against prosecution witnesses, some of whom had criminal records —as both prosecution and defence witnesses sometimes have. In effect, the defence amounted to an allegation of conspiracy, probably by quite a large number of people, against Mr. Cleeland.

It was not for Ministers of the day to decide on the facts of the case, any more than it would be if Mr. Cleeland were coming to trial now in a similar case. It was for the jury to decide, on the evidence presented by the prosecution and the defence, whether the charge against Mr. Cleeland was proved. I think it is fair to say that, by their verdict, the one notion that they did reject was the notion of any kind of conspiracy mounted against Mr. Cleeland by the authorities, to which, on the face of it, it seems very hard to give credence.

Quite properly, from his point of view, Mr. Cleeland applied for leave to appeal against his conviction. The main element in his case was the evidence of a Mr. Michael Nash. Mr. Nash had for some time occupied a cell near Mr. Cleeland's at Stevenage police station, where the prosecution alleged that Mr. Cleeland had an incriminating conversation with a fellow prisoner. Mr. Cleeland maintained that the conversation never took place, and Mr. Nash supported him.

It later came to light that a visit by a Mr. Russell to Mr. Cleeland in Wandworth prison had been wrongly recorded there as a meeting between Mr. Cleeland and Mr. Nash. That error, if left unremedied, would have fostered the suspicion that the two men had colluded over the evidence to be given at the appeal hearing. However, the Home Office prison department eventually established that mistakes had been made and corrected Mr. Cleeland's record accordingly. The Criminal Appeal Office was informed by the Home Office by letter on 8 January 1976 of what had occurred, and was left in no doubt that the Home Office accepted that there had been no prison visit to Mr. Cleeland by Mr. Nash.

In rejecting Mr. Nash's evidence, the Court of Appeal referred to an attempt—I quote from the judgment—by "cunning criminals getting together to concoct a specious if, on the face of it, credible story to discredit the police." In reaching that conclusion, the court took account of Mr. Nash's credibility as a witness and of the circumstances in which he came to be giving his evidence. The court made it clear that the error disclosed in the Home Office letter

[Mr. John Patten]

had no bearing on the outcome of Mr. Cleeland's appeal. It was accepted that the two men had not met face to face in Wandsworth prison. The court held—I think that this is important, because of the slight mystique of conspiracy that still surrounds the case—that

"there was not a shred of evidence that either the Home Office or Prison Department were conspiring with the police."

Meanwile, in July 1975 Mr. Cleeland made a complaint to the police alleging perjury by police officers concerned with his case. Subsequently he raised further complaints, which led to the setting up of an inquiry under section 49 of the Police Act 1964. At the request of the chief constable of Hertfordshire, the investigation into Mr. Cleeland's complaints was conducted by the then assistant chief constable of Northamptonshire, Mr. Boothby. After a lengthy investigation, during which the police were allowed full access to Mr. Cleeland's prison records, Mr. Boothby produced a thorough and extensive report, on the basis of which the Director of Public Prosecutions decided in November 1979 that there was no evidence to justify any criminal proceedings against any person named in the report.

Subsequently the report was passed to the Home Office to see whether it revealed any matters that might have affected the safety of Mr. Cleeland's conviction. It was concluded that there would be no justification in recommending any interference with the decision of the courts in his case.

The release of the police report has been raised by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East, and I dare say the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who is also in the Chamber, supports his hon. Friend, in view of his interest in the case. It is a long-established principle that has effectively been accepted not just by successive Home Secretaries in this Administration but by successive Home Secretaries and Governments that police reports are confidential and are not made public—and never have been—either in whole or in part. The maintenance of that principle is crucial in ensuring full and frank communication between police officers themselves and between chief officers of police and the Home Secretary of the day. Many reports of investigations conducted by the police contain information that should not be disclosed freely, such as allegations and statements made to the police and facts disclosed in the course of an investigation that could be prejudicial to named persons. Such information always has been treated as confidential, partly on the ground that nobody should have a crime publicly imputed to him, except in court. That is what the release of many police reports of all sorts would consistently do. It is also treated as confidential partly to preserve the confidentiality of the investigations.

The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford may rest assured that both my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and the then Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), have carefully considered Mr. Boothby's report and can find nothing in its conclusions to suggest that it provides evidence that is supportive of Mr. Cleeland's claims. If it had, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department would not have hesitated to refer the case to the Court of Appeal, as he has done on other occasions.

Whatever might be said by those who feel that Mr. Cleeland has been wrongfully convicted, I can say that since his appeal was dismissed by the Court of Appeal hardly a year has passed, apart from the last 12 months, without some consideration having been given to the case. I understand that the interest of the former Member for Hertford and Stortford, Mrs. Shirley Williams, dates from 1974, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford, who is here, has pursued the case since he succeeded Mrs. Williams in 1979 as the Member of Parliament for the constituency. Both have discussed the case with successive Home Office Ministers, and over the years there has been considerable correspondence between the parties.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East has read the report of the debate in the House on 29 April 1982. There have been representations from solicitors acting on Mr. Cleeland's behalf and from Mr. Cleeland himself. On each occasion detailed and careful consideration has been given to the case as a whole and to the individual points that were raised. Of course, my right hon. Friend and I will reflect on the detailed points made by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East in exactly the same way.

There has not at any stage been any delay in the way in which the examination has been carried out. Mr. Cleeland's allegations have been given the most exhaustive consideration and nothing so far has come to light to support his claim that his conviction resulted from perjury, collusion or faults in the forensic evidence to which the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East has referred.

The exhaustive nature of the considerations is demonstrated by a long and detailed memorandum prepared by Home Office officials last year and sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford at that time. I shall certainly make a copy available to the hon. Members for Coventry, North-East and for Coventry, South-East, and I shall also place a copy in the Library of the House, because it is an important document.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is always ready to make a reference under section 17 to the Court of Appeal when he considers that there are grounds for doing so. The House will know that my right hon. Friend has not hesitated to do so in notable cases in the past year or so, but none of the matters raised so far tonight, including those put so clearly and in such detail by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East, seem to me at this stage to provide grounds for departing from the view already taken by my right hon. Friend about this case.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

IMPERIAL COLLEGE BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

BRITISH WATERWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords]*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

HARWICH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Commerce and Industry)

2. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the part which education authorities are playing in the promotion of links between schools and commerce and industry.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The technical and vocational education initiative, which will be operating in all local education authorities in England and Wales from this September, makes the forging of links between education and local industry a requirement of its projects. In addition, education authorities are now supporting initiatives on many fronts, such as the development of compacts and the secondment of head teachers into industry. All these help to bring the worlds of education and industry closer together and foster mutual understanding.

Mr. Favell: As there will be 1 million fewer school leavers in 1995, will my hon. Friend continue to impress on go-ahead firms the importance of linking with schools? The important thing to note is that the firms involved are go-ahead, because laggards do not link, but enthusiasts do. Does she agree that there should not be endless meetings at town halls but direct links with schools, where good could be done?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Today we have published a booklet entitled "Education and Industry: Partners for the Future", which will encourage industry and commerce to get together closely with local education authorities and schools to ensure that the links are fostered. There is not much point in industry making links with local authorities unless the authorities are themselves clear about the way in which they wish to proceed with the partnerships. Therefore, it is important that local education authorities should have meetings and have their policies clearly defined before industry and commerce become involved.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What about the links between commerce and schools in East Sussex, where the local Conservative-controlled county council lost £237,000 of ratepayers' money in a squalid little company that was set up? It lost public money. What are the Government going to do about that? Do they intend to intervene and have some form of inquiry into what happened?

Mrs. Rumbold: With respect to the hon. Member I suggest that he pursues the interests of his own constituency. The matter that he has raised has absolutely nothing to do with local education authorities and links with industry.

Mr. Pawsey: To return to the subject raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), which is genuinely important, what action will be taken to increase the number of business men serving on school governing bodies? Has my hon. Friend had any contact with the Confederation of British Industry and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to persuade those organisations to get their members to serve on governing bodies?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend raises a most important matter, because at the beginning of the next school year we shall expect to see co-opted members from business and industry serving on our school governing bodies. We have contacted both the CBI and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and have been holding regional as well as national meetings with them to encourage them to put their members forward as governors of both primary and secondary schools.

Education Reform Bill

3. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the procedures to be used for appointments to bodies to be established under the terms of the Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The Bill itself specifies the range of professional expertise and experience to be included in appointments to most of the new bodies, and appointments are made on that basis.

Mr. Buckley: In the light of the article that appeared in *The Observer* on 3 July, what criteria are used by the Department for appointment to the bodies held, and is membership of those bodies politically vetted by 10 Downing street?

Mr. Baker: On the latter question, I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is none whatsoever. I have made many public appointments to the bodies set up in the shadow of the Bill and to many other educational councils, including the National Curriculum Council, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, research councils

and four curriculum working groups. As far as I am aware, there has been no criticism of partiality, lack of balance or lack of fairness in any of those appointments.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that he is taking a positive step for the future because, in the past, any fool, crank or nanny could get on a board of governors and contribute absolutely nothing to the well-being and education of our children?

Mr. Baker: I do not appoint governors, but I am glad that more people are coming forward to become governors. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I very carefully go through the curriculum vitae of applicants for appointments to various bodies, and in some cases we also interview them.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Given that a Scottish sub-committee of the Universities Funding Council is to be established, does the Secretary of State agree that individuals appointed to that body should have the experience and expertise of having gone through a Scottish university and should have graduated from such a university, rather than from universities in other parts of the country?

Mr. Baker: I would not necessarily agree with that. Many good Scots have gone to English universities and many good English people have gone to Scottish universities. Last night the House agreed that there would be a Scottish and a Welsh sub-committee of the UFC. I also intend to appoint people with Scottish experience to the main body of the UFC.

Mr. Fatchett: Is it not now clear that, in relation to testing and appointments, the Prime Minister's Office and, in particular, the unelected and unaccountable Professor Griffiths, are in charge of education policy? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the proposed appointments of John Harvey-Jones and Peter Mortimore were vetoed by the Prime Minister and Professor Griffiths? Is it not now also clear that the criteria used for appointments are not educational, but political? Does he agree that the whole approach is political rather than educational?

Mr. Baker: Professor Griffiths is an adviser to the Prime Minister, and I am grateful for the support that he gives to the policies that I bring forward. All my appointments are announced publicly. As regards the names that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, I refer him to the written reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), when she said:

"It is not the practice to comment further on public appointments of this kind.—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. *234*.]

That is mainly in the interests of the named persons.

Student Grants

4. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the value in real terms of the maximum student grant, expressed as a percentage of the 1978-79 maximum grant.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The basic rate of grant payable to students studying outside London is worth 86 per cent. of the corresponding rate in 1978-79.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister accept that the cut in students' living standards is even greater than his figures suggest if we take into account the cuts in students' social security benefits, housing benefit and of course the dreaded poll tax, which is just around the corner? Therefore, will the Minister take immediate steps to restore the student grant to at least the purchasing power that it had in 1978-79, when the Labour party was in power, instead of toying with the idea of either partially or completely scrapping the grant system and replacing it with a student loan scheme? That would prohibit many students from lower-income families from going on to higher education.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is obviously reflecting deeply on this subject and he might like to consider that since 1979, in spite of, or in line with, the fall in the value of the grant, participation in higher education has increased by 12·9 per cent. and that the number of students in higher education has increased by 18·9 per cent.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give the House some information on how our grants compare with those of other countries? Are they more, or less, generous?

Mr. Jackson: The proportion of the national product that is spent on higher education in Britain is the highest in the Western world. My information is that our grant system is almost certainly the most generous and certainly the most extensive in the Western world.

Ms. Armstrong: Many people are somewhat concerned at the Minister's logic when he says that the reason why not enough women and people from lower social classes —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Armstrong: —are getting into higher education is that we are paying them too much. Will he ensure in any review—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Conservative Members are not listening——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a serious matter.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Minister ensure that any review that he carries out will make sure that people from low income families whom he has committed himself to getting into higher education will have a greater, not a lesser, opportunity?

Mr. Jackson: We share the hon. Lady's concern with the widening of opportunity for access to higher education. That will continue to be an important theme for us in the review. The key determinant of access to and opportunity for higher education seems to be the numbers who come into the system. We have recently had the enrolments and the fact is that the Government have now achieved their target of 50,000 additional places by 1990 —and we have done so by 1988.

Mr. Marlow: As my hon. Friend knows well, this House decreed many years ago that the age of majority and independence for young people should be 18. It is therefore totally inappropriate, under those circumstances, that the grant given to individual students depends in any respect on the wealth or otherwise of their parents.

Before someone else does it—I have asked my hon. Friend to do this before—will he test this thesis before the European Court of Human Rights?

Mr. Jackson: We are considering the future of parental contribution to student maintenance in the context of our review. Every system that we have studied involves some element of family or parental obligation. I believe that the family is a vital institution. It is reasonable to expect parents to make some contribution to the support of their student children.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: What is so good about student loans if the Cabinet is vetoing them? Will the Minister confirm that there are now storm warnings in the Department of Education and Science in case No. 10 leaks the student loan document? Why has he now abandoned his unattributable briefings to the press about the virtue of student loans? Will he admit that the real losers are not Ministers' reputations but students, the real value of whose student grants has dramatically fallen over the past 10 years? Will he also admit that there should now be an immediate increase in the level of student support, for the benefit of students and the country?

Mr. Jackson: As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has a later question on that point we should not steal his thunder.

City Technology Colleges

5. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement about the financing of city technology colleges.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Total planned expenditure on the city technology colleges programme over the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 is £90 million, which includes both capital and recurrent costs. To date more than £25 million has been pledged by sponsors towards the capital costs of establishing CTCs. That is a quite unprecedented response to an education initiative.

Mr. Banks: If I were a Minister I would wait until I had the money in my hands—[HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman is not."] I shall be one day.

What has happened to the pledge that the right hon. Gentleman made at the Tory party conference in 1986 to set up 20 city technology colleges? Only two have been announced, mostly paid for by the taxpayer, not by business men. Why does the Secretary of State not come to the Dispatch Box and tell the truth for once? The CTCs are a fraud and a failure and owe far more to the ideology of the Conservative party than to the educational needs of our students.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman starts with the improbability of ever being a Minister and moves to the implausibility of not knowing the facts of the case. Seven CTCs have already been announced. I understand that proposals might come forward for one in Docklands. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that so much of his career has been dedicated to failure and decline that he cannot be associated with anything like CTCs, which will succeed and expand.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will not CTCs add greatly to the diversity of provision in our educational system? Has not such diversity of provision always been the strength of our education? Will my right hon. Friend seek to diversify provision within CTCs, and will he confirm that it is difficult to get them established in poor areas, where poor children would benefit from them, because Labour local authorities are so obstructive?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. There will be a network of at least 20 CTCs—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] Details of several more will be published later this year. I assure the House that they will be there. I have already said that over £25 million has been committed by private sponsors. One of the greatest problems is, as my hon. Friend said, the reluctance of Labour authorities, for political and dogmatic reasons, to provide sites.

Mr. Straw: As the Secretary of State has now announced a £4 million increase in the amont that is to be spent, to £90 million over three years, has he no sense of shame at the scale of the taxpayer-funded bail out for his lame duck CTC policy? What moral or political principle justifies his spending more next year on a few CTCs for a few hundred children than on the introduction of a national curriculum for 7 million of our children in the state sector?

Mr. Baker: That is an absurd statement, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. One has to add to the cost of the national curriculum not only the £65 million in the Education Reform Bill, but the ESG money of £75 million, the local training grants for teachers of £60 million or £70 million and also, on the basis that he uses, the cost of running primary and secondary schools. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that he is worried and scared that this will be a highly popular and successful programme.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is this not good news, coupled with the recent news on the curriculum of the CTCs, positive compared to the continual whining and whingeing of the Opposition about these matters? We want more encouragement for CTCs, not only from the Government, but from industry, because this is an idea that all of us who believe in variety in education thoroughly support and want to see succeed.

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend, and later today the House will be asked to approve a Lords amendment to the Education Reform Bill to extend the concept of CTCs to involve technology and the arts. That is a popular move. The Opposition do not like CTCs because they will end the monopoly of public free education, which the Labour party is pledged to support.

Pen Top Safety

6. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has received to his circular concerning pen top safety sent to all local education authorities; and whether he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) for his continued interest in this matter. The response to our circular has been good.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that the parents of 11-year old Billy Walker, the Leicester boy who died after swallowing a pen top, as too many other children have

done, have prepared a petition with several thousand signatures which I shall present to the House on Friday? Therefore, when he says that there has been a good response to the circular, they will wish to know what that response has been and what chance there is of its resulting in no more unnecessary deaths from this cause.

Mr. Dunn: I was not aware of the petition, but I note the hon. and learned Gentleman's point. I can tell him that 32 local education authorities have sent to the Department copies of guidance material that they have issued. A number of authorities have issued to their schools pens with ventilated tops, which carry less risk of asphyxiation if swallowed. I undertake to keep the problem under review.

Mr. Greg Knight: What is the position in regard to the British standard, and when will it be available?

Mr. Dunn: I understand from the British Standards Institution that the standard will be published in December this year. It is my intention to write again to local education authorities when the new British standard becomes available.

University Restructuring

7. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made by British universities with the targeted programme of restructuring, following his announcement in November 1987 of additional funds for this purpose.

Mr. Jackson: The £250 million allocated for the three-year restructuring programme is being administered by the UGC. It has already announced an improved scheme for reimbursing premature retirement costs. Other aspects will be firmed up in the light of the committee's analysis of universities' latest academic plans and financial forecasts.

Mr. Shersby: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that, as a result of the programme, universities will be able to bring their expenditure and income into balance by the end of the public expenditure survey in 1990-91?

Mr. Jackson: It is the intention of the restructuring programme that that should be achieved.

Mr. John Evans: Has the Minister seen the statement by the chairman of the vice-chancellors' committee that 10 universities are likely to lose their science facility because of a shortage of funds and escalating costs? One of the universities will be Salford. Is he aware that the loss will be greeted with dismay throughout the north-west? Will he ensure that sufficient funds are made available for the 10 universities, and especially Salford, to retain their science facility?

Mr. Jackson: I think that the hon. Gentleman is misinterpreting the statement of the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The chairman said that he believed that there was a good case on scientific grounds for a concentration of the resources available for research in the universities, which might reduce the number of science departments in universities. That is his personal view, and it is one that should command respect.

Rating Reform

8. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make additional grants to Scottish universities in the current year to enable them to meet the requirement being placed upon them to provide details on their students to community charge registration officers.

Mr. Jackson: No, Sir. It is not expected that the community charge will place a significant additional administrative burden on universities.

Mr. McAllion: The real cost will be the damage that is done to the relationship between Scottish universities and their students. Does the Minister agree with the protest by Edinburgh university court, and its expression of grave concern at being forced to abandon its long-term commitment to treat students' addresses and other personal information in confidence? Will he support the university's offer to the Scottish Office merely to verify student status to poll tax registration officers, thereby removing the requirement on universities in Scotland seriously to infringe the civil liberties of their students?

Mr. Jackson: I am sure that universities will wish to co-operate in enforcing the law. If students are to be able to claim the 80 per cent. rebate that they are being offered, it will be necessary for them to have a certificate to make that claim.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that money would be available for this and other purposes if funds from the taxpayer were not being handed over to the National Union of Students, without the consent of the students concerned?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend knows that the issue of students' unions is under review by the Government. I do not want to anticipate the conclusions of that review.

Mr. Buchan: Is the Minister aware that universities are keen on obeying the law, but are not keen on becoming part of the police system that has been adopted by the Government, with the invasion of privacy that that involves? The relationship between students and universities will be destroyed, and the universities are saying that they want no part of that. Will he listen to them?

Mr. Jackson: There is no invasion of privacy involved. We are talking of information that is necessary to enable a tax for local services to be collected. I am sure that the universities will wish to co-operate in that.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Scottish universities are already funded generously, and that they gain more money than the proportion of the Scottish population would justify?

Mr. Jackson: We have a national system of higher education, and by that I mean British national. I am not aware of the statistics that my hon. Friend brings forward in respect of one part of the country.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that some record might wisely be kept, especially if Northern Ireland students and their parents are subject to double taxation? The parents will be paying rates according to the decision

of the Government, and when their children come to England or Scotland they will have to pay the community charge.

Mr. Jackson: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's argument. It is an important one and we shall be taking it up in the context of the student support review.

"Strategy for the Science Base"

9. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what responses he has received to the consultative document, "Strategy for the Science Base".

Mr. Jackson: We have received some 260 responses to the Advisory Board for the Research Council's consultative document, "A Strategy for the Science Base". There seems to be widespread support for most of the board's recommendations.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister realise that because he hides behind the vice-chancellors while he cuts the science budget, because he dithers while the research councils are cut and because he has surrendered key areas of research to other departments, the scientific community is losing faith in him and the Government? Or is it that he does not have the guts to meet scientists after such a long time because he has nothing to offer?

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State and I have many meetings with scientists—indeed, I spend about a day a week visiting institutions up and down the country, where I meet scientists and have amicable discussions with them. The hon. Gentleman's premise is wrong. There has been no cut. There has been an increase of 6·2 per cent. this year in the funds that are provided for basic science in this country, and since 1979 there has been an increase in real terms of 15 per cent.

Mr. Dalyell: Among the recommendations for which there is not support, is there a recommendation for premature retirement, and what are the costs of premature retirement that the Minister has in his brief?

Mr. Jackson: I am not sure about the category to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I shall have to discuss that with him to give him the information that he wants.

There is general support in the scientific community for the basic philosophy of the ABRC proposals, which envisage an added emphasis on selectivity and concentration in the deployment of science resources.

Dr. Bray: I am sorry that there seems to be no interest in science strategy from Conservative Members. Is it the Government's policy both to withdraw support from near market research in the Department of Trade and Industry, and for the Department of Education and Science to encourage industrially relevant research? If so, when will the Government sort out their strategy and reply to the ABRC document?

Mr. Jackson: The Government are considering their response to the ABRC document, which addresses a large, complex and important subject. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Government are actively reviewing near market research by Government Departments, and he is also right to think that the Government are anxious that the considerations of exploitability and economic return on basic and strategic science should be taken into account—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I ask the House to pay attention to the question.

City Technology Colleges

10. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the number of city technology colleges which could be established if redundant school premises were made available by local education authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We plan to set up 20 city technology colleges and so far £25 million has been raised by private sponsors. But some local education authorities, for dogmatic political reasons, refuse to co-operate. That is their loss.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that CTCs do much good for the children of our country and are welcomed by Conservative Members? We want even more CTCs to be created. Will my right hon. Frend tell the House what action he will take to put pressure on local authorities that obstruct Government legislation on this issue?

Mr. Baker: Many Conservative-controlled authorities realise the advantages of CTCs and are co-operating in the programme. No Labour authority has done so yet, but they will come round to it, in two or three years' time.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister described the reason for refusing to co-operate over CTCs as political. Would he include the Tory-controlled borough of Trafford, which has just withdrawn its proposal to have a CTC on the site of the former Stretford boys' grammar school? Does he accept that the reason for that is that it was realised how the provision of education in north Trafford would be damaged? Will he guarantee that neither a CTC nor an arts tech will be imposed on north Trafford?

Mr. Baker: I understand that proposals are being prepared for me that apply to the reorganisation of the whole of secondary education in Trafford and that any consideration of a CTC has been put on one side until all secondary education there has been reorganised. I am sure that the Greater Manchester area will benefit from at least one CTC, if not two.

Mr. Bowis: If the Inner London education authority continues its dog in the manger attitude to the use of surplus premises for CTCs, will my right hon. Friend enable the London Residuary Body to take that into account in its terms of reference for the disposal of such properties after it succeeds the ILEA?

Mr. Baker: I do not expect ILEA to come forward with any of its surplus property for a CTC; that would be wishful thinking. However, when responsibility is transferred to the London boroughs in April 1990, some may come forward with proposals because they, too, will see the advantages.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that the chairman of the CTC Trust, Cyril Taylor, has criticised the Department of Education and Science and said that it has "woefully underestimated" the cost of building and refurbishing

redundant schools? Did the Department not similarly underestimate the funds that would be forthcoming from private employers, nearly all of them refused to give money, and is not the whole thing now a complete mess?

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman is present for the debate on CTCs in about an hour's time, I shall point out to him the large number of companies—national names—that have supported the CTCs because they recognise the enormous success of the programme. I can confirm that no other education initiative has raised as much money as the CTC initiative has raised over the past 18 months. The sum is £25 million and it will increase to £30 million in the next few months.

Mr. Madel: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is perfectly open to local education authorities to use surplus school places for adult or further education rather than going for clumsy closure plans?

Mr. Baker: I understand what lies behind my hon. Friend's question and I can only reply to him as I replied to him in the debate last night.

Qualified Teacher Status

11. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consultation document "Qualified Teacher Status"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has asked that responses to this consultation document be sent to the Department by 14 October. Some 24 responses have so far been received, mainly from individuals.

Mr. Steinberg: The 1984 Department of Education and Science circular dealing with the accreditation of teachers stated that teachers should have two years of quality training. In the new document we find the suggestion of a qualification only to a standard above A-level. Given that it was agreed in 1984 that specialised training was needed for teachers, why, in 1988, do we no longer need specialised teacher training? Is it because the licensed teachers will not be qualified and will fail to raise—indeed, will lower—the standard of education?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, Sir. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman does not understand the present position as regards teacher qualification, let alone our proposals. The standard route in teacher training is for there to be graduate entry and a year's initial teacher-training. For the non-standard courses there are already five routes for people who are not graduates. Under our proposals, those entering by two of those routes will have to undergo at least two years of teacher training before they can be qualified as teachers—a much more rigorous requirement. Otherwise, they will simply remain as licensed teachers.

Mr. Hayward: Did not at least one qualified teacher prove that the status of teachers does not need enhancing? Did she not maintain her level-headedness while those around her, particularly her husband, were losing their heads in Zimbabwe?

Mrs. Rumbold: Perhaps some qualified teachers need in-service training in geography and in field trips before visiting the river basins of Africa, such as those of the Limpopo and the Zamebezi. I am glad that a certain lady did not need those qualifications.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is it not the case that, thanks to the Government's neglect and demoralisation of the teaching profession, there will be the most severe shortage, worse even that at present, in science, mathematics, craft, design and technology and modern foreign language teaching? How can the imposition of unqualified teachers off the streets do anything but lower education standards even further?

Mrs. Rumbold: Clearly, the hon. Lady has not been listening. We are talking not about the imposition of unqualified teachers but about a qualified teacher force of 90 per cent. of people who have been through our universities and polytechnics, plus having had a year's good initial teacher training. Those who come in through the other routes will be subjected to a much more rigorous test. Those who are currently in the system and who have not been through initial teacher training or any sort of training are already in our schools and cannot be subjected to the training that we are planning for the new group.

Local Education Authorities

12. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements exist for monitoring the efficiency of local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate, through their detailed work in auditing and inspection respectively, play a central part in monitoring the efficiency of local education authorities. In addition, the Government set efficiency targets in critical areas such as staffing ratios and the removal of surplus school accommodation and monitor local authority performance in relation to those targets.

Mr. Batiste: Is my hon. Friend aware of the growing practice in some Labour-controlled education authorities of allowing councillors to usurp the day-to-day functions of full-time officials? Does that not cause great damage to the efficient running of education in many parts of the country, such as in Leeds at this time? Will my hon. Friend ask for an efficiency audit of the performance of Leeds education authority?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is deplorable that locally elected members should usurp the position of the professional officers and not take their advice when they are dealing with matters as serious as education. I hope that my hon. Friend will make that clear to the electorate at the local elections so that they ensure that the right sort of people are elected as councillors, who will take professional advice when it comes to such matters as education.

Mr. Cryer: When the Department of Education and Science examines the efficiency of a city such as Bradford, will it be taken into account that because of the parsimony of the Government Bradford has at least 500 temporary classrooms, which causes enormous difficulties for teachers in maintaining reasonable standards? If the DES is concerned about standards of teaching, why does it not

give more money to allow proper, permanent extensions to schools in Bradford, to get rid of the shanty-town classrooms that disfigure too many schools?

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1985-86 local education authorities spent £280 million on the repair and maintenance of primary and secondary school buildings. In 1986-87 the sum had risen to £320 million, an increase in cash terms of 14 per cent. Those amounts represent average expenditure per school of £11,750 in 1985-86 and £13,500 in 1986-87. I am sure that in Bradford those amounts will have been spent according to the priorities of the local education authority.

Student Finance

13. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now intends to publish his report on student finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government will publish their proposals for the future of student support in a White Paper before the end of the year.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. Does he agree that both economic principles and international experience point overwhelmingly to the advantages of a combined loan and grant system? Will that be the basis of the Government's response?

Mr. Jackson: We have looked at the possibility of a top-up loan system, as exists in many other parts of the world. That will be covered in the White Paper that we shall publish before the end of the year.

Mr. Straw: It has been two years since the review was established, and repeatedly, in leaks and answers to parliamentary questions, the Minister and the Secretary of State have said that the review would be published this month. Why the delay?

Mr. Jackson: It is a complex subject. When one grasps the nettle, it is advisable to grasp it firmly. It is this Government's intention to grasp that nettle firmly in due course.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

14. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average secondary pupil-teacher ratio in 1987-88; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79.

Mr. Dunn: The average pupil-teacher ratio for maintained secondary schools in England for 1987-88 is not yet available. The average pupil-teacher ratio in 1986-87 was 15·6:1. That was an improvement on 1978-79, when the average pupil-teacher ratio in maintained secondary schools was 16·7:1.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that those excellent figures give the lie to Labour claims that education has been cut? Will he confirm that the Government's expenditure plans will lead to a further reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio?

Mr. Dunn: Yes. I go a stage further and say that the Government have captured the high ground in the education debate. We shall continue to dictate the terms for that debate for the remainder of this century and well into the 21st. The last time that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) made an original statement was when the midwife thumped him at birth. The only trouble is that she did not thump him hard enough.

Pupil Costs

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools *(a)* in England as a whole and *(b)* in Staffordshire, in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities in England spent an average of £1,035 per secondary pupil in 1978-79 and £1,340 per secondary pupil in 1986-87 at 1986-87 prices. The comparable figures for Staffordshire are £1,040 and £1,255.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures show a satisfactory improvement in funding in Staffordshire and in the country at large since the Government have been in power?

Mr. Dunn: Yes. The Government's strong record is supported by other objective measures. In January 1987 the pupil-teacher ratio was 17·3:1, compared with 18·9:1 in January 1979. Average class sizes in primary and secondary schools have been improving, and there are many fewer classes today with more than 30 pupils.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Marland: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend find time to reflect on the recent misery inflicted on holidaymakers at our airports? Bearing in mind the fact that many holidaymakers have saved for and looked forward to their holidays for the entire year, will my right hon. Friend try to end this chaos, meet the Civil Aviation Authority and ensure that incompetent heads roll?

The Prime Minister: I am indeed aware and concerned about the delays to holidaymakers, which, in large measure, have been due to actions in other countries. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is meeting the chairman of the CAA today to discuss progress in improving the flow control system, and he has already amended the air traffic distribution rules to allow some limited use of Heathrow by chartered flights. I assure my hon. Friend that finance has not been a constraint on past investment. About £250 million worth of investment is planned for the next five years.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that the United Nations calculates that since 1981 in the front-line states nearly 700,000 children have died, nearly 200,000 children have been orphaned and millions more suffer

hunger directly because of the war being conducted by South Africa against those front-line states? Against that background, will the Prime Minister increase support to the front-line states and ensure that that is reinforced by using strong sanctions against the source of the suffering and the slaughter—the apartheid regime of South Africa?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will perhaps agree that if there were ever to be comprehensive sanctions against South Africa the number of people who would suffer, including children, would be infinitely greater. Calculations have been made about the number of children who would be affected. We give considerable help to the front-line states, especially £50 million to Mozambique, which, perhaps, suffers most of all, and we have given special additional help to build pathways and roadways so that people need not take their goods through South Africa, but have other routes to the ports.

Mr. Kinnock: The aid given is welcomed, even though over six years it was cut by the Government by 40 per cent. Is the Prime Minister aware that every community, church, trade union, and township organisation in South Africa that is representative of the majority of people continually ask for sanctions—*[Interruption.]*—that the Commonwealth asks for sanctions and that the leadership of the front-line states calls for sanctions? Does the Prime Minister really think that she knows more about what needs to be done than those who live daily with apartheid and its aggression?

The Prime Minister: Although the right hon. Gentleman goes on about sanctions here in Westminster, by virtue of his recent visit he will know that the front-line states do not themselves apply sanctions, because they are aware of the devastating effect that they would have on their own economies and on their own peoples, as well as on the black people of South Africa. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to see the calculations made by Operation Hunger in South Africa, supported by the private sector—but which we do a great deal to help—he will know that the effect of comprehensive sanctions would vastly increase the number of starving children to such an extent that it is doubtful whether they could be looked after.

Mr. Kinnock: The vulnerability of the front-line states is no excuse for inaction by the Government. Is it not clear that, while giving support to the front-line states is right, without it being supported by sanctions against apartheid the Prime Minister earns the reputation of being the appeaser of the apartheid regime that makes war on the front-line states and kills their children?

The Prime Minister: On the contrary, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, we completely and utterly condemn apartheid. A special sum of some £20 million is allocated to black South Africans to provide them with more education than they would otherwise have. I totally disagree with the right hon. Gentleman about sanctions, as did the previous Labour Government. Unlike him, I am not prepared to stand here comfortably in the House and impose starvation and poverty on millions and millions of black South Africans and black children. He is prepared to do that.

Mr. Colvin: Further to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), will she consider again the possibility of night movements of aircraft from airports in the south-east —[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—especially for aircraft in the NNC category, which are the new, quieter, wide-bodied jets, for a test period of 12 months? Will she use her power in Europe to press for a pan-European air traffic control system, backed by strictly enforced no-strike agreements with air traffic controllers?

The Prime Minister: Night restrictions at Gatwick allow some flexibility to help charter flights. When my right hon. Friend saw representatives of the airlines this morning he noted that they did not raise the question of night restrictions, because the flexibility already allowed there does not alter the commitment to improving the noise climate around airports. As my hon. Friend knows, internationally the responsibility for the co-ordination of air traffic control services in Europe rests with the European air navigation planning group within the International Civil Aviation Organisation, and everything possible is being done to step up that co-ordination. I agree with him that it would be a very good thing, especially for people in Europe, if there were no-strike agreements with air traffic controllers.

Q2. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Prime Minister believe that she knows better than the African people what is good for them? Does she not realise that this is not only a question of sense, but a question of morality? Has she read the report of the international conference at Harare about the treatment, imprisonment and killing of children in South Africa? Has the time not come for her to associate herself with some of the finest leaders in the world and to say, "Enough is enough. We shall not tolerate a country that declares war on its own people. We want sanctions now."?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there is a great difference between what the black South African states say and what they do. They urge comprehensive sanctions, but they do not themselves impose—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: They do not themselves impose sanctions from their own countries because of the poverty that that would cause their own people, as well as those in South Africa. I see nothing moral in sitting comfortably in the House of Commons and pronouncing poverty and starvation on many black children and black people in South Africa. That would only make the position worse. I am amazed that poverty and starvation have become Labour party policy on South Africa.

Q3. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend take time out of her busy day to confirm that her consular services are properly staffed, particularly in the southern Africa area, in view of the increase in the number of distressed subjects

in that part of the world? Will she also take time to ask the Zimbabwe Government whether they would commend the lance-corporal who refused to be bullied—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must relate to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: Our consular services and embassies are well staffed and able to deal with almost any situation. The aid that we give to the front-line states is greatly appreciated, as is the training that we give in Zimbabwe to the armed forces of that country.

Q4. **Mr Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Why was the Prime Minister the only Head of Government of the major European countries who did not send birthday greetings to Nelson Mandela yesterday? Can she answer this question: if she is genuinely against apartheid, which many of us doubt, why is it that on every conceivable occasion she carries out a policy of appeasement towards South Africa in the same way as Neville Chamberlain did with Nazi Germany?

The Prime Minister: The Government have made it clear on very many occasions, starting at the Commonwealth conference in the Bahamas, that we believe that Mr. Mandela and other political prisoners should be released and that there should be a suspension of violence on all sides. I do not think that the way in which the hon. Gentleman carries on about the matter is likely to achieve the release for which so many of us earnestly wish. I repeat that the front-line states and many black South Africans warmly appreciate the practical help in money terms that we give from this country to help them. That is very much better than the ranting and raving that we hear from Opposition Members.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that any increase in night flights at Heathrow would be most deeply resented by hundreds of thousands of local residents, who do not see why they should lose one minute of their beauty sleep to enable other people to obtain marginally cheaper holidays—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was difficult for me to hear, let alone anyone else in the Chamber.

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the emergency at Gatwick could be resolved by sending charter planes to Stansted, which is under-used, instead of Heathrow, where people living nearby already suffer from noise and congestion of over 700 flights per day?

The Prime Minister: I heard the word Heathrow and I heard the word Stansted. My right hon. Friend has allowed extra flights into Heathrow to help the charter flights over the temporary difficulties. Of course, that does not alter the noise restrictions at night. With regard to Stansted, the Government traffic distribution rules do not prevent charter flights to Stansted, so operators are already free to use Stansted.

Q5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Prime Minister aware that the level of borrowing in this country at present is reaching frightening proportions, even worse than the Barber boom? Does she understand that the proportion of family debt has increased since 1979 from 45 per cent. to more than 80 per cent. in 1988—[HON. MEMBERS: "Of what?"] —of residual income after tax? Does she understand that while she is going round the country talking about thrift and prudence, nobody is listening as she continues to operate her pawn-shop economy?

The Prime Minister: I have two points in reply to the hon. Gentleman. First, the rise in personal debt is matched by increased holdings of financial assets willingly held. Secondly, the whole tone of the hon. Gentleman's question must mean that he is absolutely delighted with the increase in interest rates.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

John Dudley Fishburn, Esq., for Kensington.

Points of Order

3.33 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you, Mr. Speaker, instruct your Chaplain to give spiritual guidance to a confused hon. Member who denies being a Christian on Friday and sings "Jerusalem" on Sunday at the first sign of a gun?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that this is not a frivolous point of order. The hon. Member is a member of the Chairmen's Panel.

Mr. Winterton: During the exchange between the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, from a sedentary position, heard by us all, the hon. Gentleman described the Prime Minister as a hypocrite. *[Interruption.]* I believe that the standards of the House should be maintained. I understand that that is an unparliamentary word and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that word but the standard of behaviour during Prime Minister's questions was absolutely disgraceful.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage and Exchequer Contributions) (No. 2) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document Nos. 4236/86 and 4498/88 on chromium in water be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Documents No. 9715/87 on electromagnetic compatibility be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Documents Nos. 5017/87, 6358/87 and 5151/88 on anti-dumping measures be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Durant.]*

Standard Form of Lease (Leasehold Residential Property)

3.35 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to introduce a standard form of lease for residential property.

There are millions of flats and maisonettes. Therefore, there are millions of leaseholders throughout the country. Many hon. Members are owners of leases on flats or maisonettes, so they will have experience of being leaseholders. With blocks of flats there is a division of ownership to take account of the fact that inevitably there is a division of tenure. Under our present system, the ownership of blocks of flats is divided into two—the freeholder and the leaseholder. That form of tenure has led to much trouble in the past; there is trouble with it at present; and, I fear, there will be trouble with it in the future.

The Law Commission has recently recommended that the system of leasehold be swept away and that a new strata title system be introduced. That is all very well as far as it goes, but so far it has not got very far. I propose to bring in a standard form of lease which will apply to all new lettings in England and Wales. The standard lease will set out in considerable detail the covenants of freeholders and leaseholders. It will include such items as provision for repairs and insurance. It will set out services and describe their use and the use of the common parts. At present, there is no standard form of lease. The Law Society does not produce one, and the Government could step in, to the benefit of leaseholders.

The Bill has two fundamental objectives. At present, the standard length of lease on a flat is 99 years. On average, a flat is sold every three years. That means that in the process of conveyancing the lease is scrutinised 33 times. It cannot make sense that a lease should be scrutinised so often. These leases are drawn up by firms of solicitors. Every firm will be busy drawing up its form of lease, and every time a flat is sold some other firm of solicitors will be busying checking it. That is all done at the expense of the prospective purchaser. There is great public concern about the costs of conveyancing. A standard form of lease would reduce those costs. The solicitor acting on behalf of the prospective purchaser would cast his eye over the lease and say, "This is the standard form of lease. I know that it is in order. Therefore, there is no need for me to check it."

My second objective is to eliminate defects in leases. At present, they are remarkably common, and I shall give one example. A block of flats in north London was sold at auction last year. In the auction catalogue the defects in the leases were clearly set out as being one of the assets of the lot. That meant that the flats were unmortgageable, which in turn meant that they were virtually unsaleable. As a consequence the wretched leaseholders had to go back to the freeholder and ask him to rectify the defects. That, of course, put the freeholder in an immensely strong position, for he did not have to agree to rectify the leases. In fact, he said, "Of course I will rectify them, but it will cost you X thousand pounds."

A system cannot be right under which a freeholder can grab that kind of windfall gain when he has done nothing to earn it, and when the only reason he is getting hold of

it is that his solicitor drew up the leases wrongly in the first place. My standard form of lease would ensure that there were no defects.

There is a precedent. In the case of agricultural tenancies or tenancies for short-term residential letting, it is possible to go to any law stationer and find ready-made agreements that can be bought for a pound or two, and everyone accepts them. What is more, there is a statutory precedent. Part III of schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1980 sets out the bare bones of a lease for former council tenants who wish to exercise their right to buy to acquire the leasehold of their flats.

The objective of my Bill will, I think, prove popular with the many thousands who are busy buying and selling flats. The Bill should reduce the cost of conveyancing and by cutting out defects it will cut out uncertainty for leaseholders. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Hugo Summerson, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Sir John Biggs-Davison, Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Mr. Simon Burns and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

Standard Form of Lease (Leasehold Residential Property)

Mr. Hugo Summerson accordingly presented a Bill to introduce a standard form of lease for residential property: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 29 July and to be printed. [Bill 202.]

3.42 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have left it until now, when things have quietened down and there are fewer hon. Members in the Chamber. However, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) is currently in the Chamber. You will recall that before you came in my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) raised a point of order with Mr. Speaker. During that point of order, the hon. Member for Bootle—who is a very honourable and honest man—shouted at my hon. Friend that he thought he was a Fascist. Now would be an appropriate time, with a light House present, for the hon. Gentleman to have an opportunity to withdraw the remark. I am sure that, in the full light of day, he would not like it to be held against him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I was not in the Chamber at the time, but my recollection is that Mr. Speaker dealt with the matter when it arose.

Orders of the Day

Education Reform Bill

[2nd Allotted Day]

Lords amendments further considered.

Clause 94

Agreements for establishment, etc. of city technology college

Lords amendment: No. 228, in page 94, line 8, after "of" insert "either—

(i)"

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we may take Lords amendments Nos. 229 to 232.

3.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is the last of the school matters set down for further consideration of the Lords amendments before us before we move on to higher education. I am delighted that the Opposition decided to choose city technology colleges for today's opening debate on the Bill. I have no doubt that they will make as big a mess of today as they made of yesterday.

Yesterday was a fiasco for the Opposition from start to finish. One Opposition Front Bench spokesman said that he wanted the world made free for atheists to teach religion, and later in the evening the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) set out his considered thoughts on the electoral system for grant-maintained schools. He destroyed not only the credibility of his policy, but his personal credibility with one of the worst-thought-out, ill-conceived and absurd proposals.

The amendment was moved by the Government on Third Reading in the other place following the amendment of my noble Friend Lord St. John of Fawsley on Report in the other place. It will allow the city technology programme to embrace institutions which focus on the application of technology to the performing and creative arts. Those institutions will be known as city colleges for the technology of the arts.

The other amendment relating to CTCs was moved by the noble Baroness Blatch. That extended from five to seven years the minimum period of notice before a funding agreement with a CTC can be terminated.

The case for CTCs is straightforward. There is an urgent need for action in some of our towns and cities. In some of the schools in our inner cities there are high levels of truancy and many young people are achieving much less than they could otherwise do. Many often leave without any formal qualifications. The Government have policies to deal with that ranging from the technical and vocational education initiative to more technology in our schools and our new compact initiative.

The House may like to know that today we published a booklet entitled "Industry Matters" pointing out the way in which firms and schools should get together across the school system quite apart from the CTC initiative. It is important that schools, industry and commerce should

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

work more closely together. I am sure that parties in the House are not divided on that. Since Industry Year in 1986 there has been a growing level of co-operation. It is good for our young people to experience what life after school is like in industry and commerce. Work experience is now a common feature of education for 15 and 16-year-olds.

Many parents are also worried about the opportunities that are being denied to our children in some of our towns and cities. Therefore, 18 months ago we proposed to establish CTCs. They will provide free education for pupils between 11 and 18 years of age. They will give parents a new choice of school.

We shall be setting up a network of 20 CTCs, which I am sure will become beacons of excellence. I hope that some of the practices and attitudes and, indeed, the ethos that they are creating will be copied and emulated throughout the education system.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) because he is only dropping in between rounds in the election.

Mr. Ashdown: The Secretary of State will recall that he set himself the target of 20 CTCs by the end of the decade. In the light of the manifest failure to launch any more than two, and those on somewhat dubious grounds, does he still believe that he will achieve his target? Will he confirm it now?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman could not have been present at Question Time earlier. Seven CTCs have already been announced. The first, in Solihull, will be in operation in about six weeks. Nottingham CTC will be in operation next year, as, we hope, will Middlesbrough. There has also been a commitment for a college in Dartford, Kent, and by Dixons for one in Yorkshire, the site of which will, I hope, be announced shortly. The Philip and Pauline Harris trust has also made a commitment and there are others.

Mr. Dalyell: Speaking of excellence, given the experience of the past 18 months, where will teachers of maths and physics come from? Is it not a question of robbing Peter to pay Paul?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman, who follows these matters closely, will know that we have a scheme to promote greater recruitment of teachers of physics, maths and craft, design and technology. We had good recruitment levels last year and I hope that they will be better this year. We have also launched a big advertising programme. I am encouraging, through changes in the regulations affecting teacher qualifications, the more mature person or the person with an overseas qualification. In all those ways we are seeking to improve the number of teachers joining the teaching profession with maths, physics and CTC qualifications.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): If there is such a great supply of teachers for maths and physics, why has Nottingham CTC found it necessary to pay maths and science teachers 5 per cent. above the national pay scale and offer inducements of up to £7,000 per teacher?

Mr. Baker: One of the things that the hon. Gentleman cannot stand is that the colleges are independent and make up their own minds about salary levels——

Mr. Straw: Answer the question.

Mr. Baker: The colleges know perfectly well that they will be getting the same or equivalent amount of grant per capita or per child as the state-maintained schools in the area. If they wish to pay their teachers more and to make more offers, for heaven's sake what is wrong with that? They will have to make their savings from the rest of their grant and they are prepared to do so. They make their own arrangements. The hon. Member for Blackburn wants a degree of standardisation and formality in such matters which most people find totally unacceptable.

Turning to the point raised about the lack of sponsors, the hon. Member for Blackburn said first that there has been poor support from industry. When I announced the CTC programme there was just one sponsor—Hanson plc—and I was chided and attacked and it was said that there would never be any other sponsors. But slowly the sponsors grew. We got to £5 million pledged by sponsors; then to £10 million; then to £15 million, £20 million and now to £25 million. That will be rising, I am quite sure, in the next few months to more than £30 million.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment when I have advanced a little further with my speech. I shall give way to him eventually because I always like giving way to him.

Mr. Banks: Give way now.

Mr. Baker: In a moment.

The plain fact of the matter is that many companies up and down the country want to support the concept of these new schools, but I was told that large companies do not support the CTC movement. Just let me run through the list of some of the supporters. At Nottingham, Mr. Djanogly from Nottingham Manufacturers—one of the great companies in that city—is a substantial supporter of the Nottingham CTC. How about these for unknown companies: Boots, W. H. Smith, British Coal.

In a radio debate, the hon. Member for Blackburn told me that Marks and Spencer had not supported the scheme. Well, I can tell the House that Marks and Spencer has supported the Nottingham CTC. The hon. Gentleman did not even know that—[HON. MEMBERS: "How much?"] That is for the sponsors to decide themselves and for them to announce. The hon. Member for Blackburn cannot stomach the fact that more sponsors are coming forward, virtually daily, to support the CTCs. Opposition Members do not like appreciation of the success of the programme.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo).

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. I hope that I am not misjudging the figures, but my recollection of Marks and Spencer's contribution is that it is for a quarter of a million pounds.

Mr. Baker: I am not prepared to comment on any figure or any sponsor. That is the line that I have taken. It is up to sponsors to decide how much they wish to give.

Let us look at the other supporters throughout the country. We were told that we did not have any national names. However, Dixons, which is a household name throughout the country, has announced its support. I shall mention the figure because Dixons has announced it—£1 million. In Middlesbrough, we have £1 million from British American Tobacco, supported—*[Interruption.]*

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Hang on; I am dealing with the hon. Member for Blackburn. Is he going to attack the largest company in the country, apart from the oil and utility companies——

Mr. Tony Banks: Smoking is a filthy and disgusting habit.

Mr. Straw: Does the Secretary of State approve of what Mr. Gerald Denis of British American Tobacco stated in *The Times Educational Supplement* and which he did not deny in terms when he wrote to that paper two weeks later:

"I do not think anti-smoking campaigns should be brought into the school."?

Mr. Baker: Health education will be determined by the principal. Does not the hon. Gentleman recognise that British American Tobacco does not sell any tobacco products in this country and that 60 per cent. of the company's activities relate to organisations such as Eagle Star or financial services of one sort or another, and large paperworks?

Apart from British American Tobacco——

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Baker: The hon. Lady should contain her natural impatience for a moment.

Apart from British American Tobacco, the other small companies that are helping the Middlesbrough CTC are British Steel—an extremely small company!—Davy McKee and John Hall, one of the great entrepreneurs of the north-east.

In the case of the Solihull CTC, £1 million was initially put up by the Hanson Trust. It has now raised a further £1 million because between 30 and 40 companies in the west midlands have contributed. I am confident that Hanson will raise a further £1 million and that demonstrates the success and popularity of the programme. Many other sponsors do not wish to announce their names, but they will do so in time.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West must contain his natural impatience, but I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Banks: I am most grateful to the Secretary of State. Instead of making it up as he goes along, the right hon. Gentleman would convince us more if he answered a simple question: how many sponsors? What we want to know is the number of sponsors. We do not want the Secretary of State simply to say, "A few have promised here, a few will come forward there". How many sponsors, and how much money?

Mr. Baker: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that £25 million has been pledged. I have given him the names of several sponsors and when the other sponsors wish to announce their names they will do so. I am sure that he will be the first to congratulate them and to move motions at the Labour party conference to thank them for the public-spirited way in which they are planning to provide money from their funds to help to educate children in our towns and cities.

I hope that I have dealt with the accusations made by the hon. Member for Blackburn, who has also made the absurd claim that, to bolster the programme, we have extended its range to encompass technology in the arts. He should get up to date and find out what is happening in our schools with regard to art, design and technology. Incidentally, I should thank the hon. Gentleman for his unintended assistance, because each time he stumps the country attacking CTCs I am approached by another sponsor. Such sponsors believe that if the Labour party is arguing that CTCs are a bad idea, they must be worth supporting. The hon. Gentleman has turned out to be one of the best recruiting sergeants I could possibly have had——

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Baker: —and here is another.

Ms. Armstrong: I wonder whether the Secretary of State recognises that many people are seriously concerned that a sponsor wishes to influence the nature of the curriculum. If the sponsor of the Middlesbrough CTC, British American Tobacco, wishes to ensure that there is no no-smoking campaign, will he reject its money?

Mr. Baker: I assure the hon. Lady that the trustees of the CTC of Middlesbrough will not agree to that. The funding agreement must have my approval, and I assure her that I shall want to know the CTC's health education policy.

I am surprised that the Labour party has been so cool about support for technology in the arts because its arts spokesman has promoted a great interest in the arts. We must recognise that the arts—not just the performing and creative arts, but the range of design technology—is becoming much more technological. If one visits a music class, it is clear from the advanced music equipment that we are in a world of new technology—the world of music synthesisers and equipment that can compose music. Videos are pure technology and the new industries connected with satellite television are job positive.

We want a greater concentration on such activities. Certain sponsors have already said that they wish to come forward, but I must disappoint the hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) because those sponsors do not wish their names to be known. They want to create colleges that are involved with the performing and creative arts and they want to use technology to improve those creative arts. That must be a good thing. It is happening in some schools in the state maintained sector, and I welcome it. I have seen an extremely good city art and technology college in Newcastle that has a whole range of sophisticated photographic and design equipment. If people want to sponsor CTCs for that, why should we stand in their way? It is an absurdly dog-in-the-manger attitude for the Opposition to adopt——

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): The Secretary of State has spoken of sponsors choosing. It may be old-fashioned, but millions of people are happy to have education provided by the state and believe that it should be first rate and delivered by his Department, not handed out in a great big cauldron-like begging bowl into which people are expected to throw their pennies. Rather than supporting the idea of sponsors, many people would like the right hon. Gentleman to get on and tackle the problems in our schools that they want to be resolved.

4 pm

Mr. Baker: I do not think the hon. Gentleman has followed the Bill's provisions closely. To begin with, I do not dole out education. The local education authorities provide education around the country. The whole thrust of the Bill is to create greater choice in our education system. The CTCs are one way of doing that; grant-maintained schools are another. I do not believe in the principle that local education authorities should have the complete monopoly on free education in our country. There should be greater choice and variety—that is what we stand for. But the Opposition do not want that; the hon. Gentleman has encapsulated their attitude perfectly.

It is the old Ford theme once again—"You can have any colour as long as it is black." In other words, people can have any sort of education as long as the Labour party provides and controls it by means of its councillors and unions. That is the choice the Labour party offers, but we are providing much greater choice, which I know the Opposition do not like.

I come now to the third absurd claim made by the hon. Member for Blackburn. I am more and more surprised that he uses the CTCs in a debate of this sort, because the campaign will be successful. The hon. Gentleman has made the absurd claim that we are spending more on the CTCs than on the introduction of the national curriculum. He made it again at Question Time today. That shows how desperate the Opposition are. The cost to the taxpayer of the CTC programme, which was published in the last White Paper, is about £90 million over the period from 1987 to 1991. That includes capital and current expenditure.

This should be compared with the costs of implementing the national curriculum. Over three years, £65 million has been allocated by central Government merely to cover additional expenditure. Added to that will be the large amounts of money allocated by education support grants and the LEA training grant schemes. In 1989-90 we expect to spend £30 million on the ESG scheme. Training grant figures are expected to be similar to those for 1988-89, when £22·5 million will be spent in national priority areas, with another £19 million from local priority area funds. That is a total programme of £90 million a year, compared with £90 million on CTCs for the whole period covered by the White Paper. On the same basis that the hon. Member for Blackburn used to make those absurd comparisons, we must add the running costs of primary and secondary schools. The CTCs' £90 million includes the running costs of the schools. That shows how absurd the thinking and approach of the Opposition are.

Mr. Straw: The figures that the right hon. Gentleman claims are absurd, which are for the preparations for the national curriculum and obviously do not include the day-to-day running of existing schools, came from his Department in answers from him. But if that analogy is unfair, will the Secretary of State explain how he justifies the fact that £16 million of taxpayers' money is being used to support the capital building of three schools while the local authorities in the three areas concerned—Middlesbrough, Cleveland and Solihull—have been allocated less than half that figure, £6·8 million, to spend on the capital and improvement works of 845 schools?

Mr. Baker: We have in no way taken money away from local education authorities to provide the money that we have allocated to the CTCs. There is a separate amount of expenditure in the White Paper under the heading of CTCs. So this has not been at the expense of local education authorities' capital programmes. It comes from the money for the education system as a whole, and it will be money well spent. Opposition Members will see how successful the CTCs will be as the years go by.

I am not in the least surprised by the political hostility of the Opposition. Their attitude is exactly the same as it was towards TVEI in 1983, when Labour councils up and down the land said that they did not want to touch the TVEI money, which they said was at the expense of the education system—the very argument that we heard a couple of minutes ago. They brushed the idea aside. One or two were prepared to co-operate, but the generality were not. What was even worse, the money came from a Department other than the Department of Education and Science, which made it trebly tainted. It came from the Department of Employment. Now queues of local education authorities are asking for TVEI money. We have seen that it has worked and become a success. I predict that CTCs will do the same.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Am I not right in thinking that one of the last local education authorities to come round to TVEI was Lancashire county council, which is Labour-run and encompasses the constituency of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)?

Mr. Baker: That is right. I have yet to turn up what the hon. Member for Blackburn was saying about TVEI in 1983. No doubt he could send me the odd press cutting to prove how strongly he supported it and how, with his visionary approach to education, he urged Lancashire county council to grasp the opportunity. If he wants to quote to me the speeches he made in 1983 supporting TVEI, I shall give way to him. He is condemned by his silence. He has gone deaf again.

The Opposition dislike other things about CTCs, too. For instance, they do not like their independence. The heads of Solihull and Nottingham CTCs display an entirely different approach. In Nottingham the principal has made it clear that he would expect no-strike agreements with his teaching staff. That must stick in the gullet of some Opposition Members, although I do not expect it to stick in the gullets of Opposition Members who are sponsored by Eric Hammond's union. It must be a joy, however, for many parents to hear of a no-strike agreement with teachers.

The hon. Member for Blackburn said that the whole idea was to build completely new schools and that we should not use old buildings. He said that in a debate with me on the radio—

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): A short time ago the right hon. Gentleman said that many of the

teachers in the CTCs would be earning much above the odds. He has destroyed the negotiating rights of teachers and has been condemned by the International Labour Office for that. The ILO made a point of that, as I mentioned to the Secretary of State in the Select Committee the other day when all the journalists were present. Is the right hon. Gentleman really going to impose his will on the teaching force? Does he not realise that they will fight back at some time if he does so?

Mr. Baker: That is the last intervention that I shall take. If salaries higher than the main teachers' grade or incentive allowances are offered, they will be offered only on savings that can be made within the recurrent costs of the CTC, and that is up to the CTC.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree with no-strike agreements with teachers? Will he come out and say that? Many people in teaching are saying it, as are many other unions. The hon. Gentleman is a strong member of the NUT. Will he advise his union to agree with no-strike agreements?

Mr. Flannery: I profoundly disagree with no-strike agreements. To withhold one's labour in the face of tyranny and of not giving proper negotiating rights is a basic right, and the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations has condemned the Government for removing that right. The Secretary of State is violating international law, and if he expects teachers to go along with that he is dreaming. Therefore, the trade union movement, except for the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union, will not agree with it.

Mr. Baker: Many other unions agree with no-strike agreements—for instance, the union that is growing fastest in the teaching world, the Professional Association of Teachers. It is putting on as many members as the NUT is losing. Does not the hon. Gentleman think that that is related to the attitude that he has expressed, that he will willingly look at the prospect of more disruption in our schools?

I made clear to the hon. Gentleman in the Select Committee, and will do so again, that we shall be entering discussions with the unions after the summer recess to try to determine a better way to work out teachers' pay and conditions. I have made it clear all along that the interim advisory committee is an interim body that is necessary after the collapse of Burnham.

The hon. Members for Blackburn and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) have both asked about section 12 proposals. It is often said that schools that are running and, for one reason or another, wish to become CTCs should not do so. That is absurd. If schools wish to gain the benefit from the CTC programme, and if their governors wish it, and it is done with the approval of the education authority, why should they not be able to propose to do so? However, any plans to convert existing schools into CTCs require the publication of statutory proposals. All such proposals will be decided upon their merits.

Should potential sponsors wish to approach local education authorities and school governors with a view to future CTC establishments, they are free to do so. It is entirely for local education authorities to draw up what proposals they wish to publish. There is nothing new about this. Labour Members should think back, if they can recall that long ago, to when their party was last in power. The Labour Government advocated comprehensive schools on a huge scale. It became, in effect, Government policy that all schools should become comprehensive. Proposals were coming forward that the Secretary of State of the day had to decide impartially, case by case.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Secretary of State argues that, under section 12, he will be in a position to deal with proposals put to him on their merits. How, after this afternoon's performance, in which he has clearly, with some embarrassment but also with some enthusiasm, put the case for CTCs, can he make a judgment on merit? Is it not clearly the case that the Secretary of State is partial and is using the resources of his Department to support a policy? He cannot make a judgment on the merits of a case.

Mr. Baker I have today defended Government policy, as Labour Ministers defended Government policy on comprehensive schools for nearly 20 years. In many cases——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I doubt whether they did so on some narrow amendment from the other place. I hope that the House will now return to the amendment.

Mr. Baker You are right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was drawing a parallel and defending Government policy—it is legitimate for Ministers to do so—I hope vigorously, and on as many occasions as I can. I am surprised that the Opposition have chosen to attack this policy. I am staggered that they have decided to attack this type of school. The first one is to open within six weeks. There is no doubt that it will be highly popular and successful. When parents in the area were canvassed, more than 350 children applied and 180 were selected.

Let me scotch at once the idea that the pupils were selected on account of ability. The average IQ of pupils admitted to Kingshurst is about 100. The range is from 70 to 124. One cannot get a wider range of IQ differentials in a school than that. We have often heard that parents are committed to education. When the school held its first parents' meeting, more than 300 parents turned up. That shows the commitment of parents, and of the local community and of industry, to these bold imaginative measures.

What the Labour party does not like is that these schools are independent of local education authorities. They are different. They bring spontaneity, inventiveness and creativity into the education system. If one had tried to spend this sort of money in revitalising and setting up these beacons, one would have got nowhere near doing what the CTCs will achieve. I confirm again that we are on course to set up a network of 20, and we shall have the support of parents and industry in achieving this. The net result will be better education for many children in our towns and cities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I inform the House that this amendment involves privilege.

4.15 pm

Mr. Straw: It is now 21 months since the Conservative party conference in October 1986, when the Secretary of State rashly announced his policy for city technology colleges. He said a moment ago that it was absurd for us

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to claim that this policy was for new schools. So short is his memory that he has forgotten what he said in October 1986. I will remind him. He does not want to hear those words because now he is twisting the policy that had been abandoned as a failure. He said that it was his intention to launch a pilot network of

"new schools in urban areas, including the disadvantaged inner cities."

He also said that they would be called city technology colleges. In the 21 months since the Secretary of State's announcement, he has refused to secure any debate in the House about his policy. He manipulated the guillotine in Committee and on Report so that CTCs were crowded out by religious education and religious worship debates.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The hon. Gentleman knows that when we were discussing the arrangements for the guillotine, I said time and time again that I was willing to accommodate his arrangements. He will know that, and it has been done time and again.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State makes my point because, having been forced——

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Are we to reveal behind-the-Chair conversations?

Mr. Straw: It was the Secretary of State who decided to reveal the discussions in the Business Committee over who had arranged the debate for this evening. Yes, we asked for this debate to take place this evening. The Secretary of State says that he is proud to debate it tonight. He had better explain why it was that he proposed that this debate should take place for one hour between the hours of 11 o'clock and midnight yesterday—a time guaranteed to ensure the minimum publicity to something that is embarrassing to him.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I was prepared to provide time for this debate at any time at which the hon. Gentleman wished it, and that is what I have done.

Mr. Straw: I merely draw attention to the fact that there has been no debate on this policy, and there was none in Committee. If the Secretary of State is so proud of this policy, why has he not insisted on a debate? Why did he not come to the House in November 1986 to secure the approval of this House for this policy? The Secretary of State knows that that is because he spoke before he thought. He gave a commitment that he cannot now fulfil. In the glossy pamphlet that he published on 14 October 1986, he gave two commitments that have failed to come about. This policy is therefore a failure. He said:

"The principle of funding will be that the promoters will meet all or a substantial part of the capital costs of CTCs."

We know that that simply has not happened. Most—in some cases, almost all—of the cost of CTCs have come from the taxpayer.

The Secretary of State said something else in this glossy pamphlet, paid for by the taxpayer. He said that the Department

"is confident that the number of institutions and the number of pupils will build up rapidly thereafter. The Government intends that 20 CTCs should be in operation by the end of the decade."

The end of the decade is next year. The Secretary of State has admitted to the House under cross-examination that there will not be 20 CTCs in operation by the end of this year. There will not be 10, or even five. There will be three and none of those would be in operation but for the bail out paid for by the British taxpayer.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not a fact that the Secretary of State made the announcement at the Conservative party conference to get himself a standing ovation? The reality is that the British taxpayer will have to pay for that ovation. That is the action of a Minister who previously criticised Labour local authorities for the money that they spent on advertising. There cannot be a better example of hypocrisy.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. Public expenditure on the CTC programme has risen tenfold. It is literally out of control. If a local authority had done anything of the sort, it would be rate capped and controlled by the Government.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You reminded us earlier that the amendments were tightly drawn. It seems, however, that we are having a re-run of the debate on Second Reading. I wonder whether you could guide us——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was not in the Chair earlier, but I was following carefully the course of the debate before I took occupancy of it. I think that it is reasonable for me to allow as much tolerance and latitude to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) as was allowed to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Secretary of State—I am sorry, I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am always grateful to the Secretary of State because he provides us with such good copy. Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I am trying to ascertain whether his policy has succeeded or failed.

It was typical of the Secretary of State to resort to cheap, personal attacks on my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) when he opened the debate. He did so because he understood the nature of his own failure. He made an extraordinary suggestion about what happened during a debate last night. The right hon. Gentleman should check the record. What he said about my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish is an untruth. He should check the record and apologise to the House.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Apologise now!

Mr. Straw: I shall give the right hon. Gentleman the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: If I have said anything that is wrong, I shall withdraw it. I shall have to check the record to see whether that is so.

Mr. Straw: It is typical of the Secretary of State to speak before he has studied the record. He distorted what my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish had said. He did not have the courtesy or the intelligence to quote the *Hansard* report in respect of my hon. Friend.

The Secretary of State described as absurd our proposition that there should be one vote per family in ballots for grant-maintained schools. There was one vote per family in a ballot on a CTC at Riverside school. In that ballot the parents voted overwhelmingly against having a CTC for that school. I look forward to hearing whether

the Secretary of State will take note that 89 per cent. of the parents who participated in the ballot at Riverside school in Bexley voted against the proposition that there should be a CTC. I give the right hon. Gentleman decent notice that we expect him to say during the debate whether he will take note of that result. As the proposition would fall if it involved a grant-maintained school, will it fall similarly in the Riverside context?

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): The hon. Gentleman has referred to a school in my constituency. Does he agree that parents participated in many ballots about 10 years ago when they wanted grammar schools to be retained? The then Secretary of State for Education and Science, a member of a Labour Government, took no notice of the parents' wishes.

Mr. Straw: We are not talking about school closures. Every Government and every local authority, of whatever political complexion, would face major and serious difficulties as a result of declining school rolls. We all know that. We are talking about changes in status and whether the Government will follow their own principle of seceding to parents the right to choose. Apparently parents will have a right to choose whether their school, as it were, opts out of local authority control. Such is the imperative of securing 20 CTCs—whether new schools or old, whether in urban areas or rural areas—that the Secretary of State is ready to ride roughshod over parents' wishes, even where nine out of 10 of them object to the idea of a CTC.

The debate arises only by accident. In the closing hours of the debate in another place, Lord St. John of Fawsley proposed that the concept of a CTC should be widened to embrace what some consider to be the strange concept of a college for the technology of the arts, a concept so odd that Lord Stewart of Fulham said that it would, if implemented, enable children to learn about the role of the crane in a Greek drama but not of the purpose of the drama itself.

We understand why the Secretary of State has been so embarrassed about the CTC policy and why he has sought persistently to avoid debate on it. It is his Achilles heel. It is a morally degenerate and educationally divisive policy, and a policy which can be seen already to have failed abjectly when reference is made to its original conception. The taxpayer is now having to rescue the Secretary of State's failure, and is doing so on a staggering scale. The right hon. Gentleman promised 20 new schools in urban and deprived areas, where all or most of the capital would be put up by private donors. He promised that 20 such new schools would be in operation by the end of next year. He has failed on every count.

I accept that the Kingswood CTC will be opened this September. With luck, the CTC in Nottingham may be opened by next September. It is just possible that the CTC in Middlesbrough will also be opened. Of the 26 urban areas identified by the Secretary of State in his press statement on 14 October 1986, CTCs have been announced in only three of them.

The plan has failed and it has run into almost universal opposition. Mr. Peter Wood is a former Conservative councillor in the west country and a former director of Plymouth chamber of commerce. He is not a Labour councillor who wishes to dismiss the Secretary of State's plan. Mr. Wood is reported in the Friday 20 May edition of *The Western Morning News*. He said:

> "The idea has now sunk without trace. We earmarked possible sites for the college and needed at least £600,000 to get it off the ground. In the event, we got one pledge of £30,000 from a single company. There has just not been enough commitment from local firms."

Mr. Bowis: If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about the low number of CTCs that have "got off the ground" to date, and if he accepts that part of the reason for this is the provision of buildings, or lack of provision, why has he not encouraged his colleagues on the Inner London education authority to provide the necessary premises when we already have the funding on offer from companies? The ILEA, with its dog-in-the-manger attitude, refuses to allow premises to be made available to put the schools therein.

Mr. Straw: The ILEA has not adopted a dog-in-the-manger attitude. Its attitude is central to our objection to CTCs. My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) revealed in Question Time that the Conservative authority in Trafford is opposing the proposition to have a CTC in its area. The reason for that is simple. Almost every urban area has suffered disproportionately from falling rolls. The Secretary of State has forced these local authorities to close schools in their areas. They have gone through the trauma of reorganisation. In Cleveland, for example, seven secondary schools have been closed, and there are still 7,000 unused secondary school places in the area. Having gone through the sensitive process of parental consultation and reorganisation, authorities know that if they co-operate in the establishment of CTCs they will undermine science teaching in the other schools because the CTC will pay teachers more and, therefore, recruit more teachers. Secondly, they will destabilise schooling in their areas and force other schools to close.

I am astonished that Conservative Members, who claim to be economists, do not understand the diseconomies that will arise. The Secretary of State spoke about Kingswood school. I have been to look at Kingswood school and other schools in that area——

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): It is Kingshurst school.

4.30 pm

Mr. Straw: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I have been to Kingshurst school and to the other schools in that area. There is apprehension that the education in those schools could be damaged because the Secretary of State is loading the dice in favour of one privileged school sector and against local authorities.

The director of Plymouth chamber of commerce said that there was just not enough commitment from local firms. Yesterday I told the House of complaints by the colleagues of the Secretary of State that he is all presentation and not enough properly thought through policy. I can reveal to the House that the Secretary of State starts every week with an hour's meeting at 9.30 on a Monday morning, which is entitled quite simply "Publicity". In the last month he has had one meeting dealing with policy round-up for three quarters of an hour and four meetings—one every week—entitled "Publicity". The right hon. Gentleman's desire for a quick headline is catching up with him. The so-called policy on the CTCs has been seen through not just by the Opposition but by traditional supporters of the Tory party. Apparently, some

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of his ministerial colleagues are outraged by the way in which public funds have been hijacked from deserving projects to bail out this gimmick which has gone wrong.

Mr. Hawkins: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would help my shallow brain by telling us which amendment he is talking to.

Mr. Straw: I am talking to Lords amendment No. 230 which amends page 94, line 20 of the Bill and includes the words

"in the case of a school to be known as a city technology college, on science and technology".

The Secretary of State should listen to those Conservative Back Benchers who have been offended by the way in which LEA schools in their areas have been starved of funds while a few favoured CTCs will receive millions. The Secretary of State has tried to play a trick on the House and the country by suggesting that the money comes from two separate pots. He ought to talk to his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who rightly lectures that all public money comes from one source and that we have to make choices. He cannot seriously be trying to suggest that £86 million has been manufactured out of thin air and that if it were not used on the CTCs it would not be available to use on improving the education of the 95 per cent. of children who have to be educated in the state sector. That was a cheap and dishonest point to seek to make.

The policies have been seen through by businesses—even many of those businesses that give money to the Conservative party. According to the Secretary of State, 1,800 firms have been approached for money for CTCs and in many cases quite unacceptable pressure has been brought to bear on individual business men by the Secretary of State and those acting for him. It has been claimed that the companies owe the Secretary of State a favour. There have been veiled hints of honours for those who cough up and of political retribution for those who do not. Many business men to whom I have spoken thoroughly resent the pressure that has been applied. Even so, of the 1,800 firms approached the Secretary of State has been able to name only 20; what a hit rate that is. He claims that £25 million has been pledged and we should weigh that word with care. Even if the sum is £25 million, £9 million of that will come from the taxpayer in tax relief, because the businesses will get tax relief of 35 per cent. on every pound that they put in. The true figure is £16 million.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a going rate in contributions to Conservative party funds for the buying of peerages and knighthoods? Does he know the going rate for the donation that one has to make to a CTC to get a knighthood or peerage?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps we may get back to the amendment.

Mr. Straw: We know that there is a correlation between donations and honours and we shall see whether it applies in this case. Whether or not the Secretary of State tries to deny it in his bluster, almost every major company—especially those concerned about our science base—has boycotted the CTC proposal. ICI, the main company in Middlesbrough, has boycotted the CTC in Middlesbrough. IBM has boycotted the CTCs; Shell has boycotted them; BP has boycotted them and Sainsbury has boycotted them. The list goes on.

It is a mark of the desperation felt by the Secretary of State that he has had to resort to contributions from British American Tobacco—a contribution that gives new meaning to the phrase "It's the tobacco that counts." The Secretary of State did not repudiate what Mr. Gerald Denis told *The Times Educational Supplement* on 17 June:

"I do not think anti-smoking campaigns should be brought into the school."

We know that those who run large companies think that it is not only the tobacco but the money that counts. Mr. Denis thinks that he has bought influence over the running of the CTC. That is what he said to the TES on 17 June. I hope that the Minister of State will clearly repudiate that view in her reply.

The Industrial Society, which is funded by most of the major companies, has labelled the CTC policy a failure and the director-general of the CBI, which represents almost every major manufacturing company in the country, has described the CTC policy as an irrelevancy.

The CTC policy, as originally sold by the Secretary of State, has failed. His solution to that failure is simply to raid the Exchequer. Private backers have boycotted the scheme and the taxpayer has been dragooned into rescuing it. If the scheme is such a success, why has the Secretary of State abandoned the condition that all or a substantial part of the funding will be put up by the promoters? What is the reason for that? It is simply an old-fashioned Heathite bail-out of a private operation at the taxpayer's expense.

According to the TES, £200 million will be put in—£90 million over the next three years. I see that the Secretary of State is leaving us and I am not surprised. More money—£33 million—is to be spent next year on a few CTCs and on preparation for the national curriculum. More civil servants, at a more senior level, are working on CTCs, for a few thousand children at the very most, than on the transfer of ILEA, which will affect 270,000 children in inner London. The Minister may say that it is not true, but I have the answer given to me by the Secretary of State on 13 June which clearly shows that £25,000 a month is being spent directly on the administration of the CTC policy. One grade 5 assistant secretary in charge of a whole branch is working on CTCs. There is one grade 5 HMI and two assistant secretaries with branches alongside in charge of CTC policy——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see how this can be remotely connected with the amendments.

Mr. Straw: With the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is directly related to the CTC policy. We are talking about how many officials and how many resources ——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendments.

Mr. Straw: Amendment No. 230 goes to the very heart of the CTC policy because it gives the Secretary of State and the House powers to fund CTCs. CTCs cannot be funded without the administration of that funding.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) says that he is talking to amendment No. 230, but that amendment has nothing to do with funding. It merely

deals with the curriculum for the CTCs and the CCTAs. He may be talking to some other amendment, but it is not amendment No. 230.

Mr. Straw: That shows the hon. Gentleman's lack of understanding. One cannot have a curriculum without its being paid for.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The House may be pleased to hear that amendment No. 230 simply says:

"in the case of a school to be known as a city technology college, on science and technology; or"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that hon. Members will have read the amendment. It seemed to be for the convenience of the House to have a broad debate on the amendment and that is what we have had, but equally I think that the whole House will recognise that there must be limits. I hope that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will recognise the limits that I have set.

Mr. Straw: Alongside the fact that more officials at a more senior level are devoted to CTC policy than to the transfer of ILEA is the fact that more taxpayers' money is being devoted to the capital costs of just three CTCs than to the capital improvements of 845 schools in the whole of the three local education authorities covered by the three CTCs.

The Secretary of State seeks to ask why we object to CTC policy. Let me tell him why. It is because it is deeply and desperately offensive to the 95 per cent. of children who are being and will continue to be educated in the state system. It is based on a profound double standard. How does he justify the fact that in Middlesbrough, in Cleveland, that county council is crying out for funds to improve its laboratories and equipment and repair its leaking roofs in schools, yet it has been allocated a tiny amount while one authority is allocated £4 million? How does the right hon. Gentleman cope with the fact that in Nottinghamshire £9 million of state money is going to one school while 514 schools in the county of Nottingham are to receive £2·46 million? If the Secretary of State wants to come back on that and to give me the reason why there is that double standard, I shall be happy to give way.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The Secretary of State has his head down now.

Mr. Straw: Of course the right hon. Gentleman has his head down, because he knows that it is indefensible that one school can get £9 million while 500 schools share just £2·46 million. On the one hand, the Secretary of State follows a policy in which the education of the majority of children is supposed to be carried out on the cheap. ILEA is rate-capped and abolished for spending over £2,200 on the education of each secondary pupil. On the other hand, in the assisted places scheme, we find that Government funds can pay up to £5,600 and then that in CTCs—*[Interruption.]* If the Secretary of State wishes to intervene and to explain the double standards for how one school can get £9 million and 500 get £2·46 million, I shall happily give way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] Of course, the right hon. Gentleman will not intervene.

Money is being poured into CTCs. Earlier I asked the Secretary of State why CTCs would be paying their science teachers at least 5 per cent. more than the going national rate and were offering removal and relocation expenses of £7,000——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Where was that?

Mr. Straw: Nottinghamshire.

The Secretary of State sought to brush that aside. The simple truth is that there are great shortages of science and maths teachers. We all know that. The Secretary of State may try to argue, as he did in his earlier speech, about the need for competition between schools. Competition can work only if it is fair. The Secretary of State has loaded the dice *in favour of CTCs and against* other schools.

There is no fixed quantum of knowledge—education is a dynamic. But there is a fixed quantum of science teachers and of pupils. The policy of paying some teachers in a few CTCs will undermine teaching in other schools.

It is a further sign of the Secretary of State's desperation that the policy has been wholly altered from creating new schools to taking over existing, living schools. *[Interruption.]* Again, the Secretary of State has been commenting about my speech from a sedentary position. He said that it was an absurd idea for me to claim that there were to be new schools. Let him now explain how the policy has been overturned so that existing, living schools will be taken over to salvage his policy. The nature of that policy illustrates how unfair it is. Haberdashers' Aske's schools have been good, well-run voluntary-controlled comprehensives, happy about their relationship with ILEA. I visited——

4.45 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's speech is wide of the amendments. I hope that he will now get nearer to the amendments.

Mr. Straw: I am speaking about the curriculum in the CTCs and my speech is no wider than the Secretary of State's proposition. He said that the policy for CTCs had now been extended to cover existing schools and I am trying to answer that point.

Haberdashers' Aske's asked ILEA to ask the Department of Education and Science for money to pay for a new science block. The Secretary of State refused less than £1 million. He is now bribing that school to leave the state sector, with £4 million. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) will speak about Downs school, but let me now ask the Secretary of State about the result of the parents' ballot at Riverside school. It is he who has spoken about the need for parents' views to be taken into account. I gave him notice that parents have voted by 89 per cent. to 11 per cent. against turning Riverside school in Bexley into a CTC. Will the Secretary of State respect the parents' wishes? I offer him the chance to intervene. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The Secretary of State's silence speaks volumes because the simple truth is that he will ride roughshod over the parents' wishes, because they are inconvenient to him.

There is now the strange idea of a college for the technology of the arts. It is not just Opposition Members who have thought that to be a strange idea. Lord Beloff, a Conservative peer, said this of the proposition:

"To put forward at the Report stage of a Bill of this kind a suggestion that was not tabled either at Second Reading or at the Committee stage puts Members of this House at something of a disadvantage . . . But to think that at Report stage, at 9.50 pm, the House of Lords should invent a new kind of School—no one has suggested that this would be a partnership—is asking rather a lot."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 27 June 1988; Vol. 498, c. 1249.]

[Mr. Straw]

At no stage during his speech today did the Secretary of State give us any details about how the school was to operate, what were to be its capital costs, or how much of the capital costs was to be met by the taxpayer, not by private donors.

This country faces a serious science crisis. We spend less on civil research than any other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils has said that our policy on science research is at a watershed and slipping in the wrong direction. Half the teachers of maths and physics did not study at degree level the subject that they now teach and 40 per cent. of postgraduates qualifying to teach do not enter the profession. The Engineering Council and the Secondary Heads Association has estimated a shortage of science teachers of 4,000 maths teachers and 2,300 physics teachers.

To that crisis the Secretary of State's only response is the CTC. The director-general of the CBI said that the idea of CTCs is irrelevant. It is much more likely to be damaging to science teaching as a whole. Some £90 million is to be spent on CTCs over the next three years. How much better could that money be spent on upgrading laboratory facilities in existing schools, on extending in-service training, on improving career prospects and recruitment of science teachers, or on encouraging genuine partnership between business and existing schools? But as ever with the Secretary of State, we are offered a gimmick in place of a policy, which is now being bailed out at the taxpayers' expense. The Secretary of State's CTC policy is a scandal, a fraud and a failure. I oppose the amendments.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the debates on these amendments must conclude not later than 6.30 pm.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I welcome Lords amendment No. 230, which broadens the scope of CTCs. They will increase choice and diversity in the education system and will provide the skills that are so badly needed in Britain.

There are three reasons why CTCs should be set up. First, as was realised in America—sadly, it has not been realised by the Opposition—excellence is increased by increasing choice. Parents and children want choice, and that is why, when Kingshurst opened its books for pupils, 4,000 children from as far away as Bristol and Glasgow applied for the 175 places available. It provides a competitive spur for nearby schools. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that Kingshurst will have a debilitating effect on schools in the area, despite the fact that its catchment area is extremely wide. It will take 100 pupils from the Birmingham area, and when one considers that the annual intake to secondary schools in Birmingham is 14,000, to say that Kingshurst is likely to have an effect on schools in the vicinity is to live in cloud-cuckoo-land.

The extended CTCs will provide a further choice, in our cities and I hope elsewhere, for many children who would otherwise be denied it, irrespective of their race, income and abilities—except for enthusiasm for and commitment to the idea.

The second reason is that technology—especially technology connected with the arts—is demanded by the jobs market. Professor Charles Handy of the Institute of Personnel Management estimates that, although 50 years ago 30 per cent. of the population were knowledge workers, in 10 years' time the proportion will have increased to 70 per cent. When we realise that 40 per cent. of pupils presently leave school without qualifications and that too many of our pupils do not have a commitment in their fourth and fifth years to what our schools are producing—in some schools near Birmingham 120 of the 270 fifth formers do not attend school at the beginning of their fifth year—making the curriculum relevant, as CTCs will do, becomes increasingly vital.

We are told about the necessity for engineering apprenticeships. In my constituency engineering apprenticeships are available but, sadly, such are the relations between schools and industry that only 50 per cent. are taken up. In West Germany, 85 per cent. of 16 to 18-year-olds continue in training. In the United States the proportion is 80 per cent., but in Britain it is only 60 per cent., and of them, only one third continue at school. As a result, it should not be surprising—although Opposition Members do not seem to understand it—that Britain produces only 13,500 engineers a year compared with 40,000 in Germany. More importantly, only 4,000 of the former find their way into manufacturing industry.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The hon. Gentleman is making a fairly interesting point about the lack of training places for young people aged over 16 compared with the position in Germany and the United States. But which Government have disbanded training boards almost wholesale across the country?

Mr. Coombs: The engineering industry training board has said that funding for engineering apprenticeships, which are available but not taken up, has not declined under this Government. We heard that at a conference last week. CTCs will be another means of resolving the problem of engineering training.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Is the hon. Gentleman asserting that the number of engineering apprenticeships has not declined under this Government? If he believes that, he has been sadly misinformed.

Mr. Coombs: Last week the engineering industry training board said that the present method of funding engineering apprenticeship and training generally is satisfactory, but that the problem is that school leavers are not taking up those apprenticeships.

Specialist schools such as CTCs imply commitment, and at Kingshurst the emphasis is not on ability but on the commitment of parents and pupils. As the Secretary of State said, it is significant that the IQs of the children who attend Kinghurst vary between 72 and 128. In the United States, the former Benjamin Franklin school in New York had a 56 per cent. drop-out rate and only 7 per cent. of its pupils went on to further education. Since it was changed into a specialist school for mathematics and science it has attracted 3,000 applicants for 350 places. Half still come from the Harlem area and 95 per cent. of pupils go on to colleges.

Valerie Bragg, the principal of the CTC in Solihull, said that for her first parents' meeting nearly all the parents turned up, and the 10 who did not sent their apologies.

CTCs will also encourage commitment from their staff. Although some teachers—not all—may be paid up to 5 per cent. more than average form teachers, at Kingshurst they are expected to do 40 hours of teaching a week, which is on average 30 per cent. more than they would be expected to do in state schools. They will gain 5 per cent. more pay for 30 per cent. more teaching hours, but they are prepared to show that commitment.

City technology colleges are a recognition of the fact that a specialised technological curriculum will provide commitment, choice and high standards. The hon. Member for Blackburn seems to have learnt that lesson. He is reported to have said that a Labour Government —it will probably not happen during the next 25 years —would not abolish CTCs. We shall be following the German example of specialist schools—the Gymnasium, the Hauptschule and the Realschule—in providing vocational training. Further, CTCs do not cut across the commitment to comprehensive education. Valerie Bragg says that she is a great believer in comprehensive schools, and she believes that, eventually, all schools will go in the direction that her CTC is taking.

Mr. Morgan: Which of those three categories of German school that the hon. Gentleman referred to as specialist schools are available to all children in Germany? I do not see any resemblance between them and the CTC concept.

5 pm

Mr. Coombs: Anyone who has visited a Realschule—I visited the one in Frankfurt which has very close links with the local Höechst chemicals factory—will find that a company's relationship with a local school and its curriculum is similar to that being offered by the CTCs, and that that is the model upon which CTCs have been based.

CTCs will be consistent with the national curriculum, will provide choice, excellence and the involvement with parents and local industry that parents want. Most of all, they will act as a catalyst for greater choice and opportunity for the children, irrespective of their ability and their ability to pay. They will act as a catalyst for higher standards because of that choice and the resulting commitment. They will tend to bridge the gap that is evident throughout the country between schools and especially manufacturing industry because of the technological curriculum that they will provide. That is yet another and natural continuation of schemes such as the training and vocational education initiative, UBI, Trident and the enterprise programme that have been set up under this Government. I hope that they will be a forerunner of the potential for specialist and magnet schools, whether in the local education authority sector or outside. Those CTCs, especially as expanded for schools offering technology for art, will offer parents a degree of choice, variety and quality in education that they have not been offered hitherto and that the country desperately needs. That is why I shall be supporting the Lords amendment.

Mr. Tony Banks: I have just received the written reply to my question No. 5 this afternoon, and I want to make sure that it is correct. The Secretary of State's answer is:

"Total planned public expenditure on the city technology colleges programme over the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 is £90 million, which includes both capital and recurrent costs. To date more than £25 has been pledged by sponsors towards the capital costs of establishing CTCs. This is . . . quite unprecedented".

I imagine that it probably is—wholly unprecedented. I would not have thought that one would get very much for £25. One might be able to buy a packet of cigarettes, although I do not know whether British American Tobacco would want them smoked around the back of the lavatories in the CTCs. One must assume that there is an error here and, clearly, the Department of Education and Science needs to improve its numeracy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has said much of what wanted to say, so I will not detain the House for very long. As hon. Members know, I have to attend a Procedure Committee meeting in a moment and I apologise to hon. Members for not staying to hear the rest of the debate. It is clear from what we have heard this afternoon that the CTCs were nothing more than the Secretary of State going for a cheap round of applause and, indeed, a standing ovation at the 1986 Conservative party conference. One understands that that is the norm at Conservative party conferences. Everyone who is capable of walking, talking and farting at the same time gets a standing ovation. To make sure of a standing ovation the Secretary of State thought he would try to bribe the conference by saying that he would set up 20 CTCs during the decade but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, his strategy now lies in ruins at his feet. His fumbling and bumbling during Question Time and when talking on this part of the Bill clearly revealed that.

I object strongly to the way in which the British taxpayer is being forced to pay out to save Baker's face. It is not a very handsome face and is certainly not worth £90 million of taxpayers' money. That is why we have tabled our amendment (a). If all the money, or a great majority of it—by which I mean 90 per cent.—was forthcoming from private business, the Opposition might see something in it, because it would be a bit of icing on the cake, but the British taxpayer has now to bail out this lamentable failure, this apology of a policy from this apology of a Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State said that he cannot tell us the name of the companies. Excuse us for believing that he probably does not know the names. It is the cheapest trick in the book to come to the Dispatch Box and say, "I have lots and lots of promises, but, unfortunately, I cannot tell the House what they amount to. I cannot name any of them." The Secretary of State has not the sort of track record that makes us want to take him at his word.

Mr. Brando-Bravo: Not so loud.

Mr. Banks: I am speaking loudly, because I hope that I can get it through the skulls even of Conservative Members that what they are defending is a fraud and a con on the British people, because for education these proposals are not worth the paper that they are written on.

It is now clear that the Secretary of State cannot give straight answers. We did not ask the Secretary of State to reveal anything—just the number of companies involved. We cannot therefore believe anything that he says about CTCs and the future funding of them. The Secretary of State is, no doubt, trying to induce various Tory party-inclined business people to give money to save his face and that of the Prime Minister and the Government. He will be saying, "You can see that we do quite proudly by our friends when they stump up money for the

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Conservative party. If you put up some money for the CTCs, the odd knighthood or peerage could just mysteriously come your way."

Mr. Hawkins: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would enlighten us on which Lords amendment he is speaking to.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman knows precisely which one I am speaking to. It is all about CTCs and their funding.

One can imagine what is being done at the moment, because the Secretary of State is sprawling on the ropes. His policy is in tatters around him and he desperately needs some support. I can imagine him going along to Richard Branson, who seems to the the favourite Conservative-inclined business man at the moment, and saying, "Come on Richard, let us see some of that money and you can have a knighthood or a peerage." I shall watch the honours list very carefully because before long I know that we shall see the Count of Condoms or Lord Johnnie Branson appearing in it—him and his Mates.

Mr. Hawkins: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether the other place will think that the House has given any serious consideration to its amendments to this part of the Bill.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I believe that the establishment of city technology colleges is perhaps the most exciting, radical and much-needed development in education policy since the second world war. It is interesting, but not surprising, that yet another initiative from the Conservative party helps inner cities and makes what is taught more relevant and useful to the world of work. It gives expression to that part of the 1944 Act relating to a tripartite system, which was never given a chance to succeed.

The CTCs will have a number of features. They will lead and implement curriculum development in science and technology. They will widen parental choice, raise standards and introduce more competition—competition is a good word—and they will extend diversity and break the monopoly of education provision by often stale, backward-looking and out-of-touch Left-wing local education authorities.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Which amendment is the hon. Gentleman speaking to?

Mr. Amos: I am speaking to amendment No. 230—the same amendment as the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) spoke to.

There is a crying need in this country for closer and more productive links between the education system and the wealth-producing parts of the economy. We simply must have more mobility of personnel and ideas between schools and colleges, industry and commerce and the Civil Service. As a country, we are too inward-looking, resistant to change and demarcated.

We should, therefore, welcome with open arms, not only the active interest by industry and commerce, but their willingness to invest their money. We should not be suspicious of that partnership, but excited by its possibilities. It represents a logical development of other Government initiatives to ensure that we have a properly trained and skilled work force to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next decade. We already have the TVEI and the CPVE. I am happy to confirm what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier about the Labour party's attitude towards the TVEI. When I was chairman of the education committee in Enfield, the council resisted and objected to the idea and rejected the money. It has now changed its mind because it has seen that the system works.

All too often, economic growth is held back by a lack of skilled manpower. As the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) knows, the problem of the lack of skilled manpower is already affecting the north-east. Northern Engineering Industries, Procter and Gamble and the Northern Development Company have already identified that problem. Local businesses in my constituency, which borders that of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West, are concerned about that problem and are doing something about it. Business is forging links, through the Northumbria employer network and the Tynedale Enterprise Agency Ltd., with local schools so that the schools can be better aware of the needs of the local economy and businesses can in turn provide school children with more direct experience of the world outside while they are at school. I cannot see why the Labour party does not welcome that initiative with open arms.

CTCs will be firmly in the state sector. They will be free, open to all pupils and have wide catchment areas.

Mr. Straw: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Secretary of State, in evidence to the Select Committee, said that CTCs would not be in the state sector, but would be private schools?

Mr. Amos: They are independent state schools, but, if the running costs and some of the capital costs of those colleges are provided by the state, the colleges clearly have a direct link with the state. It is nonsense to pretend that they are totally independent.

The CTCs will provide real hope for inner city youngsters to escape from the cycle of educational deprivation and from large, impersonal, bady disciplined comprehensive schools in which the curriculum is neither relevant nor suited to the needs of most of their pupils.

Ms. Armstrong: It is interesting to note that the hon. Gentleman sees Hexham as an inner city. Will he tell us whether any northern authority has welcomed the initiative and believes that it will meet the need for improved training and skill development in the northern region?

5.15 pm

Mr. Amos: Yes, I can confirm that the Northumbria employer network, the Tynedale Enterprise Agency Ltd and the Northern Development Company have welcomed the initiative.

The establishment of CTCs will bring extra money into the education system. They will remain accountable to the Secretary of State for the way in which they spend their state grant. In effect, they will bring in new people with new ideas and a new style of management. That partnership between local industry and central Government has again brought to life cities that were destined to long-term decline. We should look around the world and broaden our horizons a little.

We can see a revival based on that partnership in Baltimore, Boston and New England. Those areas have built new economic growth and hope on the basis of the hi-tech industries of the future, instead of trying to reverse the irreversible long-term decline of manufacturing industry. The sooner we have a CTC on Tyneside, the better. Perhaps I can ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State whether he will consider extending the initiative to rural areas such as Hexham where the need for a highly skilled and professional work force is just as important as in the cities.

The concept and practice of CTCs are right. As a teacher, I was often saddened to see so many pupils being dragged through watered-down academic courses which we knew had little relevance to their needs, abilities and aptitudes. It was a terrible waste of resources and of youngsters' opportunities. By concentrating on technology and science in those schools, many pupils will be able to use their innate abilities instead of becoming bored and disruptive pupils elsewhere. CTCs may be outside the system, but what is so sacrosanct about a decadent system? I ask Opposition Members to take this opportunity, instead of trying to defend stale old structures and practices. Whereas the Labour party destroys direct grant schools and grammar schools, we are building new city technology colleges.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In opening the debate, the Secretary of State spoke about high levels of truancy, lack of qualifications, the need for schools to be in close contact with industry and commerce and the opportunities that were being denied to some children and the concern of their parents about that denial of opportunities. He sought to justify the amendments by reference to those issues. I ask him, therefore, why Ministers are talking to the Haberdashers' Aske's schools in Deptford. I cannot understand how those problems have been identified in those schools in Deptford because I do not believe that they exist there. How will the amendments introduce into the legislation a solution to problems that have not been perceived to be present in schools in Deptford?

The Secretary of State's original proposals sought to introduce new schools as an addition to the education provision. In Question Time today, we heard about redundant buildings and the need to make use of such buildings. Why, therefore, has he picked two flourishing comprehensive schools to be proposed as a CTC? They are neither empty buildings—heaven forbid—nor do they fall under the category of new provisions.

On the contrary, in Deptford we are fortunate to have the Haberdashers' Aske's girls and boys schools which the parents, teachers and governors of those schools will defend as schools of excellence. Why, therefore, should we have a CTC?

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Does the hon. Lady agree that one of the reasons why my right hon. Friend is pursuing that policy is that Labour authorities are not making available redundant schools? If they were, we would see many more CTCs being created in the areas where they are most needed.

Ms. Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman seems to suggest that, because the Secretary of State was frustrated in his efforts to get 20 CTCs, he is picking on two good and flourishing comprehensives. That is no answer. At the moment, the schools are operational and provide the education that children in my constituency need.

More important, those two schools are part of a five-school north Lewisham consortium which was set up specifically by the Labour-controlled ILEA to do some of the things about which the Government have spoken so enthusiastically. It was set up to raise standards, to provide sixth-form education for all five schools and to provide opportunities for the most disadvantaged children in my community, and there are many hundreds of those children. In short, the consortium was set up to give young people the benefit of the expertise that could be brought together from five schools.

Let me explain to the Secretary of State just how it works, in case he has not been able to look into the matter. There is a system whereby the school which is the most excellent and the most expertise in a particular topic offers a sixth-form course to all the children from the five schools. There is a combined revision centre for all the children from the five schools, funded by ILEA—I wonder for how long under this Government. It is genuine community-based education and it is extremely popular with parents.

I shall use the study of politics as an example. In the lower sixth this year, six children came from Addey and Stanhope school, six children from Aske's boys' school, five children from Aske's girls' school, two children from Deptford Green, and on this occasion none from Hatcham Wood. Will there be any room for the study of politics in the curriculum of the CTCs? If those two Aske's schools, which happen to be the best resourced schools of the consortium, are taken out, what will happen to the three remaining schools? What will happen to their sixth forms? What will happen to the 11 to 18 education that ILEA has attempted to provide in my constituency?

The Secretary of State spoke about contact with business, industry and commerce. What about the ILEA compact, which I suggest has been more successful in making those contacts than he has been in trying to involve and interest any sector of business or industry in my constituency with regard to funding of the CTCs? Those five schools have coped well with the problem of falling rolls with which we are all familiar.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Ruddock: No. I have very little time.

The plans to expand the intake of 11-year-olds to the CTCs, which could mean an increase of 30 or even 60 children, would disrupt the partnership between primary and secondary schools in that area. The relationships between primary and secondary schools are extremely good. If the Secretary of State is in favour of parental choice, how will he give real parental choice to the parents of children in about 80 primary schools, whose parental choice will be limited by the removal of two of those secondary schools?

Mr. Bostock, the chairman of the governors of the Haberdashers' Aske's schools, has been persuaded that the status of a CTC will guarantee the continuation of 16 to 19 provision within the two schools for which he is responsible. Does the Secretary of State justify that with the destruction of the sixth forms of three other schools? Is he confident that the whole project might not result in the closure of one of those five schools? Is it not true that

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there will be increasing selective entry? If the schools are as good as he suggests, there will be competition, and what will happen to the more disadvantaged children who will be limited in their choice of school?

As for parental rights, will the Secretary of State guarantee that there will be consultation of all the people in my constituency who will be affected? Perhaps he remembers, as I do, that in April the chairman of the governors produced proposals without consultation to close those schools by September this year.

All the parents in my constituency are deeply worried about this divisive and elitist proposal that goes against all that we have striven to provide in terms of equality and opportunity in my constituency. Furthermore, Mr. Bostock has been led to believe that £4 million of public money might be available for the setting up of a CTC. Is that the case? Is the sum around £4 million? How can he justify that, when the running costs of all five schools in the consortium amounts to about £5 million?

Our schools are being starved of capital and funding because of the policies of this Government. The ILEA has reduced capitation allowances by nearly 60 per cent. and we have been trying to get Victorian buildings renovated and repaired throughout the years in which the Government have sought to impose cuts on ILEA and on our schools. Indeed, 75 per cent. of the maintenance grant has been cut from a school that I visited last week, yet, remarkably, after all the works at the Haberdashers' Aske's girls' school which were listed to be done and which could not be funded, suddenly two weeks ago an architect was busily inspecting the whole school, not to repair the leaking roof which we have been told could not be afforded, but to make an assessment of just how much money would be needed to set up the school as a CTC.

It is a horrible proposal because it seeks to steal money from the majority and give it to the minority. I am for excellence. I am a scientist by training and throughout my political career I have argued for the need for more science teachers, more science training and better education for our children. In my constituency, the parents, governors and teachers are all for more resources, more expertise and better educational standards. When I as their Member of Parliament demand those things, I do so on the basis that we want them for all. We do not want to take for some and leave the rest poor. In my constituency, educational standards need real public funding for real equality of opportunity and that is why we oppose the amendment.

Mr. Evennett: I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate. I welcome the clause which broadens the scope of the CTCs to include the creative arts. I also welcome the Secretary of State's comments on the city technology colleges. In particular, I should like to voice my support for his aims which will benefit the children.

We must not forget that we are talking primarily about the interests of the children, and, secondly, about parental rights. Those are the central issues to the clauses and to the establishment of city technology colleges. I hope that there will be a city technology college established in Thamesmead which is in my constituency. At present, the matter is before Bexley council, and eventually, no doubt, it will come before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his decision.

In principle, and contrary to the comment of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), there is widespread support for a city technology college in Thamesmead from parents on both sides of the borough divide. The hon. Member for Blackburn mentioned no comments from parents from the Greenwich side of the borough boundary, who at present do not have a very good education system within the borough because it is under the control of ILEA. Large numbers of people in Greenwich write to me or Bexley education authority wanting their children to come across. Therefore, it is not true that parents in Thamesmead do not want a city technology college.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Evennett: I shall give way in a moment.

I also remind the House that a similar poll took place in Thamesmead on the abolition of the GLC, and the results were similar. The Thamesmead Town Trust is running affairs so much better than the GLC did when it existed. People forget about the GLC and they do not regret that it was abolished. Not only are people not aware of what the GLC did but they look positively at what the Thamesmead Town Trust is doing and welcome it.

Mr. Straw: Are we to understand that, although the hon. Gentleman voted for the idea of a ballot among parents of an individual school where that triggers an opt-out application, he wholly dismisses the result of a similar ballot where the vote was nine to one against having a CTC?

5.30 pm

Mr. Evennett: As usual, the hon. Gentleman misses the point. I am talking about parents throughout Thamesmead, not just those concerned with one school. As I tried to explain in an intervention, during the past 20 years in which I have been involved in education, there have been Secretaries of State, including Shirley Williams in the Labour Government, who took no notice of parents who wanted grammar schools. One hundred per cent. of parents voted in favour of the retention of particular schools, but no notice was taken of them. We are talking about the establishment of city technology colleges in areas where there is a need for improved education. A CTC in Thamesmead would be welcomed by the vast majority of parents and would be in the interests of the vast majority of children, and we must never forget that.

I do not want to dwell too long on Thamesmead, because it is not mentioned in the Lords amendment. However, the debates there reflect what has been going on in debates in this Chamber and in the other place. Many people in Dartford support proposals to establish a CTC there. I understand from the Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn)—and many other people that there is strong support from teachers, parents and the local authority to establish a CTC in Dartford. I have it on good authority that even the leader of the Labour council has shown some support for the principle of a CTC.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): There is a minority Labour group in Dartford—that is not quite the same

thing. I confirm that Councillor Noel Jones, leader of the minority Labour group on Dartford borough council, has welcomed the principle of a CTC in north-west Kent.

Mr. Evennett: As always, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. It is interesting to note how progressive certain Labour politicians are outside the House; it is a pity that there are not more of them in the Chamber speaking on these issues.

Conservative Members welcome the opportunity for choice in education. We deplore the standardisation that the comprehensive route allowed. There is choice for parents and children in Bexley, where there are excellent grammar schools and technology colleges, and there is an excellent bilateral school at Erith. We believe in choice for parents and the maximum opportunities for all children.

One would think from the Opposition's comments that the CTCs are élitist——

Ms. Armstrong: They are.

Mr. Evennett: I am sorry that the hon. Lady again refuses to listen. Perhaps she would learn something if she did.

A CTC in Thamesmead would give all children, across the ability range, an opportunity to attend. At the moment, the majority of children do not have such an opportunity. Conservative Members also believe in excellence in education. We should like education standards to be raised across the board, by giving greater variety and opportunity.

Much has been said about technology. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) talked about politics in schools. We all look for a wide opportunity for study in schools, but there are tremendous shortages in science, creative arts and technology. We must ask the Opposition what alternatives they would come up with to meet this crying need. Unfortunately, it seems from the Labour-controlled education authorities that the Labour party has no suggestions. What is Labour's proposal to meet the need to educate our children for the future? There are no suggestions and no policies. The answer is shrouded in the mists of secrecy. There is the old rhetoric from the Labour Front Bench on what Labour would like by way of more money and so on, but there appear to be no policies to provide skills in science and technology to redress the imbalance.

Ms. Ruddock: To produce the best scientists and technologists, scientific and technological education must be provided in every secondary school. It should not be provided in just a few at the expense of the many.

Mr. Evennett: The hon. Lady is known to be wrong frequently on these matters. Why is that education not provided now? I can speak from experience in ILEA and I shall take no lessons from the Opposition. The money was spent in ILEA, but the facilities were not provided. It is no good the Opposition saying that they want simply to provide education for everyone. ILEA has had the money and been found wanting. We must look to the interests of the education of children for the future and to a new approach. CTCs offer a new approach providing the skills of tomorrow.

I can speak from my constituency experience when I visit people connected with industry and commerce. They are crying out for people to learn the new technologies. We have been too slow in following those routes. That must be the fault of the local education authority. We know ILEA's views and the way in which it likes to spend the money, but it does not spend it primarily in the interests of children or in the country's long-term interests.

Why are the Opposition so against CTCs? They think that they will be successful and that there will be an increased demand for places because the education offered will be of such a high standard. It is interesting that all the proposals and ideas for the future come from Conservative Members. The CTCs are bold initiatives, backed by Government and private finance. They offer an opportunity to move forward to the next century and to look to a better education, one that is relevant to the needs of children—not one that looks to the past and the disaster of the comprehensives. It is only too apparent to those of us who have worked in London schools and who know what is happening on the ground that the vast comprehensives did not work.

It ill behoves the Labour Front Bench to suggest that the future is to be found in the way of the past, and that we should just carry on in the same old way. That will not do. We want to go forward in the interests of all children. That will not be done by throwing money around, as some London authorities believe.

Ms. Armstrong: If the hon. Gentleman is so interested in moving forward and not going back to the past, why is he such a staunch defender of A-levels, which most people in most universities say will not provide the skill and knowledge base for the future?

Mr. Evennett: I am afraid that if I stray down that path I shall be very wide of the Lords amendment.

We are looking for a better curriculum and for better training and opportunities for children in science and technology.

Mr. Dunn: Do not the comments of Opposition Members display an indescribable lack of knowledge of the needs of south-east London and north Kent along the riverside? Moreover, do they not understand that many authorities controlled by us see this not as a conflict but as an extra dimension of choice? That point has to be made time and again.

Mr. Evennett: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is rather sad to hear the hon. Member for Blackburn speak about a particular school in Thamesmead. Perhaps he should come down to my constituency and the neighbouring one and talk to some parents, because he is not knowledgeable about the area and its needs. The hon. Gentleman is not even listening, which I regret very much, as he is only too willing to use examples from my constituency, but when I try to put him right he is not willing to listen.

Mr. Straw: I was merely reflecting that Buckhurst Hill county high school, where the hon. Gentleman was educated, has been turned into a comprehensive by a Conservative authority. Is he complaining about that?

Mr. Evennett: I am not talking about my own school; I am talking about a school in my constituency which the hon. Gentleman named in his speech. I am talking about the needs of my constituents. I do not represent Buckhurst Hill or speak for that authority. I am pointing out that parents in Thamesmead would very much like a city technology college to be established in the area that the

[Mr. Evennett]

hon. Gentleman mentioned. As I have said, it is up to the local education authority to make the decision, and I would not dream of commenting on what is done by other local authorities, because I am not involved in them.

In principle, we are seeking a bold new initiative that has the support of the vast majority of parents who want a better education for their children. Bearing in mind the money spent by the taxpayer, they are not happy with the present system, and that is the reason for the Bill. We are aiming to improve results.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): The changes affecting the Buckhurst Hill county high school, to which the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) referred, are not the policy of a Conservative authority. They are the policy of Essex county council, which is not Conservative-controlled.

Mr. Evennett: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me some local knowledge of an area with which I no longer have contact.

We know why the Opposition do not like the amendment. They do not like change; they do not like choice; they do not believe in excellence; they do not like facts; they do not want to raise standards. They prefer to depress rather than elevate the conditions of our children. I consider their views misguided and inaccurate, and I look forward to a successful CTC network across the country.

Mr. Ashdown: The House will have listened to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) with incredulity. I was intrigued by his speech, which seemed a product more of Conservative party propaganda than of brainwork. He said rather interestingly that it had sprung from his own experience. I thought that that would bear some examination and that it might be worth looking up the hon. Gentleman's entry in Dod. Having done so, I learnt to my surprise that the hon. Gentleman indeed has experience of education. He was a teacher for two years before becoming a Lloyd's underwriter, which he remained for 16 years. The House may comment on such a remarkable translation, but I feel certain that in the hon. Gentleman's speech we heard the voice of the Lloyd's underwriter rather than that of the teacher.

The idea that the Government are offering greater choice in any part of the Bill—let alone the part dealing with city technology colleges—is fraudulent nonsense. There may be choice for the parents of those fortunate enough to go to the few CTCs that there will be, and I do not pretend that they will not be chosen from across the ability range. But at what cost? The cost has been clearly displayed in the figures and the fact that payment for teachers will come from a different source. The same applies to opting out. A party that masquerades under the banner of choice and freedom is offering choice for the few —the advantaged and the rich—and the devil take the rest.

5.45 pm

Mr. Evennett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I always enjoy his performances, but I should like to ask him two questions. First, what experience has he in education? Secondly, as one who has been an ILEA governor-manager for many years, may I ask him what inner city experience he has in education?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman has asked me a direct question. I have been a member of a local education authority—as he will discover if he cares to look up my biography—for longer than the hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] In Dorset county council. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that someone who has no experience in a specialised range cannot comment? That is nonsense.

Mr. Evennett: The city technology college is an inner city initiative.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for digging a hole and then conveniently jumping straight into it. The Government said first that the CTC was concerned with inner cities, but they have had to move the goalposts there as everywhere else. When he first thought of this gimcrack idea, the Secretary of State referred to inner cities. That was in his speech, but the Government changed it because it would not work. The Bill has nothing to do with inner cities: it refers to urban areas, and that will be the theme of what I have to say.

The debate has been wide-ranging, dealing with the Government's policies on CTCs in general. That is as well, because the policy is now revealed as a miserable failure. I might even bring myself to feel sorry for the Secretary of State, given the mess into which he has got himself, but for the fact that the rope with which he has hanged himself consists of two strands of his own manufacture. The first seeks to implement, whatever the cost to children and to education, the ideology of the Conservative party. The second seeks to make practical what was essentially a mere gimmick. During the general election and before, we said that this was a "gimmick a day" Secretary of State. A gimmick a day takes attention away from the other problems of education, but this gimmick is now coming home to roost.

By any standards—even the Government's own—the policy has manifestly failed. Almost the most interesting question, which the Secretary of State refused to answer, was put to him by me. He had set himself a target of 20 CTCs by the end of the decade. When I asked him to repeat that, he refused. He knows that there is no earthly chance of establishing even five CTCs by the end of the decade. He has told us that the likely figure is three by the end of next year.

The policy has failed on other counts. The major proportion of the money was to be provided by industry, but we now know that the Treasury will have to provide the lion's share—in some cases, a huge preponderance. The Secretary of State said that the project would be for inner cities. He has now had to move the goalposts to make it relevant to urban areas. The facts—not the rhetoric—that the Government have presented show that they have underestimated the cost of buildings that will be required to put this madcap scheme into operation, and manifestly overestimated the amount that industry is prepared to contribute—a measly £25 million, pledged but not yet delivered. Watch this space, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I suspect that it will be much less than that.

The scheme is only being rescued by politically sympathetic local education authorities. The measly three that have been established, compared with the 20 that we were promised, have been established only in politically sympathetic authorities.

Ms. Armstrong: Solihull.

Mr. Ashdown: Yes, the deprived area of Solihull.

Does not the Secretary of State find a certain irony in the fact that he has set up the system to bypass the LEAs, yet he cannot bring it into operation without the political co-operation of his political friends in the LEAs that they control? What an irony there is there.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Earlier, the hon. Gentleman spoke about choice for a few. That seems to be a common theme on the Opposition Benches. They believe that if everybody cannot have choice, nobody can have it. That is a foolish point.

It is true that there is great difficulty in finding sites within inner cities. That is because, in general, they are represented by Labour authorities which are fundamentally opposed to the idea. The citizens of Nottingham are grateful that, by a majority of one, the council is Conservative-controlled so that planning consent has been possible.

Mr. Ashdown: Sites have not been found in inner cities because industry would not stump up the money to buy them. The Government manifestly underestimated the cost of purchasing those sites. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) gave us a clear example of how, when the public are consulted, they are opposed to the scheme. This is an ideological bandwagon that the Government are determined to push through, irrespective of the damage that it does to education.

Mr. Dunn *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), I shall then give way.

The hon. Gentleman raised a fair point. I do claim that the choice that the Government are offering is fraudulent for reasons that have been well advanced here and in Committee, but it is reasonable to ask whether there is an alternative, and I believe that there is. I am on record as having said in Committee that I do not object to industry sponsorship. I do not object to industry partnership or to bringing in funds from outside. I do not even object to new foundations of schools, provided that they submit to the overall admissions policy and to the quality control operated by the LEA. That is the key point, because that would ensure that the needs of all are met and that those who at the occasional opted-out school, which will essentially be an island school which disrupts education provision for others, do not receive that advantage—if there is an advantage, and I suspect that there will be—paid for at the expense of others who are in less favourable positions. That is the way round the Government's point about how we would offer choice.

I am interested in one fact about the Government's proposals. I believe that I am right in saying—I am ready to be corrected if the Minister feels that I am wrong—that even for those CTCs that will be opened in September no funding agreement has yet been published. As I understand it, those agreements remain secret. Why? Is it because, once again, the Government intend to move the goalposts and make sure that the Treasury put in whatever money is necessary to make their policy work? To make this impractical gimcrack ideology, which will so damage education, work, they are prepared to use untold amounts of taxpayers' money, taken away from other sections of education.

It is wrong to say that this is new money. Of course it is not new money. It comes out of the same pot. When millions of pounds are spent on three schools—more than is given for the upkeep and fabric of 847 other schools in the same area—that is nothing less than damaging, divisive and dangerous.

Mr. Dunn: I want to clarify one point. Earlier, the hon. Gentleman said that the Government's policy has failed miserably. If it has failed, why the excitement? Then he went on to say that this is most damaging to the education system. If it has failed, because in his view the number of colleges is so small, how can it damage the education system? Secondly, how does the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the legislation and the philosophy of his approach to education differ from that of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)?

Mr. Ashdown: I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you would call me to order if I sought to answer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I will answer the hon. Gentleman's question. He knows the answer well. He knows the proposals that we have put forward. As someone who has mastered his brief, he will have read the document that I produced entitled "The Alternative Education Bill". He will know how our policy differs from that of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

The Minister asks why there is such a furore if the policy has failed. Failed though it has, the Government are prepared to push it through at whatever cost to the Exchequer—money that others will be robbed of. The damage will be paid for by those left outside the CTC system.

Mr. Pawsey: It has not failed.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman should choose any one of the criteria that the Government have set, either in respect of the Treasury contribution, or the number of schools which are to be established, or the definition about inner cities, and measure how far the Government have got down the line. By any one of those criteria, this is a miserable failure. The damage that the Minister asked about is being done because the Government are now seeking to drive through, at whatever cost, an idea that was cooked up on the back of a fag packet as a gimmick to get a standing ovation at the Tory party conference.

We shall vote against the amendment because here was an opportunity genuinely to establish a different kind of school. Here was an opportunity to bring in some new ideas. Here was an opportunity to set a decent framework for a partnership between industry and education, and to do it for the benefit of all within the framework of the admissions policy, the quality control and the curriculum set by the local education authority, but the Government have blown it. They have blown the opportunity and at the same time have damaged the education system. This is a miserable policy which the Government are now propping up at whatever cost. It deserves to die. I regret only that it will die slowly and painfully and expensively for many instead of being killed here in a Division.

Mr. Mills: I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House for having been briefly out of the Chamber to meet some constituents.

As I have the first CTC in my constituency, I count this as a most important matter. I have listened today to hypertense passion from the hon. Member for Blackburn

[Mr. Mills]

(Mr. Straw), who could not even get the name of Kingshurst right, and to synthetic indignation from various Opposition Members. Perhaps, on the basis of the degree of almost incoherent opposition to this policy, the opposition of the big and the multi-little, terribly little, Opposition parties, the House will judge that this is a good idea.

This is an extremely interesting extension of choice, not just ordinary choice, but choice on a technology base in an area which requires the regeneration of its manufacturing technology.

I use words such as "synthetic", "hypertense" and "incoherent" because Opposition Members do not even seem to realise where the college will be based and the character of the area. Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst, which I have had the honour to represent for many years, is an extremely deprived area. It is north of the Solihull borough and is quite unlike it. I advise the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), who has been laughing the whole way through——

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): As my hon. Friend's nextdoor neighbour and sharing the borough of Solihull with him, I can endorse every word that he has said. I should like to explain that there is a considerable difference in the nature and texture of the borough between north and south. Every word that my hon. Friend has said is correct. His area needs this choice, and I am glad that it has got it.

6 pm

Mr. Mills: I welcome the words of my hon. Friend. Like many hon. Members, we have varied constituencies. I hope that Opposition Members will listen carefully to what I am about to say. Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood has an extremely high level of unemployment. I do not know whether I need to spell that out. It is an area that in the past has been terribly dependent on manufacturing industry.

When speaking on this subject, I should declare an interest as one who has worked for 20 years in the car component industry in the area, literally two miles from the school in question, so I do know a little about it. In my career I worked on the shop floor, the design board and eventually as senior manager and I know only too well manufacturing industry's demand for young people emerging from their school education with technological knowledge. I cannot stress how strongly I resent the remarks made by Opposition Members who seem neither to understand the needs of the west midlands and especially the needs of deprived parts of it, nor the need for technology. They have obviously never seen engineering or manufacturing except through a long-distance telescope, probably with the wrong end clapped to their blind eye. That seems the measure of their understanding or misunderstanding of the objectives of the CTCs.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Mr. Mills: I have waited patiently to speak in the debate and am not going to give way. I have already apologised to the House. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Mr. Mills: I shall continue. The CTC is based in Kingshurst and will offer a technology-based education.

What is the test of success? Opposition Members have talked about failure, but what is success? People wish their children to be involved in this new form of education——

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Mr. Mills: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the debate on short speeches, he would know why I am making my speech short. I have already taken six minutes and will take four minutes more——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We cannot have two Members on their feet at the same time. Mr. Mills.

Mr. Mills: I shall not give way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I wish to be brief.

If the test of success is demand, why has the school been oversubscribed by parents who wish their children to attend it? The demand is not just in the delineated catchment area, which is much wider than the Solihull borough—a point that has not been mentioned so far——

Ms. Armstrong: It has.

Mr. Mills: If that is so, I have missed it. Perhaps the House will forgive me. We should not be trivial about this important experiment. Any change in education will take time, effort and dedication and I congratulate the Government on giving all those things.

It is ridiculous for Opposition Members to try to diminish the number of industrial sponsors. I should have thought that Opposition Members would have been jumping around their Benches in astonishment at the fact that, to use the Opposition's own terms, the Government have got "capitalist" organisations to dig into their funds. However, instead of doing that, Opposition Members say, "It is not enough." I find that extraordinary. The list of industrial and commercial sponsors ranges from manufacturing to all sorts of industries which are apparently willing to put their hard-earned cash on the nail to create a school that will bring them children or young adults with a technology-based education. That is wildly exciting and should not be diminished. It has been done in 18 months.

I used the word "synthetic" about Opposition Members. The fact that Opposition Members say that it is a failure to move towards a technology-based education shows that their minds must be paralysed by the need for political opposition and that their minds are feeble and without logic. Opposition Members have an insensate desire to criticise the Government, but there is no logic in their argument. I would say that they are intemperate——

Mr. Grocott: Answer one question.

Mr. Mills: No, I shall not give way, knowing your eagerness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for other hon. Members to be called to speak for 10 minutes, which leaves me about one minute.

There will be choice for young people and their parents and improvements in deprived areas such as Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood which have unemployment rates so high as to be tragic, and a need for skills retraining.

In conclusion, as a member of the Select Committee on Employment, I visited Germany fairly recently for a couple of days to see what is happening there. Its

apprenticeship scheme, or the "Lehrling", shows that that country, which is supposed to be famous for indifference to change, is changing. The Ruhr and other parts of Germany now have skills training throughout the education system. We have this most exciting experiment, which will give my constituency and the west midlands more young people who are able to move into the factories in which I used to work, with not just knowledge but a knowledge of the ethic and culture of manufacturing industry. That should never be diminished. The experiment deserves to be tried. It has received far more support than we could ever have guessed when the Government launched it 18 months ago in partnership with industry, and with the voluntary interest of industrial companies. That bodes well for the future, for our technology and for the deprived areas of the west midlands.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Opposition Members have had to listen for too long this afternoon to what is essentially empty rhetoric about the extension of choice. We should look at the real facts. We may have three CTCs by 1990 in the whole of England. There is no talk of one in Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland at the moment.

We have been told about the wonderful amount of sponsorship that has been successfully put into the schools, but on the basis of the Secretary of State's answer about the number of companies that have been approached, we find that so far he has succeeded in achieving an interest in providing sponsorship for the city technology college scheme of 0·0101 per cent. recurring.

The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) said that the city technology colleges were about the interests of children and parental rights. I remind him that there will be three schools at an exorbitant cost. The school that is to be created on Teesside will receive £1·5 million from British American Tobacco and £4·5 million of Government money. However, the Cleveland local authority has a capital allocation of £3·6 million. Therefore, more money is being poured into one school than is given to the local authority for the whole of its capital allocation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."]—

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: No, I shall not give way because the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) refused to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). Therefore, I think that it would be better if I got on with my argument.

Mr. Devlin *rose*—

Mr. Griffiths: No, I shall not give way.

The truth is that Conservative Members—

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is refusing to give way on the ground that Teesside city technology college is not in my constituency. I can inform the House that it is, in fact, in my constituency, as is one third of Middlesbrough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has got his point on the record, but it is not really a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I made no claim about which area the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) represents or where the college will be situated.

The Government have introduced a programme on which they intend to spend £90 million to create a handful of schools in England. If they were truly concerned about the interests of all children they would divert that money to local authorities to help them to provide better facilities in their schools. We are opposed to the divisive nature of the CTCs. We are not against improving technical education, but let us provide such improvement for all children, not just a few.

Conservative Members have already gone to great lengths to prove that the CTCs are so popular that parents have been turned away. What choice is available to those parents and their children? It would be far better to improve the provision of technical facilities and technical teaching in all our schools than to try to scramble around getting industrial sponsorship for less than a handful of schools.

I am sure that Conservative Members read the article in *The Observer* this weekend, which highlighted another problem connected with the creation of CTCs. That article described how the Roman Catholic diocese of Newcastle and Hexham, which is part of the Gateshead municipal borough, is planning to sell one of its schools which is surplus to requirement and said that it will be used as a CTC. Gateshead has just gone through an extremely painful reorganisation process and it has already had to close four comprehensive schools to take account of falling rolls. If a new school is created within that area, the borough will have to consider its present schools and close one of them. What choice will be offered to parents if, as the result of the creation of another CTC, another school is closed? The parents would be forced to send their children elsewhere.

We must underline to the Government that they have failed in their intention to make "city" technology colleges because none of them is to be located in inner cities. They have failed in their intention to provide industrial sponsorship—it is running at about 15 per cent. compared with the 80 to 90 per cent. that the Secretary of State originally had in mind. Perhaps the Secretary of State would care to tell us exactly where he believes the 25 CTCs, about which he has such confidence, will be created.

A school that is faced with possible closure may believe that the way out is to apply to become a CTC, or it might consider it better to apply to be a grant-maintained school. Schools will have to consider the additional funding that they may receive. It may be a better option to be a CTC because the Government appear to be indiscriminately providing money for such schools. It is a pity that they are not indiscriminate when providing finance for comprehensive schools to improve their technical and other facilities.

Thanks to the way in which the Government are demoralising teachers, schools face difficulties with a number of subjects, not only technical subjects—foreign language teaching is in disarray. Surely the Secretary of State would agree that it would be far better to provide more resources to improve our foreign language teaching rather than just concentrating upon technology.

Conservative Members must come clean because they are trying to create selection by stealth and are trying to go back to the old 11-plus system. The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford referred to that system and spoke of the

[Mr. Griffiths]

choice between grammar and secondary moderns. It was not a system of choice, but one of selection—the parents had no choice. We want to avoid that. Let us provide money so that all our children can have a good education rather than a few.

6.15 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): We are delighted to note that the Secretary of State is back in the Chamber. That means either that nobody turned up for his drinks party or, unfortunately, that he had to cut it short. I congratulate those Conservative Back Benchers who stayed and did not take up his invitation.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has already said, this is the first opportunity that we have had to exchange our views on this important issue. Prior to today there had been no debate in Committee or in the House about this policy. As my hon. Friend said, the British taxpayer is having to bail out the Secretary of State's project. He has failed on every count and in particular he has failed to explain to us his CTC policy. That policy is a scandal, a fraud and a failure.

The Secretary of State's performance this afternoon was the performance of a man struggling up to his armpits in sinking sand. The Secretary of State chose to characterise local authorities' refusal to play ball with his half-baked idea as evidence of political dogma. However, ever since he announced his CTC initiative to the cheering hordes at the Tory party conference, he has emphasised that CTCs would be independent of local authorities and would draw heavily on industrial money and support. The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) still believes that is the case, and I hope that the Secretary of State will take note of that hon. Gentleman's special pleading.

Unfortunately, for the Secretary of State his grandiose schemes have collapsed about him. The begging bowl went round, but the captains of industry and even the bluest of the blue-chip companies, such as ICI, GEC, IBM and British Gas, refused to put anything in. Several leading firms, such as ICI, have made it clear publicly that they will not support the scheme. It has become painfully obvious that this tarnished idea, which was never discussed with education professionals or negotiated with local politicians, is proving to be a huge political embarrassment.

In yet another face-saving exercise the Government have moved the goalposts again. More public money is to be pumped in and the awkward local authorities are to be vilified, yet again. The Secretary of State has had to persuade the Treasury to bail him out and private sponsors are expected to foot only 20 per cent. of the bill. The Department's target of £20 million from private sponsorship was meant to represent almost all the capital costs of the planned 20 schemes, but such sponsorship now amounts to less than 10 per cent. of the cost. The rest of the necessary funding—we believe that it amounts to about £200 million—will come from the Treasury. It is unbelievable that any reputable company or local authority would allow the cost of a programme to increase more than 10 times in 18 months without an enormous outcry.

The taxpayer will receive a bill of £200 million, which is almost half the amount allocated for capital projects to all local authority schools, colleges and polytechnics for 1988-89. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) explained in her excellent speech how that money could be used to alleviate deprivation in her constituency. To master-mind the whole bizarre affair the Brylcreem boy has brought in his own envangelist, a man in his own image, the fund raiser in chief, Mr. Cyril Taylor—the former brand manager for Gleam toothpaste in the United States of America.

According to a report in *The Independent*, Mr. Taylor, who now has his own company and is a former Tory member of the GLC, took the project out of the hands of the civil servants. This is what he said:

"They had cheques on their desks and not even a bank account to put them in . . . They don't really understand how the world works."

It is worth looking at the original promises made in the glossy brochure to which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn referred. The Secretary of State declared that his initiatives would give parents a new choice of school and create fresh opportunities for the children of our cities. CTCs were to be sited in urban areas, particularly those suffering from acute social deprivation or those which are already the target of inner-city initiatives. The whole foundation of the CTC plan has been shaken by industry's justifiable reticence about getting involved; but our money —public money—is being used by the Secretary of State like Monopoly money so that he can buy his way out of prison and proceed to "Go". As the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) said, as they realise in America, one can increase excellence by increasing choice. What he did not say was that the United States experience of magnet schools, on which CTCs are modelled, is that they cream off the best pupils to the detriment of the rest of the school system. But then the interest rate mentioned in his speech was possibly lower than the exorbitant interest rates charged by his family firm.

The Secretary of State's launch brochure proclaimed that the CTCs would be sited in areas of acute social deprivation—in deprived areas such as Bexley, Kent and Croydon. So even Tory authorities in well-off suburban areas are being press-ganged into helping the Secretary of State to meet his political targets, with the British taxpayer footing the bill. As *The Times Educational Supplement* said in an editorial on 17 June:

"By hook or by crook, he"——

Mr. Taylor of Gleam toothpaste——

"is determined to be within sight of the target figure by the end of the year, even if he has to bend the ground rules a bit. Well, quite a lot".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State may now care to comment on the CTCs proposals for his constituency. Is it true that Kent county council's proposals for the closure and sale of the Downs lower school in Dartford for allegedly educational reasons is nothing but a subterfuge for what is, in effect, a proposal to develop land in the green belt? Could it be true that local business man Geoffrey Leigh has struck a deal with Kent county council that he will fund the CTC to the tune of £1 million if the council puts the lower school on the market and removes the accompanying land from the green belt? Is it not true that this so-called public benefactor, who is chairman of Allied London Properties plc—incidentally, it contributed £6,200 to Conservative party funds last year —controls a multi-million pound property portfolio in the south-east, including an industrial estate that just happens to back on to the Downs school? Is it not true also that Mr.

Leigh also effectively controls through a subsidiary Sterling Homes Construction, which specialises in housing development?

I understand that Mr. Leigh protests his innocence by maintaining that his proposals for a CTC are personal and unconnected with his business interests, and I am sure that there are some people in Kent who believe him. But the people of Kent should ask themselves whether it is pure circumstance that within a matter of months the borough of Dartford local plan should propose that the Downs school land and playing fields be taken out of the green belt and that, at the same time, public benefactor Mr. Leigh should turn up with an offer of £1 million.

Of course, proposals to change the plan must be approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment, so Dartford Tories are in a bit of a quandary. They should recall that it is only a month since the Under-Secretary of State attacked the Secretary of State for the Environment for refusing to allow development on land in north Dartford. I know that, because I have read the hysterical outburst of the Under-Secretary, as reported in *The Sunday Times* of 12 June.

The truth is that Dartford is divided over the proposals, despite assurances——

Mr. Dunn: Perhaps the hon. Lady will tell me what I should say to the leader of the Labour group on Dartford borough council, who has welcomed and endorsed the principle of a CTC in north-west Kent.

Mrs. Clwyd: We shall not take the hon. Gentleman's word for that; we want to hear the words for ourselves. We also want the answers to the questions that we were asking this afternoon.

The proposals for a CTC in Dartford show the way forward for other CTCs and set an ugly precedent. Property speculators up and down the land are now eyeing up the land holdings of every prime site school in the country. Their objective is clear. If the land has potential, they will use the Tory party machine to propose school amalgamation or closure, thereby releasing land for development. Despite all the protestations, the CTCs have nothing to do with education. They are the excuse—the pretext—for the selective stripping of education assets, aided and abetted by the Secretary of State.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): One could not fail to mention the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). It plumbed depths that he has hitherto not plumbed. He is known in *The Guardian* for his lacklustre speeches and lacklustre leading for the Opposition on education matters. Perhaps *The Guardian* would like to add "ramshackle" to the epithets that it gives his speeches.

It was nice to see the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) dropping in to give us the benefit of the salad party's attitude to education. I am sorry to say that he missed the prime time that I think he was hoping for, and his message came too late to help the Kensington by-election, in which his party saved its deposit by only seven votes. His arguments were threadbare.

Conservative Members have been anxious to take part in the debate, mainly because they are so fully supportive of the idea of the city technology colleges. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) made the most important point—that the engineering apprentices will benefit from the specialist nature of the CTCs for young people studying technology. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) was also right to say that we should welcome the attitude of industry, and especially its real commitment to future generations. He was also right to mention that the TVEI initiative, which was brought in by the Government, was originally refused by many Labour-controlled authorities. Only when it was seen to be something from which they could gain did they come to the Secretary of State and the industry with their hands out grabbing for money. No doubt the same will happen with the CTCs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) has greatly welcomed the latest initiative of the city technology college in his constituency. I understand from him that there have been no fewer than 45 applicants for the position of head teacher and that all who will participate in the building of the CTC will be local employers from the area.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) had to say. I must tell her that my right hon. Friend has not picked any schools. He made it quite clear in his opening speech that it is for the people who are concerned locally and for the individual sponsors to decide whether they want to make proposals to establish a CTC. My right hon. Friend will naturally then be ready to consider any such proposals on their merits.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) for his open support. He rightly homed in on the point that the Opposition are fearful that this proposal for CTCs will prove a success. It is sad that a party that is supposed to be producing new ideas for education is so arid that it cannot do any more than produce the old ideas of——

It being half-past Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [18 July], to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: *Ayes 320, Noes 201.*

Division No. 421] **[6.30 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*

Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristen Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don

Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendment No. 228 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 229 to 265 agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the previous debate, when I was out of the Chamber for a short period—I was present for most of the debate—the Secretary of State accused me of seeking a licence for agnostics and atheists to teach religious education. This followed an intervention that I made in one of his speeches yesterday. It is amazing that the right hon. Gentleman should allow 23 hours to pass before taking up the intervention. Having referred to column 817, of yesterday's *Hansard*, I can say that his attack upon me was based on a grave distortion of what I said. I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have received an indication from the right hon. Gentleman that he wishes to withdraw the attack and the distortion, and to explain to the House how he will find sufficient teachers, who are Christians, to administer the legislation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) takes my remarks as amounting to a grave insult, I shall withdraw. It was meant to be a little joke. It was not meant as an offence to the hon. Gentleman.

In his point of order the hon. Gentleman referred to religious education teachers. There is a substantial number of teachers who have been trained in religious education but do not teach it. These amount to about 6,000 or 7,000.

Clause 115

CONSTRUCTION OF REFERENCES TO LAND HELD FOR THE PURPOSES OF AN INSTITUTION

Lords amendment: No. 293 in page 113, line 6 leave out "payments, subject to such terms and conditions")
and insert
("grants, specifying such particular obligations, and subject to such general guidance"

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments to the words so restored to the Bill: Government amendments (a), in page 113, line 6, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.

(b), in page 114, line 22, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.

(c), in page 114, line 27, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.

(d), in page 115, line 25, after 'any', insert 'grants or other'.

(e), in page 115, line 32, after third 'the', insert 'grants or other'.

(f), in page 115, line 33, leave out 'payments made by'.

(g), in page 115, line 39, at end insert 'grants or other'.

(h), in page 167, line 29, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.

6.45 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We come now to an important amendment relating to the funding of universities. The universities are vital institutions in our society, embodying values of the highest significance. Legislation concerning the universities is rare. Sensitive issues were bound to be raised by the university provisions of the Bill.

I remind the House that we have sought to give legislative effect to the widely accepted recommendations of the Croham committee. It proved quite difficult, in legislative terms, to provide for the transformation of the University Grants Committee from a body advising the Secretary of State to an executive body directly accountable to Parliament and more distant from the Government. Spelling out for the first time in law the relative powers and responsibilities of the various bodies in this field gave rise to some apprehension in university circles.

I recognised this concern and, to remove misapprehensions, I proposed a series of clarifications which were accepted on Report and generally welcomed. Specifically these clarifications safeguard institutions' private income, and this was further strengthened in the House of Lords; make clear that the holder of my office may not impose specific conditions on the flow of funds to particular institutions; make any long-stop direction by the holder of my office subject to parliamentary veto; and explicitly empower the funding councils to advise the Government. I am sure that hon. Members who have followed our debates will recall the changes that were made on Report. In addition to that, the Government invited the House of Lords to define a statutory commitment to academic freedom. This was done and later tonight we are accepting that amendment.

There should be no doubt about the importance of the funding issue. We are considering here the basis upon which the total of some £3 billion of taxpayers' money, voted by the House, is allocated in the public interest in support of higher education in universities, polytechnics and colleges.

The Croham committee was very clear about the question of public accountability for university funds from the public purse. It called for the council to have an "unambiguous" power to attach

"conditions to grant, including the positive or negative earmarking of elements of the grants".

Amendment No. 293, which I am asking the House to disagree to, replaces that power with a much less certain power to

"make grants specifying such particular obligations, and subject to . . . general guidance".

This amendment would call into question the ability of the Universities Funding Council to do what the UGC has always been able to do.

There has been much debate about the word "contracts", which the Government were not the first to use. The Croham committee used it, too, and put quotation marks around it to show that they were not talking about contracts in the strict legal sense. But nor are the Government. I have given unequivocal assurances that the new funding arrangements must, first, not be excessively bureaucratic; secondly, must respect the distinctive characteristics of higher education; thirdly, must not jeopardise the pursuit of research or scholarship; and, fourthly, must not deprive institutions of the flexibility that they need to seize new opportunities.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. We have a relatively short time for the debate; however, I shall give way.

Mr. Dalyell: I have read the Lords debate and consider that it is important to know in what sense the Government are using the word "contracts". Will the Secretary of State at least define the word, as the Government want to use it?

Mr. Baker: Some seem to have found the whole concept of "contracting"—and I hope hon. Members can hear the quotation marks, which the Croham report uses—at least novel, and perhaps even shocking. But we are aiming for a clearer articulation of features already existing in the present arrangements.

For the past two years, the University Grants Committee has been agreeing academic plans with the universities. The universities have not resented that and, indeed, in many cases they have welcomed the clarity of the new arrangements.

I know that the universities recognise that there has to be some balance between institutional autonomy and responsibility for public money. Several of the vice-chancellors have said that to me. The chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said yesterday:

"It is obvious that public money coming to the universities must be subject to 'terms and conditions'."

We have the recent hearings by the Public Accounts Committee on University College Cardiff to remind us of the importance of that assurance.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I am sure that the Secretary of State understands that the use of the words "terms and conditions" is the key to the matter which is of the greatest concern to the universities. Will the Secretary of State spell out for the House exactly what he means by the words "terms and conditions"?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated what I am going to say.

The phrase "terms and conditions" is familiar in legislation. It serves a number of purposes here. First, it provides for proper accountability. The funding councils must, as the UGC does now, be able to secure satisfactory financial arrangements to monitor and safeguard very substantial public funds. That is a particularly important issue for the House as the funds in question will be voted here. The Public Accounts Committee will expect the chief officers of the councils to account for these funds.

Secondly, the funding councils must be able to continue the present practice of earmarking funds for particular uses in the national interest. Recent examples of this are the engineering and technology initiative and the additional resources for university restructuring that were announced by the Government last year. All those require the precise targeting of funds if they are to be satisfactorily achieved. That is why we need the words "terms and conditions" in the Bill. I assure the House that as a matter of course the way in which the funding councils will interpret those words will be developed through consultation. I shall ensure that this is so.

In brief, the point at issue is that by using ambiguous phrases, such as "specifying such particular obligations" and

"subject to such general guidance",

the House of Lords amendment casts doubt on something that Parliament must leave entirely clear.

The Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council—for the polytechnics and colleges must be treated in the same way—must be able, first, to require institutions to produce academic and financial plans, secondly, to require them to comply with reasonable accounting procedures and, thirdly, to ensure that money made available for particular purposes is used for those purposes and no others. In plain English, this means that the grants or payments made to institutions must be subject to terms and conditions. The House would be failing in its duty to the funding councils and to the taxpayer if it passed legislation that left such a vital question obscure.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. This is a short debate.

I am well aware that the Government's proposals for a more explicit basis for higher education funding have helped to spark-off an important and far-reaching debate, especially within the universities, about future funding. We shall listen closely to the debate—as will all hon. Members who follow these matters—and we hope to learn from it.

It is common ground between the Government and the universities that our institutions of higher education should be more autonomous, that the sources of their funding should be increasingly diversified and that their freedom of operation should be expanded in a more competitive setting in which they will be increasingly responsive to the needs of their students.

The Government have not yet reached a view about how to build on that common ground. We want the debate about funding in the higher education world to mature and reach practical conclusions. However, I would like to give the universities and other interested parties the assurance that we are interested in the common ground. We want to build on it and we shall not proceed in this matter without meaningful discussions with the leaders of our universities, polytechnics and colleges.

In the mean time, to remove misapprehensions about the Government's intentions, the amendments in my name substitute the word "grants" for the word "payments", which was one of the changes suggested by the House of Lords.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I am sure that the House will be disappointed that the Government have decided to attempt to overturn the amendments made in the House of Lords. If the Government had really wanted to give the academic world the assurance that it sought, it would have been very simple for the Secretary of State to have accepted the amendments. He has not really explained why it is essential that he takes out the words inserted by the House of Lords and replaces them with words that he has selected—unless he believes that there is a fundamental difference. It is that fundamental difference which causes concern outside the House.

The essential problem for the Government is that the universities represent a challenge to their central monetarist philosophy. The pursuit of learning cannot be fettered by the need to make a profit or to show a financial return. Monetarism is about short-term profit and loss; the universities are about the slow, careful training of the intellect and a quest for knowledge and an understanding of the universe.

Underlying this part of the Bill is the Government's stated aim that universities should receive funding only by way of "contracts". Whether one puts the word in inverted commas or not, the implication is that something measurable and saleable will have to be delivered in return for payments.

Many have made fun of the way in which a university might have had to draw up a contract with a Newton, a Dalton or a Rutherford, and how they would have fulfilled their contract to defining a natural law. How would a university have drawn up a contract with a Keynes, a Walters or a Minford asking them for an economic theory? I was an undergraduate in the department of commerce and social science at Birmingham university. I wonder how Birmingham university would have drawn up contracts with Henry Maddocks, Alan Walters, Chelly Halsey and Geoffrey Ostergard—an entrepreneur, a monetarist, a socialist and an anarchist? How would Liverpool university have drawn up a contract with Professor Patrick Minford? Would he have been told, "You will produce an economic theory that will lead to the devastation of Liverpool and challenge the whole concept of a university"?

It is easy to ridicule the idea of such a contract, but implicit in the Government's view of monetarism and in the Bill is the idea that there has to be some obvious financial return. Our debates both in this place and in the other place have been only small skirmishes, but the Bill itself marks a profound disagreement between the Government's monetarist views and the views of those who believe in academic freedom. The assertion that some values and endeavours cannot and should not be reduced to cash register terms is a challenge to the Government and is central to the business of a university.

After this debate on funding and the debate on ILEA we shall return to the question of academic freedom. The two debates are linked because the amendments raise the question of how accountable to the Government the universities and, by implication, the rest of higher education should be. Governments have a right to demand that all higher education is of high quality and produces work of high quality and that students and employees are treated fairly, but they do not have the right, and should not demand the right, to control what is studied.

In Committee, Ministers chided the Opposition when we argued that we wanted the Government to be prescriptive about conditions of employment and about the rights of students to high-quality teaching and supervision, but that higher education should be free from Government directives about what should be studied and taught. I do not see any inconsistency in that. It seems to be absolutely fundamental that the institutions and academics should have that academic freedom to study in the areas that they believe to be right rather than areas prescribed by the Government.

7 pm

In the other place, the Lord Chancellor argued that the amendments that we are now discussing, moved by Lord Swann and Lord Adrian, were making a mountain out of a molehill, and that by replacing "payments" with "grants" they were making a trivial change. If it was as trivial as the Lord Chancellor said, why is it that that

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Government are now demanding this change? Either it is of significance or the Government want to send a signal to the whole of higher education. That is what worries me —the Government are sending a depressing signal to higher education.

The Government do not have the resources or the skill —nor should they—to direct academic endeavour, except at the very margins. Just look at the damage that Lord Joseph did as Secretary of State when he tried to go round telling everyone that science and technology were good and the arts and social sciences were bad. That did not do much good for science and technology. It simply allowed the underfunding in those areas to go on and on, with people believing that that underfunding was because the arts and social sciences were unwilling to relinquish resources. It demoralised the arts and social sciences. It was fundamentally wrong. The then Secretary of State was even trying to address himself to the problems in this country, but there was no evidence that they came down to problems of science and technology. If the Secretary of State was to list the 10 problems that people saw as most pressing, I suggest that perhaps only one could be solved by major scientific endeavour—AIDS. Even that is arguable. It is probably as much of a social problem as a scientific problem.

Let us look at world food. The problem in Britain and the rest of the world is not that we lack the science to find ways of increasing food production; it is the problem of transferring food surpluses from developed to under-developed countries. On environmental destruction, we know enough about the problems of the ozone layer and the destruction of our forests. In the end, however, there is a difficulty in finding political solutions to those problems rather than in having the scientific knowledge. Our housing problem is not because we lack good architects and engineers, but it is a social and political problem of how to obtain the resources to build decent houses for all our people.

On nuclear and other weapons, Britain is not in a mess because we lack the scientific knowledge to develop weapons—we are good at doing that and we have tremendous scientific skills in producing weapons of destruction. The problem is in finding political ways so that we do not need those weapons in the first place, with the waste of resources that goes with them.

The Government's thesis that they have been pressing for the past few years, that there should be a major switch of resources from the arts and social sciences to science and technology, is fundamentally flawed. There may be a major argument that the Government should invest far more in science and technology, but it should not be at the expense of other areas.

Picking areas for research is extremely difficult. What appears to be an esoteric idea today may turn out to have a practical, real value in the future. Let me mention the example of linguistics. In the 1950s and 1960s an awful lot of people dismissed it as having little practical application whereas now, with the application of computer technology, we know that a full understanding of linguistics is fundamental for producing automatic translations and all sorts of other devices. If one talks to some of those who did the first work on lasers, they say that they were sceptical about whether there would be any practical application for their work, but in the end their thirst for knowledge produced something that is of major advantage to us.

In the Bill, the Government should have set out a charter for higher education—all higher education, not just universities. It should have been a charter, a bill of rights, establishing the concept of academic freedom in statute and establishing funding free from political direction over what is to be studied. Instead, in the clause, we have a mean determination to fetter universities with contract funding and to destroy all that I have mentioned because it is a fundamental challenge to the Government's monetarism.

I suggest that we vote against the Government amendments and that we assert that we want to preserve higher education from Government control over what is studied. We want to reject their demand for intellectual study that can be controlled by the profit motive. We want intellectual study to be free for the people to enjoy so that they can develop their intellect and the nation can prosper. I hope that the House will reject the Government amendments.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Three subjects get the incense swirling around the Chamber. One is the arts, another is religion and the third is higher education. We had an example last night—a whiff of incense—on religion, with spiritual this and spiritual that. The antidote to that is to look at some of the latest GCSE papers, in which there is little spiritual talk but quite a lot about the sociology of prisons. We have a similar atmosphere on the arts, where the antidote is to look in some of the cellars of our major institutions, which are full of the rotting ephemera of contemporary art, bought with money voted by the House.

Higher education is also a subject which tends to lead to much overblown rhetoric, and we have had a taste of it from the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). But it is not a service to higher education to talk about it in that way. Those whom I have met who run higher education establishments seem to be hard-headed and intelligent people, who do not go in for such talk. They are also fully aware that the drive for more accountability is not confined to this country. It is happening in America and France. The French, with their gift for encapsulating these things in telling phrases, have said that the accountability of universities is the counterpart of their independence. That is basically what we are talking about.

Despite all the talk by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish about contracts, we must remember that the word "contract" is not in the Bill. Personally, I do not like that word when applied to higher education, for obvious reasons. One cannot contract to have a certain number of philosophers, and so on. But it has always seemed to me from the start that it was legitimate of Croham to talk about the spirit of contract—the contractual spirit—because we need some more of that.

I am opposed to the Lords amendment because it will take us back to the old days, the lax and unsatisfactory old days, when things were done in a rather hole-in-the-corner way. That was not satisfactory to many of the leaders of our universities. In private, many of them will tell one that. It seems to me that we do not want to return to that system. We should have something clearer, more above board and more comprehensible to everybody.

Another point which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was inhibited from mentioning, but which may have been on his mind, is this. He and to some extent I were involved together in getting money for higher education from the Treasury. I believe in getting money for higher education from the Treasury because there should be more higher education and more students in higher education. But when one goes along to the Treasury and asks for money, one must put oneself in the place of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has people asking for money for clear, definite and finite things—for houses, hospitals and the elderly. Therefore, if, through the Government amendment, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State puts himself in a better position to secure more money from the Treasury for higher education, it will be a welcome change. He will be able to do that by demonstrating, through his new funding council and through the new sense of accountability, the achievements of our higher education, which are considerable and which will be even greater when the reforms have gone through.

I shall therefore vote in favour of my right hon. Friend's proposal. Of course, in some cases the changes and the new funding council will chafe against the softer parts of the system. But perhaps that flesh has become a little too soft. It will soon harden, to no one's disbenefit.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) what he thinks the Japanese do when they go to their Treasury? This debate takes place against the background of three times as many people in higher education in Japan as there are here, and look at the Japanese——

Mr. Walden *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman is a distinguished orientalist and we can argue that another time. But that is the background to the problem.

Ministers often give themselves away by the rebukes that they heap on their opponents. Earlier this afternoon, the Secretary of State told the Opposition not to be dogs in the manger. I make no bones about taking the right hon. Gentleman into my manger. It is easy to override objections. The Secretary of State seems to be on a high and thinks that there are no serious objections to his proposals.

Other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so I shall ask only three questions. First, when my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said in his excellent speech that if the Swann-Adrian amendment was not accepted it would send a depressing signal to higher education, the Secretary of State said sotto voce from a sedentary position "Not at all." I believe that he meant that comment. When he replies to the debate, will he explain why he said that, and why the Swann-Adrian argument is wrong?

Mr. Hawkins: I shall not try to answer for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State except to say that the Opposition do not seem to have noticed that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has welcomed the Government's proposal and has not lamented the death of the Swann amendment. Professor Sir Mark Richmond, the chairman of the committee, said that it welcomed the Government's amendment to the Education Reform Bill substituting the word "grants" for "payments" in clause 115. He went on to ask for clarification of the terms and conditions——

Mr. Sedgemore: He did not get it.

Mr. Hawkins: He certainly did.

Mr. Dalyell: I have read the letter, too. It would probably be better for everyone if the Secretary of State answered that point rather than for me to take time on it. He may have an answer.

My second question relates to the earmarking of funds in the national interest. Precisely who will do that and on the basis of what general criteria? That is not a catch question; it is a genuine one. It is extremely difficult to decide what is in the national interest—not only the current national interest but the foreseeable national interest in five or 10 years' time. We are talking about the national interest of the future, perhaps a decade away.

My third question relates to tenure. The Secretary of State will know from the Secretary of State for Scotland that on Friday night a group of Lothian Members of Parliament had a long meeting with Sir David Smith, the principal of Edinburgh university, and his senior colleagues. I pass on a matter that greatly worries those representatives of one of the great European universities. It is the question of redundancies. I tried in vain at Question Time to discover from the Secretary of State how much premature redundancy and retirement has cost. I thought that he would have a figure in his brief. I repeat that question and add this: are we sure that it is in the national interest to make redundant semi-compulsorily —that is what it amounts to—people aged 50 or 55 who still have much to give? I know that some of the people who were most successful in teaching me—it may not have been the same for everyone—were within 10 years of retirement. It is a crying waste of talent and is often pathetically sad in human terms that such men and women must retire early from their chosen profession.

I am appalled that the criterion of success offered by some universities is that they have completed a restructuring plan by achieving so many redundancies. This is a mark of sadness. It is not an act of success, but an act of gross failure of society.

7.15 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I am glad that Lords amendment No. 294 is now in the Bill. Earlier I and other hon. Members were worried that if the universities were successful in raising money from outside private sources they might lose some of the funding that they might otherwise expect from the Universities Funding Council, and I am glad that the Government have taken that amendment on board.

On amendment No. 293, although I cannot claim, despite my right hon. Friend's explanation, to understand every nuance of difference between a grant and a payment, his proposal is acceptable to the universities and I am happy to go along with it. I was extremely interested in my right hon. Friend's view that we have not come to the end of discussions on how the universities should be funded. He showed a remarkably open mind and a willingness to consider other ways of setting about this. His remarks were important because now coming to the surface are specific proposals that should be considered carefully.

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

They relate to whether we can apply to the universities the system of choice that has been repeatedly and strongly emphasised in our debates on grant-maintained schools.

There is a strengthening argument for allowing choice and demand to replace Government in determining which universities will attract more money. That can be done by a simple mechanism—by saying that the fees charged to students should reflect the full cost, but that through a straight grant or a loan the student should be given enough money to pay for them. If we can reach that position, the student will then determine which university will provide more courses and which will provide fewer.

I am glad that that proposal seems to attract support from some of my hon. Friends, but it will not solve the problem entirely. We must also consider the national interest. The Government should be strengthening special areas of scholarship and learning, including science, but there should be other mechanisms by which they can perform that important role. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to that when he said that the Government should have the power to launch initiatives or to strengthen areas such as science. The Government could still use the mechanism of the Universities Funding Council if they wanted to confine particular resources to particular areas. The Government could also provide funds through the research councils, which are an important part of their armoury. I do not think that it is possible to conceive of a better way in which to do that than through the research councils. They have a long history and they have been a successful mechanism.

The picture before us is that raising fees to the full level and then supporting students will give us a chance to allow demand and choice to take effect, but the Government will also have the weapon necessary to strengthen the basic scientific and academic structure of our life, which is important.

I will touch on one other suggestion, which is to be found in an interesting essay by Professor Elie Kedourie called "Diamonds Into Glass". He talks about the idea that I have just suggested, but says:

"The Government now spends annually very considerable amounts in direct grants to universities. How then if a capital sum representing the present discount value of, say, ten or fifteen years' subventions were to be given to each university which would be told that henceforth, given such a handsome dowry (or better, alimony) it would have to fend for itself?" In a way, that is a still more radical idea, and I have no doubt that the Treasury would have kittens on a major scale were it to be imposed. That is an example of the sort of new thinking that would help to restore to universities their historic independence, which should be valued highly, but at the same time they should be given the opportunity to meet the needs of the modern world.

I repeat that I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has shown a willingness to think about new ideas. The process will not end with the passage of the Bill, and I look forward to his next instalment.

Mr. Ashdown: I shall be brief, because I want to ask the Secretary of State only three questions. I join the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) in welcoming Lords amendment No. 293. The Secretary of State is right in saying that the Croham report mentioned contracting.

I direct the Secretary of State's attention to the debate in the other place on 28 June 1988 when, at column 1404, the Lord Chancellor—contrary to what the Secretary of State said—said that there was no difference between a grant and a payment. He went on about that at some length and wondered why there should be a debate on the matter at all. There appears to be a difference of opinion between the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor. The Lord Chancellor believes that the entire question was somewhat arcane as there is no difference in meaning. Perhaps the Secretary of State or the Under-Secretary will say who is right.

Croham was concerned about the extent of the terms and conditions and the proportion of contracting that the Government would nominate. We must delve into the Government's mind to discover precisely what they intend. If they intend to use a small proportion of those funds legitimately to direct, guide and steer, that is perfectly acceptable. If, on the other hand, they intend to use the larger proportion, as the right hon. Member for Aylesbury said, to diminish the choice and freedom of universities and their autonomy, we should be more worried. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will tell us the proportions that the Government have in mind. Will he give an undertaking that it will always be the much smaller proportion that is used in the way suggested by the Secretary of State?

My second question relates to Croham's recommendations, because Croham mentioned the nature of the Government's determination. It would be acceptable, I think, to most reasonable minds if the Government used funds to direct positively—for example, to bring new blood to university teaching or to open a new university department. We can see why that might happen, but we need assurances that the Government will not use funds negatively—for example, by saying that money can be provided if a troublesome course is closed down. If the Government's determination is used positively, that would be fine, but used in a form that would cause universities to close down, to remove academics or to close down departments, it would be a genuine limitation on the freedom of universities, which I regard as important—and the Secretary of State has said is important.

It is unfortunate that the Secretary of State would not let me intervene, but I hope that he will now answer my third question. We must find out what is in the Government's mind. Are they carrying forward custom and practice more effectively in this legislation or is there to be some fundamental change in the nature of universities? I would rather not have to ask that question, but I must do so, because the Under-Secretary of State has caused a considerable furore—and rightly so—in academic circles by the words he used in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*. His words were quite chilling. I shall quote them and then ask the Secretary of State whether he agrees with them. If he does, we have good reason to be suspicious that the Government have more sinister reasons for their amendments, as they want completely and fundamentally to alter the nature of our universities. The Under-Secretary of State said:

"Academics should stop cowering in the secret garden of knowledge and get to grips with the real world, since knowledge for its own sake is no longer the prime concern".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I rather hoped that he would allow the Secretary of State to tell us whether he agrees with those words.

Mr. Jackson *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way when I feel that it is right to give way. I rather hoped that the hon. Gentleman would allow the Secretary of State to say whether he agrees with those words.

Mr. Jackson: The Secretary of State will make his own speech, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also read to the House my letter in the following week's issue correcting that misreporting of my remarks.

Mr. Ashdown: That report was reported in the Lords *Hansard* of 28 June. I notice that that was uncorrected. I accept what the Minister says, but I hope that he will take time in his speech to explain to the House, unequivocally and in crystal clear words, what has been the correction to that sentiment. If underlying his and the Government's motives are sentiments such as those, I believe that we should be suspicious about those words.

Mr. Jackson: It is a matter for the hon. Gentleman's own sense of honour whether he——

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has resumed his seat.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Behind this brief amendment lies a real and deep concern about the relationship between the Government, especially the Department of Education and Science, and the universities under the terms of reference of the new Universities Funding Council.

The Secretary of State, especially in accepting the bulk of Lords amendments Nos. 294 and 293, has come a long way to recognising and meeting those concerns. I regret that he is not accepting amendment No. 293 in full, as I had hoped.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden). As the Secretary of State knows, Lords amendment No. 293 had the very strong support and endorsement of my eminent constituent, Lord Adrian. Although I do not always support the amendments of my constituents in the other place, as Lady David well knows, I regard this amendment as reasonable and fair.

My right hon. Friend has met all the major concerns of the universities about the original Bill, for which we are grateful, but I remain puzzled why he has rejected this one. I have listened to his arguments carefully, because, although this amendment is minor, it would give the UFC a greater independence of judgment, which it should have. It would be a pity if the considerable progress that has been made by my right hon. Friend's very responsive attitudes to the concerns of higher education might be in any way overshadowed by his opposition to part of Lords amendment No. 293. Although it is late in the day, I ask him to reflect further on the powerful argument deployed in its favour. I acknowledge that the concerns about centralised Government control over the universities are real and important. If the Secretary of State cannot reverse his decision tonight, I hope that he will reflect on the matter and realise that our worries are genuine and should be considered.

7.30 pm

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was a Back Bencher—we still regard him as one of us—he made a famous speech in which he warned us about the tightrope between sycophancy and rebellion. I have tended to fall off that tightrope on to the rebellious side rather than the sycophantic side, but I should like to emphasise to my right hon. Friend that I am deeply appreciative of the advances that he and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State have made towards meeting the concerns of higher education generally and not simply of the universities. That is why I regret my right hon. Friend's opposition to the Lords amendment. I also add my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant) who, although a Whip, has been very co-operative.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is wrong to reject the Lords amendment, and I hope that he will understand that I cannot support him in the Lobby on this matter.

Mr. Sedgemore: I agree with almost everything that the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) said, although I think that he was characteristically too generous to the Secretary of State.

One of the reasons why I rise is that it is an absolute delight to take part in any debate on the universities because they always end up with the Secretary of State wriggling and squirming and making a shameful retreat. He tried to reassure us over the question of contracts. He said that, like Croham, he was not concerned with legal contracts. My understanding of a legal contract is that it is simply an offer and acceptance usually made subject to certain terms and conditions. I cannot see that there is much difference between the contracts that he has in mind between the Universities Funding Council and the universities, and ordinary legal contracts.

Sir Mark Richmond says that he is worried about the way in which the phrase "terms and conditions" will be imposed. Unless the Secretary of State's words are qualified by the Under-Secretary of State, the simple answer is that the terms and conditions can be imposed at any time, in any field and unilaterally by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State may adopt his traditional argument, "I am giving these exceptional powers to the body and it will never use them badly." It might not use them badly in the early years, but, when the crisis comes, how will it use them then? When there is a shortage of money, will it impose the terms and conditions in spheres that the Secretary of State did not outline? If he intends to limit the terms and conditions to the few cases of which he spoke, why does he not put that in the Bill instead of asking us to accept that the UFC will always act in a particular way?

The other reason why I have risen to make a short contribution is that, as the hon. Member for Cambridge said, basically our political system does not work. We have an all powerful Executive which usually acts in an arrogant and, occasionally, in a politically corrupt fashion. We have a Parliament which is powerless to correct the uses and abuses of the power of the Executive. Outside bodies and institutions have been rendered almost impotent. One could say that that has happened with almost the whole of the Bill, but it has not happened with any of the debates on the universities. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has wielded power and influence. Not to put too

[Mr. Sedgemore]

fine a point on it, it has given the Secretary of State a drubbing, kicked him from pillar to post, twisted his arm, crushed his goolies, made him look silly and made him grovel. It has done that over his ideas on contracts, grants and payments by the UFC, academic freedom and over his attempt to control the administration of the universities and the development of ideas.

Some people, even in this House, resent the power of the CVCP. They resent the fact that it has helped the Opposition to put the case for academic independence clearly. They resent the influence that the committee has had over the House of Lords. They resent the way in which it has gathered together the support of the intellectual elite in this country and they resent the way in which it has got the media on its side, but, in the words of the Prime Minister—I am sure that the hon. Member for Cambridge agrees with me—we should rejoice at what the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has done. We should rejoice in the amendments that it has encouraged Members of the House of Lords to bring forward, and we should contrast the way in which the universities have stood up and fought for very fine ideals with the almost pathetic way in which the polytechnics have fought for nothing during the progress of the Bill and appeared to want to rush into the arms of the Secretary of State.

The universities and the CVCP recognise that there is nothing in this life so important as the development of an idea. The Opposition have recognised throughout the discussions on the Bill that there is nothing so important as the development of an idea. Even their noble Lordships have recognised that there is nothing so important as the development of an idea. Surely it is right that, at last, the Government should tonight try to recognise that and accept the amendments that the House of Lords has put forward.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I share several of the reservations expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) and I shall say why in just two minutes.

The part of my right hon. Friend's opening speech with which I most agreed was when he talked about the importance of the universities, the greatness of the institutions and how vital they are to our national life. That needs saying and believing over and over again because they are essential to our national life. That is why my instinctive feeling was to support the Lords amendment that my right hon. Friend is asking us to reject.

However, when my right hon. Friend referred to the Public Accounts Committee, he led me to think again and I shall listen carefully to what he says later. He said that the wording of the amendment tabled by Lord Adrian would not be sufficient to give powers to the UFC to be able to satisfy the PAC of its duty as accounting officer. I should like my right hon. Friend, or my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, to explain why that should be so because, as a member of the PAC, I attach great importance to that matter. Only a few weeks ago, the permanent secretary to the Department of Education and Science, Sir David Hancock, spoke to the PAC about the university college of Cardiff where a scandalous situation has occurred. I asked Sir David:

"Is it your view and of the Department that these affairs have been handled incompetently and negligently?"

Sir David replied:

"Those are strong words to use on a public occasion."

I asked him:

"Which would you prefer to use?"

He replied: "Yes."

I later asked Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer whether it was satisfactory that members of staff should be allowed to retire on full pension when they had acted incompetently and negligently. Sir Peter replied:

"No, I do not regard it as satisfactory."

I do not regard it as satisfactory either.

I want to be sure, if my right hon. Friend wants me to vote with him—as I said, my instinctive feeling was to support Lord Adrian—what it is about Lord Adrian's amendment that would not give adequate powers to the UFC and adequate powers of scrutiny to the PAC. If my right hon. Friend can satisfy me on that, he will perhaps have my support.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My right hon. Friend and I have always seen eye to eye on the essential worth of universities in this country. I have never believed that the Government have sought fundamentally to change the relationship between the Government and universities. However, we must accept that there is deep suspicion in the university world about the Government's motives. That is at the heart of what has been happening in the other place. That concern is compounded when, on the one hand, the Lord Chancellor says that the amendments are an irrelevance and do not make any difference and, on the other hand, Baroness Hooper says that they do and that they deny powers to the UFC which it would otherwise have had.

We must strike a balance and it would be wrong for the UFC to have fewer powers than the UGC. It is important that the new body has the ability to undertake contracts, because that could be an inventive and stimulating way of funding certain parts of higher education. However, we do not want higher education to be on a narrow-funded basis —on the basis of contracts, whether for research, teaching or the provision of what the state happens to believe is in the national interest.

We need to preserve the universities system. The essence of the block grant scheme was to stimulate initiative and inventiveness at the academic level. We must support that fundamental. I do not see that the amendments will make any difference. Whether we call it a grant or a payment, we must keep the balance. There must be a certain amount of discretion at local university level to be productive, creative and innovative. At the same time the Government, or the funding council acting on behalf of the Government, must be able to produce a direction in certain areas and to stimulate a new way for the universities and polytechnics to meet those targets.

I end with one plea. I cannot see how it makes any sense for the Government to rationalise subject provision—we have a whole series of subject reviews—and at the same time to deny the tenure that academics currently hold if they switch to other universities as a result of those subject reviews and Government-initiated rationalisation. I urge that those academics who are obliged to move to other universities as a result of the Government's own subject rationalisation at least keep the tenure that they currently hold or there will be no incentive for them to move.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): We all subscribe to the principle of academic freedom. It is implicit in the definition of academic freedom that a balance is struck between the needs of the individual academic, the needs of his department, the needs of the university and the needs of the Government in funding the work involved.

It is essential that the Government have a right to earmark money for particular activities within universities. I understand that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals accepts that there are technical weaknesses in amendment No. 339 that would prohibit the earmarking of money. I hope that my brief contribution will direct my right hon. Friend to address that problem.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The debate has been interesting because it has highlighted quite a lot of important points, in particular the relationship between the Government and the new UFC and between the UFC and its powers over the funding of universities.

First, there are certainly changes. I was asked what the changes would be. The most important change on funding is that the UFC is more distant from Government. The UFC will have more non-academic members, and over the years I certainly expect it to become more independent.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Who appoints them?

Mr. Baker: I, or the holder of my officer, will appoint them. Nonetheless, the idea of a UFC with more outside members has been welcomed by both sides of the House.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) for what he said about the need for the Lords amendment to be set aside. I certainly recommend to the House that that should be done. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) as I think that he meant it as a compliment to me when he said that I was a Back Bencher at heart. It is certainly not my intention for the arrangements that will operate in future to reduce the autonomy of the universities. I have made it clear that I should like the universities to move to a more autonomous position.

I was asked why the universities would not be depressed. I do not believe that the universities would be depressed by this measure because many of them welcome the clarity that comes from the arrangement of the UGC over the past few years for agreeing to academic plans. They would also welcome the clear clarification in the changes that we are recommending. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has said in a press release that it welcomes the proposed terms and conditions which would produce a degree of certainty for earmarking funds, particularly for the engineering and technology incentive and for the restructuring funds which I secured from the Treasury.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) that the clear advice that I have is that it would be very difficult for the Public Accounts Committee to operate a scrutiny and hold the UFC to account if it did not have terms and conditions.

I was asked about the nature of the contract. Again, contracting was not an idea devised by the Government. I refer again to paragraphs 5.14 and 5.16 of the Croham committee report:

"Both the grant definition by the UGC at the end of the distribution exercise"——

It being a quarter to Eight o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [18 July], to put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* that this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 206.

Division No. 422] **[7.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*

Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott

Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Frank Cook

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 293 disagreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Amendments (a) to (h) were made to the words so restored to the Bill.

Lords amendment: No. 294, in page 113, line 9, at end insert—

"(6A) In exercising their functions in relation to the provision of financial support for activities eligible for funding under this section the Council shall have regard to the desirability of not discouraging any university in respect of which payments are made under subsection (6) above from maintaining or developing its funding from other sources."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 4, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Lords amendment No. 294, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 299, in clause 116, page 114, line 32, at end insert—

"(7B) In exercising their functions in relation to the provision of financial support for activities eligible for funding under this section the Council shall have regard to the desirability of not discouraging any institution within the PCFC funding sector in respect of which payments are made under subsection (7) above from maintaining or developing its funding from other sources."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 4, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Lords amendment No. 299, as amended, agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendment: No. 303, after clause 117, insert the following new clause—*Inspection of accounts*—

"(1) The accounts of—

(a) any university;

(b) any higher education corporation; or

(c) any institution designated under section 113 of this Act as an institution eligible to receive support from funds administered by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council;

shall be open to the inspection of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

(2) In the case of any higher education corporation or of any such institution as is mentioned in subsection (1)(a) or (c) above—

(a) the power conferred by subsection (1) above; and

(b) the powers under sections 6 and 8 of the National Audit Act 1983 (examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of certain bodies and access to documents and information) conferred on the Comptroller and Auditor General by virtue of section 6(3)(c) of that Act;

shall be exercisable only in, or in relation to accounts or other documents which relate to, any financial year in which expenditure is incurred by the corporation, or by the governing body of the institution in question, in respect of which payments are made to them under section 115 or 116 of this Act."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 19, leave out 'payments' and insert 'grants'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Lords amendment No. 303, as amended, agreed to. [Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 295 to 298 agreed to, some with special entry.

Lords amendments Nos. 300 to 302 agreed to. [Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 304 to 342 agreed to.

Clause 144

DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR EDUCATION

Lords amendment: No. 343, in page 137, line 21, leave out "and".

8 pm

Mr. Dunn: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Lords amendment No. 344, in page 137, line 27, at end insert "; and

(c) give particulars of the management structure (within the meaning of section *(Approval of management structure and senior appointments in initial period)* of this Act) which the council proposes to adopt for the purposes of the exercise of those functions."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 2, after 'of', insert:—

'(i) the council's estimate of the capital and revenue expenditure for the year beginning on the abolition date which the council considers it would need to incur for the discharge of its education functions, in accordance with the provisions of its development plan, having regard to guidance which shall be given by the Secretary of State under paragraph (b) above as to the basis and amount of the revenue support grant, community charge and other principal sources of income, which he considers appropriate for that council in respect of its education funcions for that year; and

(ii) .'.

Lords amendments Nos. 345 to 358.

Lords amendment No. 359, after clause 146, insert the following new Clause—*Approval of management structure and senior appointments in initial period*—

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

".—(1) References in this section to the management structure of an inner London council for the purpose of the exercise of its LEA functions are references to any aspect of the council's organisation and its arrangements for managing its affairs in relation to the exercise of those functions which the Secretary of State determines ought to be subject to approval under this section with a view to securing the proper performance by the council of those functions during the initial period.

In this section "the initial period" means the period of five years beginning with the abolition date.

(2) The reference in subsection (1) above to a council's organisation and its arrangements for managing its affairs in relation to the exercise of its LEA functions includes in particular its staffing arrangements and the determination of the duties to be performed by its employees concerned in the exercise of those functions.

(3) It shall be the duty of each inner London council to adopt and to maintain during the initial period a management structure for the purpose of the exercise of its LEA functions which is for the time being approved by the Secretary of State under this section.

(4) Such a council shall not before the end of the initial period make an appointment to which this subsection applies except after consultation with the Secretary of State.

(5) Subsection (4) above applies to the appointment of a person—

(a) to be the chief education officer of the council; or

(b) to any designated post forming part of the management structure of the council for the time being approved under this section.

(6) In subsection (5)(b) above "designated" means designated for the purposes of subsection (4) above by a direction given by the Secretary of State.

(7) For the purposes of the consultation required by subsection (4) above a council proposing to make an appointment to which that subsection applies shall send to the Secretary of State particulars showing the name, previous experience and qualifications of the persons from whom the council proposes to make a selection.

(8) If the Secretary of State is of opinion that any person whose name is submitted to him under subsection (7) above is not a fit person to hold the appointment in question, he may give a direction prohibiting that person's appointment."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 22, at end insert:

, and the Secretary of State shall not exercise his powers under this section unless he has first consulted the council in question in respect thereof.'.

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, at end add

'except that in making such a direction no account shall be taken of the political views or activities, past or current, of any individual concerned.'.

Amendment (c) to the Lords amendment, at end add—

'(9) Any person aggrieved by a direction made under subsection (8) above may appeal to the High Court, and that Court shall quash the direction unless satisfied that the person to whom the direction relates is not a fit person to hold the appointment in question.'.

Lords amendments Nos. 360 to 364.

Lords amendment No. 365, after clause 158, insert the following new Clause—*Preparatory expenditure of inner London councils*—

".—(1) Without prejudice to the powers conferred by section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (which authorises a local authority to incur expenditure which it considers is in the interests of its area or inhabitants of its area), an inner London council may incur expenditure in making preparations for the exercise on and after the abolition date of its LEA functions.

(2) Where before the passing of this Act any such council has incurred such expenditure, that expenditure shall be treated after the passing of this Act as authorised by subsection (1) above.

(3) The Secretary of State may pay grants to an inner London council in respect of such expenditure incurred or to be incurred by the council in any financial year ending before the abolition date.

(4) The Secretary of State may make any payment in respect of such a grant subject to compliance by the council concerned with such conditions as he may determine."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 12, after 'council', insert

'including appropriate funding of voluntary organisations for education purposes'.

Amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, in line 13, at end insert

'and shall satisfy himself that the grants paid to each such council shall be sufficient to ensure no diminution in the level of the education service in that area.'.

Amendment (c) to the Lords amendment, in line 13, at end insert

'and shall consider the desirability of using his powers under this section and the Local Government Grants (Social Need) Act 1969 to fund voluntary organisations concerned with education in each local area for a transitional period.'.

Amendment (e) to the Lords amendment, at end add—

'(5) The Secretary of State may pay grant to the ILEA in respect of expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it before the abolition date for assisting inner London councils in making their preparations for the exercise on and after the abolition date of the LEA functions.'.

Lords amendments Nos. 366 to 386.

Lords amendment No. 387, in clause 166, page 154, line 16, leave out subsection (5)

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, at end add—

'and insert—

(5) In complying with its duties under this section, the ILEA may attach reasonable requirements to protect the confidentiality of information (including the inspection or making of any copies of documents) provided to any other party.'.

Lords amendment No. 388.

Mr. Dunn: It is appropriate that we should be dealing with this group of amendments relating to ILEA and the London boroughs that will become education authorities after 1 April. I am particularly pleased to see in the Chamber my hon. Friend the new Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), to whom I extend my best wishes for a long and successful service to the House and his constituents. I am glad that I am the first Minister to be able to say as much from the Dispatch Box. My hon. Friend's presence here is particularly warming to me because he is an exhibition of the success of our policies in a part of London where a by-election was recently held.

This is a sizeable group of amendments, but most are technical. Lords amendments Nos. 345 to 357 respond to points made principally by Lord Morton of Shuna in the other place about the desirability of ensuring on the face of the Bill that all ILEA schools will be designated to a successor authority. Similarly, Lords amendments Nos. 386 and 387, which modify the requirement on ILEA in respect of the provision of information, respond to points made by the Opposition in the other place.

I should like to say a little more about the amendments—on three subjects of particular importance—to which the Opposition have chosen to propose further amendments. The first, dealing with the boroughs' management structures and the approval of senior posts,

is embodied in Lords amendments Nos. 343, 344 and above all 359. Each borough will be required to include within its development plan a statement of its proposed management structure. The guidance to be issued after Royal Assent will give a clear statement of what we shall be looking for.

For a limited period of five years from 1 April 1990, these organisational arrangements will be subject to the Secretary of State's approval. Linked to that provision is one that requires appointments to the post of chief education officer to be made following consultation with the Secretary of State. The arrangements will be operated in the same way as the similar provision that used to apply in the case of all local education authorities. A shortlist will have to be submitted to the Department, with brief biographical details of the candidates. There is also provision for the Secretary of State to designate posts within the management structure for approval in the same way.

The Government do not take the provisions lightly, but we believe that they will be widely welcomed by those who have expressed concern about whether all the boroughs will be effective local education authorities. Their operation should not prove any more onerous than was the case with the similar requirement under the Education Act 1944 for the approval of the chief education officer, but they will provide a reassurance that the boroughs will start their lives as local education authorities with appropriate management arrangements and with a team of properly qualified staff in the education department.

Lords amendment No. 361 will enable the London residuary body to provide services currently provided by ILEA on a London-wide basis. It will also enable the LRB to act as a contractor providing specific services on repayment at the request of an inner London council. We have made it clear from the outset that we expect inner London boroughs to take on responsibility for the full range of education services from 1 April 1990, but we have always accepted that there may be areas, either where ILEA has run an organisation on a London-wide basis or in certain support services, where the boroughs will have not finalised their arrangements by 1990. The LRB can help in such circumstances to ensure continuity of provision and a smooth transfer of responsibilities. So far the only service that has been clearly identified for this purpose is Greater London Supplies—hence the specific provision in subsection (3)(b) of the amendment—but discussion with ILEA and the boroughs may reveal a need for similar arrangements to be made in other cases.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will the Department consider similar London-wide provision for sport in schools, which profits enormously from such provision? The same is true of adult education, and also of special education.

Mr. Dunn: I do not believe that that can apply in the same way as it does in this instance.

Lords amendment No. 365 puts beyond doubt the power of inner London councils to incur expenditure in preparing for the transfer of education functions. It also enables the Secretary of State to pay grant to the councils on expenditure that they incur for that purpose, and to specify the conditions that will apply.

The Government announced in March their intention to make available to councils specific grant of up to £3 million in 1988-89 and £10 million in 1989-90, payable at a rate of 100 per cent. The grant will be towards all legitimate preparatory expenditure—for example, the employment of educational advisers and other senior administrative staff, perhaps on a dual-appointment basis with ILEA—and of course the establishment of information systems and publicity. The guidance to be issued after Royal Assent will set out in full the arrangements for applying for and payment of grant.

The amendments improve the Bill's provisions for managing the transfer of educational responsibilities in inner London, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Fatchett: We are dealing with a measure that will adversely affect the educational opportunities of more than a quarter of a million children, on which there was no original consultation by the Government and which was changed while the Bill was in Committee. Yet the Government allow only half an hour for us to debate that important change.

Let me start by making two important points. First, we have been told by Conservative Members during the debate that there is no case for a unitary strategic authority for inner London. That argument has never been made conclusively. We can come to only one simple conclusion —that the case for a strategic authority for providing education in London is now as strong as it was before the vandalism of the two right hon. Members whose actions led to the destruction of ILEA.

Secondly, the Secretary of State tries, as only he can, to create the impression that London Labour boroughs are desperate to take over the education functions of ILEA. He tries to create the impression that London Labour boroughs want the abolition of ILEA. Nothing could be further from the truth.

London Labour boroughs want the continuation of ILEA. We value its work and we want to see that work and the opportunities that it provides continue for the children who are benefiting from ILEA's education policy. London Labour boroughs are now co-operating with ILEA's abolition because, unlike the Government, they do not want to play politics with children's education. They want to ensure that there are real opportunities for London's children. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) can laugh and scoff as much as he will, but the Government's record shows that they have never considered the educational opportunities for children in inner London. All that they have done is to allow their political spite and their political opposition to be vented against ILEA.

If anyone wants further evidence of that, he need look no further than these amendments. The Under-Secretary of State said that the amendments were basically technical, but one set allows the Secretary of State to appoint senior managerial officers in the education authorities in the boroughs. We know from the Government's record that they are not at all ashamed of making and vetoing appointments on political criteria. *[Interruption.]* We have seen that already with the willingness of the Prime Minister's office to veto the appointment of John Harvey —Jones and Peter Mortimer. How can we trust the Government, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister not to make those appointments on political grounds? They will clearly do that.

[Mr. Fatchett]

When the Government fail at the ballot box, as they have done in inner London on education matters, and as they will do in the inner London boroughs, they rely upon bureaucratic and political arguments. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Fatchett: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is always worrying to see the group of yobbos on the Conservative Benches. We are now accustomed to their co-ordinated activities.

The other point that I want to raise relates to finance for London boroughs. We know that the Minister of State believes that ILEA spends too much per pupil on education. Yet she would support greater spending for a minority of youngsters on the assisted places scheme. We know that the Government are determined to reduce the level of spending on education in inner London.

In a press release on 7 July from the Department of Education and Science, the Secretary of State announced that there would be further cuts in ILEA's budget for the financial year 1989-90. He went on to say:

"While expenditure at £940 million is still well above what is desirable, I believe that it represents a fair and reasonable level".

In a letter to Norman Willis, he makes a similar point. He says that in 1990-91 the effect of the safety net

"will be that the boroughs will be able to spend the same on education as ILEA could have expected to spend in their area in that year".

Those weasel words are not a promise to maintain spending levels. They are not a promise to make sure that boroughs such as Hackney and Tower Hamlets, and all the other poor boroughs, will not suffer from the measure. That is simply a promise that the Department of Education and Science will determine the level of expenditure on education for each of those boroughs. What we do know is that the Minister of State has said that this measure is a means of reducing expenditure and, therefore, a means of reducing opportunity.

The lack of time and consultation, the Government's inability to produce a cogent argument, and their willingness to take more centralised powers and to cut education expenditure in inner London lead to one inexorable conclusion—they are not bothered about the education of 270,000 children. They like to play politics, but they are not concerned. We are concerned, and that is why we shall oppose the Lords amendment.

8.15 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I, too, can fight yesterday's battles, but at least I am a Londoner. I have worked for the abolition of ILEA for some 25 years because it was wrong that inner London should have been made inferior to the outer London boroughs which were judged capable of being education authorities. I will not go any further into that. Instead, I want to talk about three matters with which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has dealt.

First, my hon. Friend has made it clear that the Secretary of State's approval for certain posts is a provision in the 1944 Act. I remind the House that it was also a provision in the reorganisation of local government after the Seebohm report for the post of director of social services, and no one objected to that.

Having seen the way that the Labour party has appointed failed Members of Parliament to be their so-called advisers in Brent, Camden, Lambeth and Islington—it is only lack of time that prevents me naming all the London Labour boroughs and many others—it is right that these posts should be filled by educationists who will help the children. Therefore, I welcome this particular point as being important.

Secondly, I am glad that the London Labour boroughs which are happy to take over education are co-operating in producing their plans according to the timetable set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, unlike the way in which they refused to co-operate with, for example, the right-to-buy legislation. They are doing it not because of any sob stuff about looking after the children, but because they know that parents realise that the Labour party has been playing politics with their kids' education in inner London for far too long.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the ability of London boroughs to spend money on education. The figures are £3 million this year and £10 million next year. Those are important sums which show that the Government want the London boroughs to get on with the job.

I am glad that the London residuary body will have powers to look after functions such as the supply services. The LRB is fortunate in having people of the calibre of Tag Taylor and Peter Bowness who understand education, who are Londoners and who will put the interests of the service well ahead of anything else.

The real tragedy is that the Labour party is obsessed with the fact that it could not win Kensington—I take this chance to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his presence here. May he remain for a long time. Despite all that has been said about the unpopularity of the Government in abolishing ILEA and the community charge, the Labour party has finished up with egg on its face and is now trying to make capital out of this part of the Bill. It will not wash and the Labour party knows it.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I and my hon. Friends fought bitterly against the Government's proposal to abolish ILEA when it first surfaced in the House. We remain convinced that we were right. In that we have the support of over 90 per cent. of the parents of the children in our areas. We look forward to the day when a Labour Government will reintroduce a London-wide authority for education in London.

Mr. Dunn: I am sorry to intervene, but will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it is his party's policy, if in government, to reinstate the Inner London education authority?

Mr. Smith: The Minister was obviously not listening because I said that we would introduce a London-wide authority for education because it is the principle of a unitary authority which is important, and that is recognised right across the Labour party.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No, time is short so I will not give way.

The Lords amendments do several things. For example, they give the Government centralised authority to make senior managerial appointments for the conduct and preparation of education in individual boroughs. Such a proposal makes a mockery of the Government's pledge when they came to office nine years ago to take central Government off the backs of local government. By supporting the amendments, they are putting central Government in control of local government, and that is unacceptable.

The Government also propose to put the London residuary body of all things in charge of a number of London-wide education services. Clearly, they have not had direct experience of the way in which the London residuary body has been performing its functions since the abolition of the Greater London council. That gives Opposition Members absolutely no confidence that the education services that are important to our constituents will be looked after and treasured.

Perhaps most important of all, the amendments completely fail to make proper financial provision or to give the boroughs the proper resources that they will need to run a good education service once ILEA has been abolished. My borough of Islington receives about £30 million worth more services from ILEA than it contributes through the rate income that it receives from Islington residents. That provides a high standard of education for Islington students, parents and pupils. I have asked the Government where that money will come from once ILEA is abolished, because the Government have not given us any assurances that proper resources will be available once ILEA has been abolished to ensure that the present level of education services for the people of my borough will continue. There is no proposal on that in the Lords amendments. My right hon. and hon. Friends have made a valiant attempt to amend the Lords amendments to make the position rather more reasonable. However, there has been no guarantee from the Government that decent and proper resource will be available.

I am deeply worried about the future quality of education in my constituency. The Government have given me no reason to hope that education will survive or thrive after abolition. Unless and until the Government make proper provision or give us decent guarantees that that provision will be made, we shall oppose their measure. The Government have so far failed entirely to give us any such guarantees.

Mr. Bowis:

"Neil Fletcher, and people like him, should have asked the hard questions years ago; they have been waiting to be asked for at least a decade. The Left did not face up to its failures, and to the manifest alarm of the mass of parents."

Those are not my words but the words of the editor of the *New Statesman* and they sum up the reason why we are where we are today in pursuing the need to take on the management of education in inner London.

The amendments concentrate on management and on the Secretary of State having a role in the appointment of senior managers in the inner London boroughs. The whole purpose of that is to ensure that the past does not recur; that the future is not as bad as the past; that the future to which we look forward is educationally assured; and that the anxieties that have been expressed so often by Opposition Members about the inability of their counterparts in the London boroughs to run education are put at rest. If Opposition Members are concerned about such things, they will be reassured that the Government are to ensure that suitable and good appointments are made to improve the standards of education in every inner London borough.

The arguments for the transfer of powers are well known and well rehearsed. They are, "Twice the cost, but half the results; twice the number of pupils leaving school without results". That is the equation with which we have had to come to terms. Parliament has debated, agreed and decided. The House of Commons has agreed——

Ms. Ruddock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bowis: No, I cannot give way because of the time.

The House of Commons has agreed and the Lords have concurred with the Commons. Many amendments have been tabled by the Government to improve the transfer.

We should direct our debate to forward-looking measures. It is crucial that we have good education in London and good educational management. Therefore, it is crucial that the Secretary of State is able to ensure that, as far as he can.

My borough of Wandsworth has already attracted as senior chief education officer Mr. Naismith from Croydon. He is a man of proven worth and experience who has been attracted by the challenge of running education in Wandsworth. Had the Bill not represented a great opportunity for the children of Wandsworth, someone of that eminence would not have been persuaded to accept that challenge. We are looking for men of such vision to produce a new ethos for the schools and children of inner London, in which there will be high expectations for children of every level of ability. We want a new ethos in which there will be co-operation with local businesses, firms and professions and in which there will be co-operation between boroughs on the provision of resources and co-operation with the polytechnics and colleges. Above all, we want co-operation with the parents in the boroughs and, as we said yesterday, especially with the parents of children with special needs. This is an opportunity for a new ethos based on a listening local council providing local education by listening to local people, through local councillors.

Returning to the debate earlier today on city technology colleges, I hope that they will provide an opportunity for local boroughs to move forward without the burden of the blockages created in the past by ILEA. In so doing, the CTCs will help to attract back the 45 per cent. of parents who in my borough, which is the Division 10 borough, currently opt to send their children to other than the local mainstream schools.

We are looking forward to a practical vision. We want to look beyond the narrow political debate to the real possibilities and real opportunities of training standards for the children of London. I believe that with this measure London's pride will grow again in our schools.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): If the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) had been working with the consent and co-operation of his constituents, he would oppose these provisions instead of being in favour of them. The overwhelming evidence is that the parents of London voted against the break-up of ILEA because they know the consequences.

I should like to speak briefly about expenditure. My borough of Lambeth is already an impoverished borough. The only borough that is poorer than Lambeth is

[Mr. John Fraser]

Hackney. However, with our straitened resources we try to do something to supplement what is provided in formal education. We try to provide and fund playgroups, voluntary nursery groups and daycare facilities in the community. We try to provide some supplementary sports facilities—*[Laughter.]* I do not see anything funny about that. As a result of rate-capping we have had to cut by 10 per cent. the amount of money given to playgroups, which are mostly run on a voluntary basis. That is a taste of what is to come. We shall have a much more serious attack on the budgets of education authorities when they are run by the London boroughs. We have seen what has happened to voluntary playgroups—the money has been cut simply because money is not available from central Government.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Does my hon. Friend recognise that because of the meanness of the London borough of Kensington, which refuses to fund directly the playgroups in my area, ILEA is disproportionately funding playgroups in that borough and that people are worried that when education is taken over by the borough the playgroups will close because of lack of funding?

Mr. Fraser: That must be right because boroughs such as Lambeth have been forced against their own judgment and good will to close facilities. Even worse will happen in boroughs such as Wandsworth and Kensington which have the will to close playgroups, not the will to resist.

We know the consequences of Government expenditure cuts. If we consider the grant-related expenditure assessment for London's educational requirements, we discover that the Government intend to reduce that expenditure to 54 per cent. of its current level. Those expenditure cuts will affect inner city schools that are already understaffed and that have to cope with enormous problems. Many of the children come from deprived communities, many of their parents are unemployed and they live in poor housing and in poverty. Rate restrictions have given us a taste of things to come.

The proposals contained in the Bill will control the management of an authority and further deplete available resources. If those proposals are pushed through as a result of this brief, half-hour debate, the consequence will cause irradicable damage to the children that I try to represent. One way out of the reinforced bars of the inner-city cage——

It being half-past Eight o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [18 July], to put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* that this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 204.

Division No. 423] **[8.30 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*

Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 343 agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 344 to 395 agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Clause 173

THE UNIVERSITY COMMISSIONERS

Lords amendment: No. 396, in page 159, line 10, after "exercise" insert

"in accordance with subsection (2) below"

Mr. Jackson: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 397, 399 and 400.

Mr. Jackson: It is right and proper that concern with academic freedom should have sounded like a ground base through all our debates, here and in another place, on the higher education provisions of the Bill. For it is clear that nothing could be more fundamental than freedom of opinion and of utterance, nowhere more so than in our institutions of higher education.

In the constitutional structure for higher education which has grown up here in Britain and which is now being put into statutory form in the Bill, academic freedom arises under three headings. First, there is the freedom of the academy from the power of Government. Secondly, there is the freedom of the academy from undue intervention by the funding councils. Those two aspects of academic freedom were dealt with by my right hon. Friend earlier. The third aspect is that of the freedom of individual academics from unwarranted pressure from their colleagues and seniors in their universities and colleges —the subject of this amendment.

The Government recommend the amendment on academic freedom to the House. I want to say a few words about its background. Although the Government do not accept that strict academic tenure is necessary for the protection of academic freedom, they were always conscious that the abolition of strict tenure would—reasonably—lead to questions about the security of academic freedom of inquiry and opinion. For that reason, the Government's approach has from the beginning been to seek to safeguard academic freedom in the new context of the abolition of strict tenure by strengthening the procedural protections for individuals against wrongful dismissal. That is why, in its first print, the Bill contained proposals to ensure that every institution would have an independent appeals tribunal. It is why we propose to abolish the exclusive jurisdiction of visitors, so as to provide an ultimate recourse to the courts in cases of dismissal.

Following the same line of thought, during the passage of the Bill the Government concluded that it was also necessary to provide enhanced protection for academics from pressures short of dismissal. Hence our amendment in another place to ensure that an independent grievance procedure is available. It is one of the amendments in the group that we shall be considering.

Alongside measures to establish procedural protections for the freedom of individual academics the Government entered upon a dialogue with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals about the possibility of writing into the Bill a general affirmation of Parliament's commitment to academic freedom——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: What dialogue?

8.45 pm

Mr. Jackson: There was an extensive dialogue. There was a series of meetings involving the Lord Chancellor and myself from the Government, and a representative designated by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, to consider the issue. So it is fair and reasonable to say there was a dialogue.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that we started with a dialogue with the deaf? It was only after a great deal of pressure that the Government really started to negotiate.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman consistently trivialises these issues and I do not propose to respond. There was a genuine dialogue about a general commitment by Parliament to the principle of academic freedom. It must be said of that dialogue that the Government found that there were genuine intellectual problems about incorporating for the first time in law the phrase "academic freedom". Our doubts related not to the principle of academic freedom—of course not—but to the precise interpretation that might be placed on that phrase in law. The genuineness of these intellectual difficulties was fully exposed and recognised by all parties to the dialogue between the Government and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. I understand that it is in recognition of those difficulties that the amendment does not include the phrase, or rather the adjective qualifying it, because the Government saw a problem in it. However, the amendment gives a fair specification of the content of the idea of academic freedom, and on that basis the Government are more than happy to accept it.

I turn briefly to two other amendments, one concerned with the definition of redundancy, the other with a loss of tenure on promotions. On the definition of redundancy, the Government have listened carefully to the debate flowing from their proposal to enable universities to make dismissals for reasons of financial exigency. That is why the Government recommend the Lords amendment to the House.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not want to bore the House, but I want to know the Government's general attitude to people who are 50, 55 or 60, and who, in their maturity, may be the best teachers of students and undergraduates. What is the Government's attitude towards such people being used, rather than the criterion of success in restructuring being based on how many people have been declared redundant? The latter is a sad state of affairs.

Mr. Jackson: Of course I agree that it is sad and damaging in many ways that people in their prime should no longer continue to be employed by their university. But universities must live within the means that are provided. Those means are substantial. Britain spends a higher

proportion of its national product on higher education than any other west European country. Restructuring in universities has been necessary. The Government have provided substantial resources, additional to the baseline funding for the universities, to provide generous compensation for early retirement. It is fair to say that there have been no cases of compulsory redundancy in any university. All the retirements have been voluntary and with generous compensation.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Minister must be aware of the case in Hull, which is currently the subject of considerable argument.

Mr. Jackson: The Hull case is the first concerning compulsory redundancy. How universities manage their resources is a matter for those universities, and the Government provide earmarked funds—this issue was considered earlier—to provide compensation. However, the extent and character of the redundancies are a matter for the universities.

Mr. Dalyell: I have asked three times today for a rough figure of how much has been paid out and how much is likely to be paid out for premature retirement. Is this figure available, and if it is can we have it?

Mr. Jackson: I made inquiries after the hon. Gentleman raised that at Question Time. I shall have to come back to him, as I promised then, because the precise figures are not immediately available. The current restructuring amount is £250 million, and restructuring money was provided in the early 1980s. The amounts in question are substantial, as are the amounts of compensation.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. Friend said that it is up to the universities, including Hull, how they deal with redundancies. Is it not a matter of record that the Bill stops universities from setting up their own redundancy compensation schemes? In Committee, when I proposed that a generous redundancy scheme should be put in place for those made redundant from universities, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave a firm undertaking that, if I withdrew my amendment, he would introduce another measure to set up a generous redundancy scheme that would survive his period in office. That has not happened either in the other place or at any other stage in the Bill.

Mr. Jackson: We went seriously and with great deliberation into the question that my hon. Friend raises, and I believe that the result was fully explained to him in a letter. The problem is that it is not possible for a Secretary of State successfully to bind his successors without a statute. Therefore, it is necessary to have a statutory redundancy scheme for academics and we have concluded that this is neither justified nor necessary. It is clear that there will always be a redundancy scheme if there is a requirement for it and that the redundancy compensation will be generous. Past experience gives us every warrant to believe that this will be the case. There can be no doubt, and it is not in anybody's interest to suggest that there might be doubt, about the future availability of redundancy money when people are dismissed.

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful for that.

Mr. Jackson: There is also an amendment concerning loss of tenure on promotions. Again, after listening to the debate, the Government recommend to the House Lords amendment No. 407, which clarifies and limits the circumstances in which strict tenure may be lost on promotion.

These amendments bring the principle of academic freedom into sharp focus. Concern for academic freedom is one of those values which constitute the common ground between the Government and the universities, to which my right hon. Friend referred earlier. In recommending these amendments, the Government are seeking to build constructively on that common ground.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: We welcome these amendments, and we welcome the fact that the Government accept them all. However, we have some reservations because the Government have not answered the fundamental question about why they were so determined to take away tenure. How much money did they expect to save? When was the money to be saved? Our debates in Committee and on Report exposed clearly that we are talking about the very long term for the repeal and revision of the statutes. We are not talking about something that will have immediate effect. The Government have never answered the question posed at the beginning: why do it? However, the amendments that the Government have accepted, either willingly or because they were forced on them, make some improvement.

The Government have managed with considerable skill the wording about academic freedom. They managed to resist for some months, then to concede, and then to have foisted on them in the other place and by the academic world the appropriate wording. Therefore, if something goes wrong in the courts, the Government will be able to blame everybody but themselves. I suspect that the Government have managed to attract the fire of many in higher education on to this amendment while they have slipped through other matters. However, having this provision in the Bill is better than leaving it out.

I am grateful that the Government have agreed to make it impossible for universities to replace older staff with younger staff doing the same job merely to save money. However, we still do not know what the Government will do about students. In many earlier debates, we were told that the university funding was to be at least changed to some extent by an increasing fees element. Suddenly the Government's deliberations on student grants and fees have been snatched away from us. Up to a couple of weeks ago, Ministers were confidently briefing journalists off the record on the merits of loans.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I never do that.

Mr. Bennett: I am sure that everybody believes the Secretary of State. It is amazing how these stories appeared in the press—presumably spontaneously.

Mr. Baker: Very creative.

Mr. Bennett: Yes. However, those reports were speculating on how the fees would be altered.

All that has been stifled and we are now told that this long-awaited and thorough review, which was to be ready for presentation to the House before the end of June, has disappeared into the mists of autumn. That leaves higher education institutions with a big question mark over whether an increased element of their funding is to come from fees, and the implications of that. It also makes us wonder how far academic freedom will be eroded because

[Mr. Bennett]

students will not be free to study the subjects that they want to study, rather than subjects that they anticipate will help them to repay their loans. We shall wish to return to this subject in many future debates.

The Government have skated quickly over the question of what pay will be available for those academics who have to sign new contracts without tenure. Logically they should be paid rather more. The Government have not told us very much about the implications of fixed contracts, which clearly are an approach for many older academics, who want them to take them up to the age at which they expect to retire. It may turn out that that proves more expensive to institutions and the Government than retaining the old powers of tenure.

I want to press the Minister about what is happening to the three review bodies on earth science, on chemistry and on physics. I am not too happy about the idea of rationalising these subjects because there are many arguments about the rounded institution. I can see some of the arguments for specialisation, although resources can be in one institution and shared by another. In the redeployment of staff there are considerable tenure implications.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give some assurance to those who are being persuaded to move from one department in a university to another—alternatively, attempts may be being made to persuade them to move—to assist in carrying through the rationalisation process. I hope that he will be able to tell them that their tenure will be secure. If that is not made clear, we shall run into major difficulties in persuading people to accept voluntary-move proposals. The process has gone much further in science than in chemistry and physics. I am sure that the Secretary of State and the Minister of State have received many letters from individuals on this issue.

We know that the Government place contracts for research, and I ask the Secretary of State to make it clear that with Government funded research the Government believe in the free dissemination of knowledge. In recent months it appears that the Department of Education and Science has been framing increasingly restrictive contracts. When research is carried out for it, restrictions are placed on the researchers, who may wish to ensure that the information is disseminated by providing papers at conferences or summaries of the work.

9 pm

The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales has many contracts with the Department of Education and Science. Again, it appears that there is a growing number of restrictions set out in the contracts. If we believe in freedom of information—the Government claim that they do—it is indefensible that the Government should be restricting the free flow of information on research in education, health, social services and areas of poverty. There may be some justification for restrictions in defence contracts, but there can be no justification for restrictions to be introduced into contracts for research in education, social services and health. In paying tribute to the concept of academic freedom and the right to disseminate knowledge, it would be helpful if the Government put the concept into practice in their contracts.

With the group of amendments that we are discussing, there will be some improvement made to the Bill, even at this late stage. We welcome that. It is only a pity that the concessions have been so hard to wring from the Government. We shall be watching carefully to see how they will develop in the next few months. We shall be awaiting especially the eventual publication, we hope, of the Government's proposals for student grants, student loans and fees for academic institutions.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I shall refer briefly to amendment No. 425, which deals with unrecognised degrees. I had the opportunity to speak to my hon. Friend the Minister about the issue some months ago. The matter was then referred to the other place, and it now appears as a Lords amendment.

There are many good reasons why bogus degrees should be limited—

Mr. Beith: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Are we not discussing Lords amendment No. 396 and the amendments which have been grouped with it, rather than a group that appears much further down the selection paper?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right. We are discussing amendments Nos. 396, 397, 399 and 400. I ask the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to relate his comments to them.

Mr. Cash: It would be difficult to bring what I have to say into a discussion on amendment No. 396 and others. I have probably made my point that we are somewhat concerned about bogus degrees.

Mr. Beith: Having aided the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) with his characteristic brevity, I must first declare an interest as a lifelong member of and adviser to the Association of University Teachers. The key amendment on academic freedom was moved in another place by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. It is right that we should briefly record why it is seen as so important and why it has attracted such widespread support from all parties, including the Conservative party.

First, in another place Lord Grimond asked:

"What is the real mischief about tenure? [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 May 1988; Vol. 497, c. 450.]

No one was successful in answering that question during the debate in another place. The main mischief is that not everyone has tenure. The unevenness of its availability is its main drawback. It has not been demonstrated that tenure would be a drawback in the restructuring that is having to take place in some of our universities. The consequences of its disappearance are already being felt, not least in the attempt to attract key people from the United States, or others who might otherwise go to the United States. Tenure is available in the United States, and it is seen to be of great importance. Against the background of the abolition of tenure, the need to assert academic freedom in some form became that much more important.

Another feature of the background of reform is the spread of redundancies. Actual redundancies and talk of them have become more widespread than at any other time during the period that I have been associated with the universities. Redundancy provisions are still not properly covered in the Bill. In one of the amendments the Lords were striking out something that the Government had put

in on academic redundancy—a rather foolish provision that gave special meaning to redundancy in the case of university academic staff. The notion was that senior academic staff could be fired simply because they were more expensive than junior academic staff. That was absurd and unjust and lay behind much of the fear and anxiety felt in the universities. They were worried that that would lead to the clearing out of people who were known to be good, simply because others could be employed more cheaply at the bottom end of the scale. That was a key factor in the universities' anxiety and the Lords were right to challenge the Government on that and other aspects.

The legacy of that is that university staff consider the Bill as illustrating the Government's clear intent that many university staff should be dismissed. The Bill makes no provision for any procedure to operate or regulate declarations of redundancy. No compensation is guaranteed beyond the wholly inadequate state redundancy payment. We still do not know how Ministers intend to implement the assurances that they gave in Committee, including the undertaking that compensation regulations at least as favourable as those in being at present will be continued.

The third feature of the background which caused great anxiety in the universities is the general climate of opinion in which such a fundamental change as the abolition of tenure is seen to have taken place—a climate in which the Government's dislike of dissent is very obvious. Comment was made on that from the Conservative Benches in the other place, not least by Lord Blake, who pointed out that there was a great deal of despondency and anxiety in the universities.

I do not find it encouraging to learn that one of the commissioners appointed by the Government to the rather depressing task of going round the universities tearing out pages providing for tenure from their statute books is to be Lord Butterworth, who voted against the academic freedom amendment. That does not bode well for the exercise in which they are engaged. The Minister spoke as though the arrival in the Bill of my noble Friend's amendment was a natural culmination of an orderly process of dialogue between the Government and their many critics. In fact, it was fiercely resisted by the Government and was carried in a Division in which the Government were outnumbered, to their great annoyance and distress.

As a result, there is now in the Bill a defence of academic freedom, the need for which has been made manifest by so many of the Government's actions. Thank goodness they have realised, even at this late stage, how foolish and damaging it would have been to resist the amendment.

Mr. Walden: During the discussions and exchanges of formulae between this House and the other place, both on this subject and on funding, one might have had the impression that a treaty was being negotiated between two warring states. There has been an element of genuine concern, but also much self-serving bogus rhetoric. There is no tradition of Government intervention in universities in this country, thank God, and there is none in prospect. I welcome the fact that the Government have accepted the Lords amendment. I cannot find it in my soul to approach this matter with the pompous seriousness with which others pretend to regard it. But I am glad that it has been settled.

I have a simple but important point to make, which is that the university tom-toms have been spreading it abroad that academic freedom in this country is under threat from Thatcherism—all the low level journalism that we are used to from Opposition Members. That is the image that is being given, and unfortunately we have to take it seriously. If I may presume to give the Government a small piece of advice, it is that they should do their utmost to ensure that all the relevant organs carry a faithful report of the Government's decision so that it reaches universities in other countries. It is important that they should have a correct view of the facts.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) did not seem to understand the reasons for reconsidering academic tenure. Let me make two suggestions to him. The hon. Gentleman should talk to vice-chancellors who, in private—I keep stressing that because it is my personal experience—would tell him, as they told me, that they want it to go in its present form. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman should talk to young academics in their early 20s who are trying——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walden: No, because I have little time and I want to leave time for the Under-Secretary of State to reply.

The hon. Gentleman should talk to young academics who are trying to get on in their particular sphere. They will tell him frankly that there are people who were recruited, perhaps too hastily, in the 1960s, who may not be of premier quality, to put it mildly, and who have jobs for life, who are not good at their jobs, and are not distinguished. They are preventing young blood getting up in the academic profession. That is one of the contributory factors to the brain drain. It is not talked about much in public by the universities because it is inconvenient to speak of it. It goes against the accepted flow of the rhetoric.

I know, and universities, vice-chancellors and young academics know, that that is a serious problem. So by doing what the Government are doing on tenure, we shall encourage young blood in this country. Some of it will stay here rather than go abroad to escape from the weight of the dead-beat intellectuals above them, who do exist.

Mr. Dalyell: I cannot know what some vice-chancellors say in private, but other vice-chancellors in public express considerable concern. Those are their public statements.

I should like to ask the Minister directly: did he agree with his hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who is a serious man and an ex-Minister, in his remarks about bogus rhetoric? Is that the view of Ministers of what happened in the House of Lords, because it is certainly not the view of a great many other people? Furthermore, with the abolition of tenure, I should like to ask the direct question: has any estimate been done, following the change in tenure, of the likelihood of even more academics, often the best academics, going to what they see as the lusher and more secure pastures of the United States? That question is echoed by the Minister's hon. Friends. The House would like to know what studies have been done or estimates made in the Department. That is a factual question.

Has any estimate been made in the Department of the effect on small university departments? It is a matter of considerable dismay to Scottish Members of Parliament

[Mr. Dalyell]

that John Erickson's department, the department of defence in Edinburgh, should perforce have reached that situation.

I should like to express my deep concern about elderly academics—no, academics over 50—finding that they no longer have places in universities. Often those are the people who take the most trouble over students who are potential teachers. There is an acute problem. David Gow says in *The Guardian:*

"A £20 million campaign to recruit more teachers of shortage subjects like maths and physics is running into problems, Mr. Bob Dunn, the schools minister, admitted yesterday."

The same is said in *The Independent:*

"Secondary heads and industrialists estimated a shortage of 4,000 mathematics teachers by 1995, and 2,300 physics teachers. He said there were also shortages, likely to worsen, in modern foreign languages, computing, and craft design and technology."

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: My hon. Friend should finish soon. The Minister has to finish at 9.15 pm.

Mr. Dalyell: Right. *Education* states:

"the three organisations say that, taking an optimistic view, the country will be short of 4,141 maths teachers"—

Mr. Bennett: Sit down.

Mr. Dalyell: The Engineering Council—*[Interruption.]* I am being serenaded by my Front Bench, so I shall sit down.

Mr. Jackson: I shall do my best to answer all those points. The most important question has been why we should abolish tenure. The simple reason is that strict tenure makes it difficult for the managements of universities to manage their institutions rationally. There is a marked correlation between the presence of strict tenure and the number of staff on short-term contracts, because it is only by putting staff on short-term contracts that they can accommodate the pressures. We must make it easier for university administrations to run their establishments rationally. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) is entirely right. If there is a problem with the brain drain——

It being a quarter past Nine o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [18 July], to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Lords amendment No. 396 agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 397 to 437 agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Clause 186

APPLICATION OF EMPLOYMENT LAW DURING FINANCIAL DELEGATION

Lords amendment: No. 438, in line 35, leave out "and Schedule 2" and insert

", section 39(1), (2) and (4), Schedule 2, paragraph 4 of Schedule *(New schools)* and section *(New schools)* so far as relating to that paragraph;".

Mrs. Rumbold: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Lords amendment No. 439, in page 166, line 36, at end insert

"and subsections (1) and (3) of section *(Costs of dismissal, premature retirement or voluntary severance).*

(3) Before making any order under this section, the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) such associations of local authorities;

(b) such bodies representing the interests of governors of voluntary schools; and

(c) such organisations representing staff in schools required to be covered by schemes under section 25 of this Act or institutions required to be covered by schemes under section 121 of this Act;

as appear to him to be concerned."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, at end add "and no Order shall be made under this section which would operate to diminish the rights of employees, whether individually or collectively."

Mrs. Rumbold: The first amendment to clause 186 is technical, as are the first three lines of amendment No. 439. The remainder of amendment No. 439 is an amendment of substance, which the Government tabled in response to points made in debate on the clause in another place. It introduces a requirement that before an order is made under the Act there should be consultation with the local authority associations, representatives of the governors of voluntary schools and organisations representing the staff of schools and colleges with delegated budgets. It is an important amendment. It ensures that the process of making an order under the Act is fully public at all times, and it gives the bodies mentioned a statutory right to comment on proposals for an order before the order is made. We have made it clear from the beginning that we intend to consult before making orders. However, the amendment gives reassurance to those who have wrongly expressed doubts about our intentions by making this a statutory requirement, and I ask the House to accept the amendment.

However, we cannot accept the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and his colleagues. The reason is simple. It may be argued by the Opposition, among others, that the fact that under financial delegation key staffing decisions are exercised by the governors rather than by the local education authority constitutes a dimunition of rights. We do not accept that, but the scope for time-consuming debates on this and other points would be considerable if the amendment were accepted.

I am surprised that the Opposition are so worried about this clause. Ten years ago, the Labour Government introduced a measure giving them wide powers to make changes in employment law—changes that could directly affect the rights of individuals. I refer to section 149 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 which allowed the Secretary of State to make orders disapplying certain provisions of that Act and to vary the operation of others——

Mr. Straw: Consolidation.

Mrs. Rumbold: It may have been a consolidation measure, but it allowed the Secretary of State to lengthen the qualifying period for protection against unfair dismissal and to remove from some classes of employees the right to time off for trade union duties. The power in that Act was much more significant than the power given by clause 186. By contrast, clear restrictions are built into the description of the power——

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I shall not.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We can have only one hon. Member on his feet at a time.

Mrs. Rumbold: It consolidated——

Mr. Straw: It is a bogus point.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not a bogus point; it is a perfectly valid one. It consolidated previous Labour legislation and, therefore, it is perfectly right and proper to refer to it within the context of the Bill.

Leaving that surprising lapse of memory aside, the amendment before us is simply not necessary. Repeatedly, I have explained that the clause is not about removing people's rights. It is evident to anyone who takes the trouble to study the wording of the clause that it is not open to my right hon. Friend or any of his successors to use the power to remove employment rights from staff.

On financial delegation, governors of schools and colleges will be given a number of important powers over staffing matters. I make no apology for that. The Government are firmly committed to the principle of local management in education. The Opposition have proclaimed that they, too, are firmly committed to the principles of financial delegation and that they want those principles to be meaningful. They want the governors of schools and colleges to take real decisions on important questions affecting the running of their schools and institutions. They must, therefore, recognise that staffing accounts for by far the largest part of the budget of a school or college. It could be anything up to 85 per cent.

If governors are to be allowed to take key decisions on staffing matters, surely those powers must be given to them. The purpose of clause 186 is to ensure that, along with their powers over staffing, governors are given the necessary responsibilities in law. It makes no sense at all for local education authorities to be compelled to take responsibility for decisions which are taken by other bodies. Opposition Members with local government experience would have complained very strongly if they had been put in that position, and local authorities asked us at an early stage to ensure that it did not happen.

Clause 186 allows my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or the holder of his office to modify employment law to make sure that where governors rather than the LEA take a decision it is the governors who assume responsibility for that decision in law. So, for example, if the governors of a school or college dismiss a member of staff and that member of staff complains that the dismissal is unfair, clause 186 would allow the Government to ensure that it is the governors who appear before the industrial tribunal to defend their decision. That is the purpose of clause 186, and we have made that clear on many occasions.

It is true that much concern—generated chiefly, I regret to say, by teacher unions—has been expressed about the clause. It is quite misconceived. Anxieties among staff in schools and colleges have been aroused needlessly, and I want to make the position clear.

It is suggested by the trade unions and others that the clause as it stands gives my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or the holder of his office an open-ended power to alter employment law to take away from staff in schools and colleges with delegated budgets their hard-won employment rights. That is an absurd misrepresentation. The wording of the clause is precise and contains two very important constraints on the use of the order-making power. First, the clause empowers the Secretary of State to make modifications to certain types of enactment. Those are enactments relating to the rights and duties of employers and employees and the relationship between them. That does not mean any change at all.

The word "modification" has a precise meaning. The repeal of a provision or alteration of its effect to the detriment of a certain class of employee would not be described as a modification. For example, removing the right of teachers to statutory redundancy pay could in no way be described as a modification. Such a use of the power by a Secretary of State could be challenged through judicial review on the ground that the change to employment law brought about by an order was more than a modification.

The second constraint is that the clause restricts the power to orders which the Secretary of State considers necessary or expedient in consequence of the operation of specific provisions of the Act. Any Secretary of State making an order under the clause will need to satisfy himself—and, if necessary, the courts—that it is reasonable both to describe the change brought about by the order as a modification, and also to believe that the modification is necessary or expedient in the light of financial delegation. It is difficult, to say the least, to see how the removal of an important employment right from staff in schools and colleges could pass either test, either that it is a modification or that it is necessary or expedient in the light of the relevant sections of the Act. Any Member of either House will be able to pray against an order under the clause.

Moreover, the amendment that the other place made to the clause at our instigation, requiring statutory consultation before an order is made, will ensure that the process of making an order is fully public at all times. It is therefore wrong to say or imply that the clause confers an open-ended power on the Secretary of State. The Government have made it clear time and time again that the clause is a technical provision which will ensure that financial delegation works smoothly in the field of staffing. The removal of people's rights is no part of its purpose or effect.

The clause is in the interests of the staff. Through it, we shall ensure that staff rights, such as the right to time off work for public duties, are respected. I hope very much that the unions and others who have been promulgating otherwise will stop presenting the clause as some kind of monstrous danger to the staff and start telling their members the truth.

This is a helpful clause through which the Government will ensure that financial delegation does not result in anomalies in employment law, but, none the less, has some substance in meaning for the governors of the schools which undertake financial delegation.

I have explained to the House why the amendment to the Lords amendment is both unnecessary and damaging and, if it is not withdrawn, I shall urge the House to reject it.

Mr. Fatchett: This is the third time that we have had the opportunity of debating clause 186—once in Committee,

[Mr. Fatchett]

once on Report and now tonight. Let me congratulate the Minister on changing her civil servants or changing the brief because the argument that she has advanced this evening, although it is no more convincing, is substantially different from her argument on Report and in Committee. She was either not briefed correctly on that occasion or the Government are simply searching for an argument. I suspect that the latter is true.

We all understand the technical reasons for the amendment. We understand why it is necessary in relation to local financial management. However, we do not understand and trust the Government's motives in taking such extensive powers. In Committee, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and I challenged the Minister about the nature of the extensive powers and, on that occasion and on Report, she had no argument against the fact that they were extensive powers. In effect, she said that we could take her word for it that we could trust in the Secretary of State.

However, she has tonight shifted the argument and says that a precedent was established by a Labour Government 10 years ago. It has taken the civil servants and the Minister a great deal of time, including debating time, to find that example and that precedent. It was never used by the Minister in Committee or on Report and it was never used by Ministers in the House of Lords.

The only example that the Minister can produce is not a Bill that changes the law, but a consolidation measure. If we consult "Erskine May" about consolidation measures, we see that a particular procedure is set out for them in the House. There is one criterion with which a consolidation measure must comply. Page 737 of "Erskine May" states that a consolidation measure should not

"introduce any substantial change in law or one that might be controversial."

That consolidated measure to which the Minister referred, by definition in terms of the procedures of the House, cannot introduce a substantial change in law or be controversial. It is clear that on this occasion the Minister's brief was threadbare, as it has been threadbare, but different, on previous occasions.

9.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I do not think that the hon. Gentleman understands what a consolidation measure is. A consolidation measure consolidates previous legislation. My hon. Friend is quite correct that it is the Act to which we now refer.

Mr. Fatchett: I can say only that the hon. Gentleman probably did less well than the Minister.

I now turn to what we consider to be the substantial arguments about the extensive powers contained in clause 186. On three occasions Ministers have given assurances that those powers will not be used in a way that will be detrimental to the interests of those employed in education.

In Standing Committee the Minister said:

"I can see no reason why there should be any consequential diminution of rights for employees as a result of the clause."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 25 February 1988; c. 1908.]

If the Minister's argument tonight had been correct, she would have had no need to say that on 25 February. Her argument then was, "Believe us. We reassure you that we do not intend to use the powers in a particular way."

In the other place Lord Trefgarne, speaking on behalf of the Government, uttered exactly the same words as the Minister of State. He said:

"I want to make it quite clear that this clause is not about diminishing employees' rights, or adversely affecting employees."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 May 1988; Vol. 497, c. 561.]

Twice we have had reassurance in those terms.

The third occasion was outside this House. The Secretary of State wrote to Lord Murray of Epping Forest about clause 186, again using the same words. He wrote:

"We have made it clear that the reason behind the clause is not about diminishing employees' rights or adversely affecting employees."

That is the wording of our amendment. The Minister has uttered the words of our amendment as has Lord Trefgarne. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State has uttered the words of our amendment. Now they are asking the House and Conservative Members to vote down the words and the assurances that they uttered on other occasions.

If the Minister is a Minister of her word, there is no need to vote against our amendment tonight. Teachers' unions or teachers' organisations will not be sending messages, but the Minister will be sending a message. If she accepts our amendment (a), the Minister's message will be that it is not the Government's intention to diminish the employment rights of people employed in education—teachers and non-teaching staff.

In an article in *The Independent* on 3 May, Julian Haviland started an article on clause 186 with a very simple opening sentence with which any Opposition Member will agree. He wrote:

"Kenneth Baker is not to be trusted."

I am sure that he would get many seconders for that motion from Conservative Members. He then referred that argument to clause 186. He wrote that the Government's argument about clause 186 was simply:

"Trust this Secretary of State. He is a good man."

As Julian Haviland said, that is an outstandingly offensive argument. It is offensive because the Secretary of State is taking unto his office powers—however he may use them—that are extensive and give the Government the power to diminish the employment rights of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Clause 186 is one of the most extensive and draconian in the Bill. We have opposed it on every possible occasion and shall continue to do so. It assumes in one person a radical ability to change the employment rights of many thousands of workers which have been developed over many decades. Because of that power, we seek to amend the clause. Because of that power, we ask the Minister to be as good as her word. I doubt that she will be, but at least she could send a message to teaching and non-teaching staff that she is a Minister of her word and one to be trusted.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I apologise to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) for not following his argument on amendment No. 438. As he knows, a number of amendments are bunched together. I want to draw attention to Lords amendment No. 442 and Government amendment (a) thereto, to which little attention has been paid. I apologise to my right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State for the fact that on the only time I have an opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Bill, which I generally support, I enter a note of demurral on one aspect.

I do not know whether my right hon. and hon. Friends are aware of the motion in the other place moved by my noble Friend Baroness Young to assist British schools in European *Community countries*. In a plain and civilised debate at an early hour in the morning Baroness Young succeeded in getting an amendment against the Government passed. This is not the stuff of high politics, but it touches on a matter that should be of great concern to us. Great emphasis is being given to our preparations for the single European market and to the approach of 1992, but in this matter we are not doing as much to help our citizens who may be expected to work within the European Community as certain of our partners are doing for their citizens. Lady Young attempted to oblige my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to provide certain help to British schools and to bring in at a certain time —although not a specified time—grant schemes to assist pupils to attend those schools in the European Community.

Government amendment (a) narrows the scope of Baroness Young's amendment, but widens its effect in applying it to all schools outside the United Kingdom. Missing from Government amendment (a)—this is the most costly item—is a scheme that would require financial assistance to be given to pupils to attend those schools. I do not expect that we can do justice to this issue in this short debate, when more contentious amendments are being considered. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not regard this as a subject that is dead and buried with the debate.

In replying to the debate in the other place, Baroness Hooper——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Perhaps I should have reproached the hon. Gentleman earlier. We are not yet discussing Lords amendment No. 442; it comes later.

Mr. Haselhurst: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that it was part of this batch.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are discussing Lords amendments Nos. 438 and 439, together with the amendment to Lords amendment No. 439.

Mr. Haselhurst: In that case, I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will there be an opportunity for me to raise my point later?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the House. I very much hope that there may be time for the hon. Gentleman to return to the matter.

Mr. Haselhurst: I thank the House for its indulgence, and you for yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Flannery: It is almost unbelievable, after all that went on in Committee and on Report, that the Minister of State can talk the nonsense that we have just heard. Clause 186 is the most draconian clause in a draconian Bill. I am surprised that the Minister of State did not realise what everyone else realises when she referred to the teachers' unions as though they had no rights.

The Minister went on to say that 85 per cent. of the money goes in that direction. There are some 4,000 teachers, and they have all been observing this debate. It is sad that we have only three quarters of an hour on this important clause, and it is already 9.40 pm.

It seems to be assumed that everyone knows what the clause says, but it should be put on record. It states:

"—(1) The Secretary of State may by order make such modifications in any enactment relating to employment and, in particular, in any enactment—

(a) conferring powers or imposing duties on employers;

(b) conferring rights on employees; or

(c) otherwise regulating the relations between employers and employees;

as he considers necessary or expedient in consequence of the operation of any of the provisions of this Act mentioned in subsection (2) below."

Those words are the most draconian that could be imagined. They put at the disposal of the Secretary of State hundreds of powers that have never before been given, even in wartime. In case anyone thinks that he does not use those powers, let us take an example in which he has already used them and violated the law.

Clause 186—one of the most controversial and least justified of the Bill's provisions—gives the Secretary of State rights that no one has had before. In 1987 there was a flagrant violation of the law. Anyone who thinks that the Secretary of State will not use the clause should take note of what he did in destroying the negotiating rights of the teachers. That had never been done before, and the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations condemned it in its annual convention in May this year.

The matter was also debated in the Lords, when Lord Murray of Epping Forest asked Baronness Hooper, the Tory spokesperson:

"Does the Minister accept that we are not discussing a unique situation? Does she share my dismay that Britain should be found guilty in the company of countries like Chile, Colombia, Bangladesh and Romania which, as she herself has said, are part of conventions to which we have agreed in the past? If she shares my dismay, can we be assured that the Government will take speedy action to restore Britain to the level of respect which formerly was accorded to us in this United Nations organisation?"

That is what the Secretary of State did without the power that he is trying to take in clause 186. The clause—which we want to amend by taking some of the venom out of it —gives him immense powers to do as he wishes with the working people in our schools. As I have said before, he sits there smiling like pussy with the milk because he has not the faintest intention of doing anything about a draconian clause which, as he knows, violates the democracy that we have had for all these years.

This all too brief debate is being watched closely by the teachers' unions and others whose members work in schools. Amendment (a) tries to put some democratic common sense into this draconian clause. The Secretary of State will use it. He has already taken one terrible action against teachers and such people. He would not have allowed such a power to remain in the Bill through all its stages unless he intended to use it against the teachers. Therefore, our amendment says:

"At end add 'and no Order shall be made under this section which would operate to diminish the rights of employees, whether individually or collectively'."

That is a sensible approach, and I commend our amendment to the House.

9.45 pm

Mr. Ashdown: It is entirely appropriate that almost the last clause that we should discuss on a Bill which is damaging not only to education but to the nature of our democracy, and which puts so much power into the hands of the Secretary of State, is the most draconian in the Bill.

We have listened to the Government during more than 200 hours of debate and it would not be inaccurate to say that we have sometimes been astounded by the threadbare nature of the Minister of State's arguments. But she has exceeded herself tonight on two counts. First, she seeks to pray in aid a precedent that does not even apply. As the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said, it is a consolidation measure. Indeed, "Erskine May" is perfectly clear on the matter. That is not the precedent that she seeks.

Secondly, having, no doubt, employed the best offices of the Department of Education and Science, trailing and trawling through the thickets of the Bill, after 200 hours of debate the Minister has discovered a new meaning for the word "modification". It has never been mentioned or discussed in all the hours of debate in Committee. She has discovered that a modification is only a small amendment.

Why was that never mentioned before? This is an argument that the Minister of State has suddenly stumbled upon. It bears no kind of examination. It is a bit like the housemaid's baby; it is only a small one. She knows perfectly well that by the smallest modification the rights that attach to teachers and other employees can be altered drastically. It would require only a small modification subsequently to alter those rights considerably.

What we see here is the hidden agenda that runs through this Bill and through the poll tax, local government, privatisation and housing legislation. It is designed for a single purpose—to suck all the power out of local authorities, leaving them no rights to be decent employers, to create a situation where, although they may be responsible for the employment of teachers, they are not even responsible for their dismissal, to ensure that we reduce the power and authority of local government to such a point that it is easy at some subsequent moment to get rid of it.

Conservative Members should have a care. They have laid down precedents in the Bill—in this clause in particular—which will be picked up by others afterwards. I do not accuse the Secretary of State of intending to use the instruments created by the Bill, but they are there for others to use. If, at the stroke of a pen and a clause such as this one, employment rights can be removed without further recourse to the House, exactly the opposite can be done as and when one wishes, further damaging the rights of individuals.

These powers will be used by others in times to come. It matters not that the Secretary of State's intentions may be reasonable or even benign; the instrument is there for others to use. This is a matter of principle. The Secretary of State should not be allowed the powers which the Bill gives him and which others may misuse after him.

The first of those powers is that contained in clause 186, which will allow the Secretary of State or others to rescind at will or to add to the employment rights of teachers or others without recourse to this House. The House must consider that, and must not agree to it. Those are the reasons why we shall oppose the provisions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am sorry to have heard the speech of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). I had not intended taking part in the debate, but having listened to the hon. Gentleman speaking with the massed ranks of the Liberal party absent, it is clear that he misunderstands both points. He misunderstands the point which was made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State about the consolidation Act. That point was misunderstood also by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). The Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 consolidated the Labour Acts of 1974 and 1975. A consolidation Act cannot introduce a new controversial clause, but the two Acts that the consolidation Act consolidated were controversial and the precedent set in the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 is that followed in the 1978 Act. My hon. Friend cannot refer to the proposals of the 1974 Act because its provisions are no longer the law. The law was consolidated in the 1978 Act and my hon. Friend is therefore absolutely correct——

Mr. Fatchett: I have listened with interest to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), although he did not participate in the debate earlier. Can he give the House some explanation of why the Minister of State did not refer to that argument either on Report or in Committee?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman has not sought to deny the point that I have just made, but he was wrong when he referred to the consolidation Act.

The hon. Member for Yeovil also referred to the taking away of powers from local authorities. Surely what we are doing is giving to those people who have responsibility for the decisions the right to go to court if they are challenged. The governors will be responsible for the employment of teachers. Therefore, they must take legal responsibility for their actions. That is why we have sought in these amendments to ensure that the responsibility is now in the hands of the governors——

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: No, I shall not give way because I have to finish my point.

Ms. Armstrong: In many senses this clause sums up the major problems that the Government have given themselves because of the powers that they are trying to take in the Bill. First, power is yet again centralised in the hands of the Secretary of State. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said yesterday, the bogus argument that they are trying to give power to parents and local communities is belied by the fact that many more powers are being centralised by the Secretary of State.

The second issue is that in this clause the Government are confusing the responsibilities of employer and manager. The Minister of State does not state who the employer is in this case. That question is left confused. The hon. Lady may think that the clause overrides employment law and makes managers responsible as employers, but she is leaving the responsibility for employment with the local education authorities and is changing the responsibility for management by giving it to the governing bodies.

Thirdly, the management will be left without any clear knowledge of their financial responsibilities. What are the Government saying to teachers about their financial responsibilities and about those people whom the Government now say will manage their employment

rights? Who will be financially liable for decisions taken by the governors? The Minister did not give us any answers tonight, or on Report or in Committee.

Throughout the passage of the Bill the Government have sought to vilify teachers, but teachers have a right to know that their employment rights will be protected by the Secretary of State. Our amendment seeks to clarify that right, but the Minister seeks to deny it.

We and the teachers want to know who will have financial liability and responsibility for the decisions that are made. More than that, teachers and parents have the right to know that basic employment rights, which have been fought for throughout generations, will be upheld by the Government. Failure to accept the amendment will mean that the Government are going against employment and democratic rights that have been fought for and secured. I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to reassure not only the House, but the teaching profession.

Mrs. Rumbold: I must repeat that we cannot accept this amendment because it would allow for the possibility of serious dispute. Some people might argue that just giving governors powers over staffing may necessarily entail some reduction of rights. However, I have already explained at some length this evening that there are two important constraints in the clause and I do not believe that it is necessary to add a third.

The local education authority is clearly designated as the employer. The Bill gives powers to governors regarding staffing, but there is nothing wrong with that and I believe that the Opposition share that conviction. If we give governors such powers, we must also give them responsibility—that is the essence of clause 186.

The worries and queries that were raised in the other place met with a consistent response. The reason we cannot accede to this amendment is that we cannot foresee now all the modifications to employment law that may be necessary in the light of financial delegation. Some issues may arise only in the light of experience and we cannot be sure that they would be met by the alternative formula that has been put to us or any other narrower formulation.

We have thought hard about this clause and we believe that it would be irresponsible to make the provision any more narrow than it is already. I have already said that the clause is not open-ended and two important constraints are already built into the wording of the clause.

I sincerely believe that the Opposition have done nothing tonight to improve the relationship between the teachers and themselves. I believe that it is essential to allay teachers' fears in the way I have described.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) raised an important point to which the Government are sympathetic. He spoke about the aims of schools and that is especially important in view of the impending open market in 1992.

Certain aspects of the original clause require careful study and that is why we are recommending a modified version to the House. It retains the important provisions designating the category of school and requires the Secretary of State to provide information and to ask for appropriate information for inspection by Her Majesty's inspectorate. I urge the House to reject the Opposition amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 439, in page 166, line 36, at end insert

"and subsections (1) and (3) of section *(Costs of dismissal, premature retirement or voluntary severance)*.

(3) Before making any order under this section, the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) such associations of local authorities;

(b) such bodies representing the interests of governors of voluntary schools; and

(c) such organisations representing staff in schools required to be covered by schemes under section 25 of this Act or institutions required to be covered by schemes under section 121 of this Act;

as appear to him to be concerned."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Fatchett: I beg to move amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, at end add

'and no Order shall be made under this section which would operate to diminish the rights of employees, whether individually or collectively'.

I ask the House to support the Minister's words.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 211, Noes 318.

Division No. 424] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David

Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael

Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to order [18 July], to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendment No. 439 agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am satisfied that Lords amendment No. 442 imposes a charge upon the public revenue not authorised by a resolution of the House and therefore, under paragraph 3 of Standing Order No. 76, the Lords amendment is deemed to be disagreed to.

Amendment (a) made to the Bill, in lieu of Lords amendment No. 442 disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 440 and 441 and 443 to 447 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 448 to 475 agreed to, some with Special entry.

Lords amendments Nos. 477 to 479 and 481 to 536 agreed to, some with Special entry.

Lords amendments Nos. 540 to 556 and 558 to 569

Housing

10.15 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg to move,

That the Housing Benefit (General) Amendment No. 2 Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 909), dated 19th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th May, be revoked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this we are to discuss the two motions on social security:

That the Family Credit (General) Amendment No. 2 Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 908), dated 19th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th May, be revoked.

That the Income Support (General) Amendment No. 2 Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 910) dated 19th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th May, be revoked.

Mrs. Beckett: The motions have been tabled to allow the House to explore the impact of the massive cuts that the Government made in April in the living standards of those in the poorest and most vulnerable groups in our society. I think that it would help the House if I made it clear at the outset that, although the Opposition hoped to be able to focus attention on the Government's record, we do not intend to jeopardise the meagre concessions that the Government are prepared to make by voting against the regulations, even though they do not go far enough and even though there is much that they omit.

I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) who observed in our most recent debate on these matters that the benefit reforms trumpeted as setting the scene for the next 40 years have not survived the test of the first 40 days. The nature of the Government's climbdown when they were forced into retreat was revealing. It was made clear that it was not the decisions that the Government had made or the savage impact of the cuts on young and old alike but the political reaction that the Government regretted. The Secretary of State was refreshingly clear about the Government's intention. He told the House that the cuts were not an error. He chided his own Back-Bench Members—and by implication slightly chided the Chair—for not having taken in over the past three years the Government's clear policy and hard-headed, not to say hard-hearted, decisions on the matter. The Secretary of State was a trifle unfair to Conservative Back Benchers who seemed—the triumph of hope over experience—not only to see party advantage in praising their Government but to believe the guff pressed into their eager hands by the Government Whips' Office.

We observed the spectacle of Conservative Back Benchers asking how the Government could keep talking about reducing dependency and encouraging people back into work when rule changes on work expenses could cost them £20 to £30 a week and why, if the Government were targeting help on those with the greatest need, the most severely disabled were potentially and actually among the greatest losers.

The Opposition had been seeking answers to those questions for the preceding three years—answers which were not forthcoming then but which in effect are forthcoming now as the Government have rushed with unseemly haste to paper over the cracks. I hope that Conservative Members and the media will take careful note when we begin to identify the holes in the limited protection that the Government refused to give until forced to do so but for which they now demand praise.

In essence, the regulations deal with some of the concessions made by the Government on housing benefit cuts. The Government—by design, as the Secretary of State told us—cut the housing benefit case load by 1 million. That is Central Office—speak for removing all entitlement to housing benefit from 1 million people.

Let me remind the House of the kind of people for whom the Government felt help with housing cost was not justified: 70,000 pensioners over the age of 80; 540,000 other pensioners; 10,000 of the sick and disabled; 70,000 lone parents; 180,000 couples with children and 120,000 others. They made up the Government's million-strong caseload.

Conservative Members—for example, last week in our debate on the elderly—tend to focus on those with savings of near or above £6,000, but they are unlikely to be the majority affected either by a total loss of housing benefit or by a severe reduction in the amount of money that they receive. That is clear, because the Government's concession on capital limits brings only 100,000 of that 1 million, most of them pensioners, back into the scheme. Looking at the others who are affected—the sick, the lone parents and the disabled—I seriously doubt that many of them have over £8,000 in the bank.

Of the 7 million or 5 million losers from the Government's housing benefit cuts, the vast majority are losers, not from the capital limit, not because they have substantial savings, but because of the harsh rate of withdrawal of benefit from anyone with an income even slightly above the poverty line. That is the area that is dealt with primarily by the extra-statutory arrangements to which I shall refer.

The changes in procedures for assessing capital are, in general, common to all the regulations. We welcome those changes. We are glad that, after all, the Government will not deprive people of all entitlement to benefit because, for example, they have a home that is on the market but from which the proceeds may not be available for a considerable time. We are relieved that the Government have taken account of the consequences of marital discord or domestic violence, but I ask the Minister to tell us why the Government tried to debar people from claiming benefit in those circumstances, in the first place. After all, it was in the package of changes following the Social Security Act 1986 that, for example, an elderly person going into residential care was deprived of benefit in that way. That is a change brought in by the Government from which they have now retreated. It has never been clear what justification other than savings could underlie such changes. I should be interested—perhaps the word is astonished—to hear the Minister justify that.

Not all the features of the regulations are common. For example, the increased capital limit applies only to housing benefit. Why? I should not have thought that the numbers who would lose income support or family credit because they had capital of over £6,000 would be large. Again, I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us why, only a few days after the introduction of schemes where cuts and restrictions have been justified by the need for common provision and common rules, a concession has to breach that grand design and is not carried into each of the schemes.

Will the Minister confirm that, because of the assumed tariff income from savings well above the return on capital that most people would expect, there will still be substantial losses of benefit even among those whose entitlement is restored by the regulations? Will the hon. Gentleman clarify the way in which the increased capital limit will apply? The regulations refer to the limit being raised only from 30 May, not from the beginning of April when the cuts began to bite. Is it intended that the period from the beginning of April to 30 May will be covered by the extra-statutory scheme, or not at all? If it is covered, does that mean that that period will be covered only for the limited number of groups to which the extra-statutory scheme, in other ways and in general, applies?

Furthermore, it was suggested to me only today that unless an application under the regulations is made by 31 July—in other words, next week—the higher limit will certainly apply only after 30 May. As I understand it, that is not mentioned in the leaflets or advertisements that have been issued. I should be grateful if the Minister would tell us whether that is so. If it is true that people have to apply before next week to get the full concession, why is the time limit being imposed, why has nobody been told about it, and are there any other time limits that we have not been warned of?

I now refer to other aspects of the transitional protection scheme which, as I have just described, interact to an extent. My concern about the time limits is heightened by the answer that was given yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) by the Under-Secretary of State about the progress in dealing with applications. The answer said that inquiry forms are being sent out to local authorities at the rate of 4,500 a day. That does not sound too bad, except that if the Government's extremely misleading propaganda on the generosity of the transitional protection scheme is believed, and 5 million losers apply, it would take three years just to deal with that aspect of the process.

Of course, that is only one part of the chain. Someone must have written to the Glasgow unit, which is now inquiring of the local authority. The local authority must fill in a complicated form and return it to Glasgow, and only after those answers have been assessed will any payment be forthcoming, if at all.

According to the Minister's answer, only a tiny number of cases has been assessed so far, and I note that 50 per cent. of those have been rejected. I know that that is not remotely a statistical sample, but the Opposition believe that substantial numbers of those who apply, confident —as, sadly, because of the propaganda so many of them are—that the Government cannot have meant to deprive them of this money, will be ineligible. In the meantime, some will be running up debts that they will find extremely hard to meet, especially if they believe the much-touted figure of £2·50.

Will the Minister tell us why any of them have to apply? Have the Government approached the local authorities to ask them to identify from their records all who might be eligible—perhaps with the Government covering the cost? If not, why not? I am told that some authorities are undertaking such a task. Of their own volition, they are scrutinising their records to identify everyone who might be eligible. Are the Government taking any steps to deal with that? It would be the height of absurdity if a local authority found out who was eligible in its area and then had to ask people to make a formal application to the local authority so that the normal procedure could be carried out. Has the Department made any changes in its procedure in this regard?

I wonder why people will have to apply. On 13 July, my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) was given an interesting answer on the way in which the scheme is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or the Department of the Environment, as appropriate. She was told:

> "As far as possible both organisations will identify housing benefit losers likely to qualify for transitional payments and will issue invitations to them to apply. A leaflet will also be made available . . . for any housing benefit loser who has not been contacted by the end of August and thinks he or she may qualify."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. *257*.]

Given the general deprivation in Northern Ireland, I should have thought that proportionally more people there received housing benefit than receive it in the United Kingdom. If it is possible for the relevant authorities in Northern Ireland to process the claims, and it need not be done by the individual applicants, why can that not be done in the rest of the United Kingdom?

While we consider the circumstances of those who will be shielded from the full effects of the losses that the Government intended them to suffer, perhaps the House will not forget those for whom even this limited protection is not on offer—those who are not in the target groups, or those whose losses, even at £6, £7 or £10 a week, are not enough for them to qualify for protection, because to the £2·50, which the Government believe to be an acceptable level of loss, must be added their water rates and rent increases, bringing them up to sums such as I have quoted.

At Question Time on 14 June the Minister of State gave me an answer that could be misleading on the future of the scheme. I asked him to confirm that transitional protection of housing benefit—about which the Government have bragged since we made them introduce it, and I have no doubt that the Minister will again praise the Government's wisdom tonight—will be eroded by next year's rent increases. If those increases are as substantial as the Secretary of State for the Environment is demanding under the Housing Bill, many hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—will have either no extra money but a large extra bill, or will have their transitional protection wiped out altogether. Will the Minister tell me clearly what will be the impact on the scheme that we are discussing of rent increases in the coming year?

It gives the Opposition no satisfaction to have been right about the pain and suffering that the Government are deliberately inflicting. It gives us even less satisfaction to realise that, at best, the savage cuts that the Government have made are to be phased in, not made immediately. They are not being stopped altogether. When I hear in debate the same justification for the cuts, I cannot but remember the articles in last weekend's papers and previously about how the Treasury is awash with money and how in a year or so the Chancellor may even be able to abolish income tax. I have listened to Department of Trade and Industry Ministers telling us what a rich and successful country we are, but when I listen to the debates on social security and on housing benefits, I wonder what kind of society the Government are trying to build.

As the war pensioners affected by the cuts will testify, some 70,000 of the over-80s are affected by the cuts. Whatever else the Government are trying to build, there is no doubt that this is not a country fit for heroes to live in, which they promised long ago.

10.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): We are tonight debating a series of proposals to amend the means-related social security benefits, all of which are entirely beneficial to claimants. I had assumed, before the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) started speaking, that we were not debating them tonight so that the Opposition would vote against them because that would have been absurd from their point of view. I suspected, correctly, that we were debating them so that the Opposition could carp again about the social security reforms that we carried out and they could, as ever, oscillitate between, on the one hand, depicting the Government as being uncaring and unhearing, and, on the other, seeking to mock us for the sensible adjustments that we have made because of the difficulties that we recognised.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Portillo: It is rather early in my speech. Why does not the hon. Gentleman seek to intervene in a moment when I will be happy to give way?

As we have heard a lot about the ill effects of the reforms and, since the reforms were brought into effect, the theme has been alleged administrative chaos, I will put the record straight on some of the achievements of the reforms.

The reforms mean extra help for families with children, better work incentives, and a system that is simpler and easier to understand and to administer. The reforms mean that nearly 90 per cent. of those affected have seen a cash gain or no change in their entitlement. The reforms have swept away many of the anomalies of the old system.

Operationally, the conversion exercise for the six million supplementary benefit cases that needed to be converted to income support was completed on time in all but a handful of our local offices. In housing benefit the conversion went well. I take the House back to 23 March when we were debating our regulations that would enable local authorities to make payments on account where they might have difficulty in converting on time. I remind the House that on that occasion the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was a prophet of doom and referred to our reforms as being on a "hurried and impossible timescale". He predicted that a large number of authorities would not implement our scheme on time.

I would never accuse the hon. Gentleman, or the hon. Member for Derby, South, or their hon. Friends, of undue reticence, but it has been significant that since 1 April the dog has not barked, because we have not been told by a significant number of local authorities that they have been in any great difficulties, despite reports that, on top of their other commitments, local authorities were being asked to give up time to answer the hon. Gentleman's questionnaire. That attempt to stir up despondency appears to have failed. The local authority associations have acknowledged that most authorities have implemented on time. We acknowledge, very gladly, that local authorities have put in a great deal of work to achieve that, and we give all credit to them, but I fear no credit, as ever, to the Opposition, who have been, as always, making bricks without straw and on this occasion for the purpose of hurling them, rather than for any constructive purpose.

Mr. Nellist: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me whether my question falls within the definition of the word "carping" that he used. He may be aware that on 12 April I asked the Prime Minister about the specific case of a woman who had a £1·65 increase in her widowed mother's pension, but had lost £13 in free school meals, and who with the housing benefit cuts will now have lost a total of about £15 to £16—yet this is supposed to help families with children. The Prime Minister said in column 18 of *Hansard* that 5 million people are gaining, 2 million have no change and 1 million have a decrease. Is he aware that in Coventry the council has examined all the cases and 4,000 people have gained and 20,500 have lost? How does Coventry's experience square with the figures that the Prime Minister gave or, indeed, with the complacent attitude shown by the Minister so far? How are my constituents, and those of other "carping" Labour Members, supposed to manage after the cuts that have taken place since April?

Mr. Portillo: I do not recall the details of the case that the hon. Gentleman raised on 12 April, but it sounds as though the person he was talking about was on family credit and had children. If that person suffered a large loss in housing benefit, he or she would be eligible for transitional payments, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will urge his constituent to apply on form RR4.

We have been through the argument about the number of gainers and losers many times. Our figures are based on national representative samples under the family expenditure survey—a data source that has been used by Governments of different parties for many years. Most respectable commentators understand that the family expenditure survey is the most reliable source of data. I am afraid to say that I do not believe that samples conducted by local authorities match up to it in terms of reliability.

Mr. Nellist: Unless I am mistaken, the Minister is talking about a survey that is not done every year. I am talking about an actual analysis of 25,000 individual cases registered in the housing benefit section of the local authority, not a survey. I am talking about 25,000 real people of whom 20,500 have lost and only 4,000 have gained.

Mr. Portillo: I understood the hon. Gentleman the first time. Our difficulty with a number of local surveys is that they have statistical errors in them. The family expenditure survey is a nationally based survey and its reliability has never before been questioned by Opposition Members.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Minister clarify that response? Of 25,000 people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency examined by the local authority, only 4,000 have gained and more than 20,000 have lost. What is the statistical error there?

Mr. Portillo: I have no means of determining how the figures were calculated or what information was fed in. The hon. Gentleman, who is a student of these matters, will know that the family expenditure survey is conducted nationally and that it has always been regarded as reliable. Opposition Members have never questioned it before.

These amendments to the regulations for needs-related benefits are entirely beneficial to claimants and are a direct response to the issues raised by hon. Members and by outside bodies. They reflect the Government's determination to ease the transition from the old benefit system to

the new for the minority of people in vulnerable groups who suffered a cash loss. I should explain the detail of the regulations, and I shall start with the Housing Benefit (General) Amendment No. 2 Regulations 1988, which are perhaps the most important.

The main change is, as the hon. Member for Derby, South said, an increase in the capital limit on housing benefit from £6,000 to £8,000. It brings about 100,000 people back into housing benefit at a cost to the taxpayer of some £35 million. I was rather surprised to hear the hon. Lady ask why we have not increased the limit on income support further still. She will know that the limit of £6,000 on income support is double what the limit was on supplementary benefit and that the two are quite different. In one we are talking about a generous increase in the capital limit, and in the other we are talking about introducing a capital limit for the first time. We have tried to decide on the best place for that limit and believe that £8,000 is a reasonable level at which to introduce it.

We moved quickly to help the small group of people whose housing benefit was stopped in April because they had an interest in property, which was not their home, worth more than the capital limit. The provision was intended to ensure that an abuse which had been allowed to exist unchecked in the supplementary benefit scheme was not carried forward into housing benefit. Before April, substantial investments in property were often disregarded for years with little or no effort being made to realise them, while taxpayers' money cushioned the owners.

Mrs. Beckett: That is a rather strange point. The Government have reinstated the original position. They may have slightly tightened up the wording, but have done nothing significant. The Minister is saying that in the past officers of his Department ignored the provisions that allowed them to take account of the possibility of a sale for a reasonable time, but that, in future, they will not ignore that. The Minister is giving us not a justification, but an excuse for a climb-down.

Mr. Portillo: There we go again. The hon. Lady wishes to depict everything in terms of whether it is a climb-down. There was abuse under the old system. The new system makes it clear that the property should be sold within six months, or a longer period if there is genuine difficulty. That is a reasonable position and I am surprised to find the hon. Lady still criticising that point.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the Minister accept that, under the old housing benefit system, capital was fully taken into account by its income effect? The interest that it generated was included in the income assessment. The Minister has not only introduced a capital limit in housing benefit for the first time, but has subjected that capital sum to the full horrors of the tariff income schedule, previously limited to supplementary benefit, whereby interest is notionally generated from those capital sums at rates far higher than could reasonably have obtained anywhere on the market.

Mr. Portillo: We have introduced a capital limit because we believe that, if one has more than £8,000 in the bank, there is no reason why one should receive help from other taxpayers, who may have no savings at all, to pay one's rent and rates. The calculations that the hon. Gentleman and others do regarding the rates of interest often leave out the fact that the first £3,000 is exempt. It is a tariff income. It is not meant to represent the rate of interest on the market. It is a way of gradually easing people away from housing benefit until the cut-off applies at £8,000.

We recognise that the change introduced in April was too dramatic; it did not protect those people who were experiencing real difficulties in selling their property. That is why we have introduced the changes that I have explained to the hon. Member for Derby, South.

We have also provided in these regulations for a disregard on housing benefit of all the payments made by the Secretary of State from the transitional payments unit. This gives me the opportunity to say something about that, which I know that the hon. Lady will welcome.

My right hon. Friend announced the housing benefit transitional payment arrangements on 27 April. Transitional payments are designed to help those in vulnerable groups who saw too sharp a drop in their housing benefit at the point of change in April. The vast majority of payments will be made to those with incomes above income support levels, as those on income support will continue to receive the maximum help available. Because of the way the new housing benefit system works, those people who have income above their income support level, receiving help with their rents and rates, will still be better off having met their housing costs than they would be on income support, whether they are in work or out of work. The issue is not about reducing their income below income support level but about the sharpness of the reduction in their housing benefit. That is an important distinction.

In many cases the reduction has occurred because a local authority scheme previously paid benefit at a higher level than the national scheme. The transitional payments cover such cases, where that discretion has now gone, to ease the change. But the basic decision to move away from local schemes must be right if we are not to go on paying quite different rates of weekly benefit to people in identical circumstances, depending solely on where they happen to live, week in and week out. I find that hard to defend.

Mr. Cousins: The Minister has now made a diversionary attack on local authorities over their local supplement to the old housing benefit scheme. Will he tell us how much of the total sum of money paid in the last financial year under housing benefit was accounted for by the marginal variations that local authorities were able to build into their local housing benefit schemes? Was it 1 per cent., ½ per cent. or 1½ per cent. of the total spend?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is being absurd. There has been a great fuss by Opposition Members about the abolition of the local schemes. What I said was not an attack on local schemes. If we wish to produce a fair system, we have to recognise that different rates of benefit paid to people in identical circumstances in different places, week in and week out, simply because of where they live, is not a fair system. We have recognised, in making the reductions, that those reductions have proved too sharp for some and we are stepping in with transitional protection.

As for the amounts, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) will recall that the maximum amount was 10 per cent. of the total housing

[Mr. Portillo]

benefit that the local authority spent in that district. Some local authorities will have been closer to that limit than others.

There will be a few cases where people on income support may have seen a drop in their cash entitlement due to detailed changes in the rules governing fuel and service charges and non-dependant deductions. Those people will also be eligible for transitional payments on the same basis as everyone else.

There have been just 11 weeks since April during which my Department has set up an entirely new unit in Glasgow to deal with applications on a national basis. We have found the buildings and equipped them. We have recruited and trained staff. We have developed procedures for calculating and awarding the payments. In conjunction with local authorities, we have devised a simple inquiry form for them to fill in to provide the unit with all the necessary information. We have issued three separate circulars to local authorities keeping them informed of all the changes. We are negotiating a financial settlement for their administrative costs.

By the end of last week, the unit had received nearly 20,000 written inquiries, and nearly 87,000 applications. It has sent out nearly 27,000 inquiries to local authorities, and those are now going out at the rate of 4,500 a day. Naturally, the speed with which those can be translated into payments will depend in part on how quickly the local authorities can process those inquiries.

We have always made it clear that the unit would not be fully operational until July, and with the first payments having been made on 14 July, I think we have more than kept faith with those whom the scheme was designed to help.

We have carried out one national press publicity campaign and another will run for two weeks from 28 July. The advertisements will include a cut-out coupon to enable people to obtain application forms through our freepost service. This is, of course, in addition to the freeline service which has been running since 5 May specifically to provide help and advice about the transitional payments scheme and which has been used extensively by Members of Parliament advisers, local authorities and applicants.

The hon. Lady said that she is concerned about the number of people who may be turned down and that people may apply when they do not qualify. I am amazed by what she said. I should have thought that she would have welcomed the fact that we were advertising widely and that people should apply. If more people apply than turn out to be qualified, that is still a good thing, because it leads us to believe that we are covering the ground.

Some local authorities can sift their applications. If they do so, that will help the process, but due to the systems which they use, not all local authorities have that capability.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister either has misunderstood me or is hoping to misrepresent what I said. We do not want people to have to apply. We do not understand why they have to apply. They do not have to apply in Northern Ireland, and they do not have to apply in all local authority areas. We do not understand why the Department cannot do something to ensure that the process is more automatic and not dependent on the individual.

We are also concerned that much of the Government's propaganda, far from being designed to encourage people to apply, is designed to encourage people to imagine that they will lose only £2·50. That is extremely misleading and liable to lead people to think that they will get money back when they will not, even if they qualify for transitional protection. That is what concerns us and it ought to concern the Minister.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady has to be realistic. When the measure was announced, it was certainly explained to the House that the £2·50 applied to losses in housing benefit and not to rises in rents that occurred on 1 April.

If the hon. Lady is saying that we should take space in national newspapers to spell out exactly how the scheme will work, with all the caveats included, and she does not believe that that will put off claimants from applying, I am very surprised. The strategy must be to have simple advertisements that encourage people to apply in case they may be eligible, and we shall make the assessment. I am sure that that is the right approach.

The hon. Lady was concerned about transitional protection for those who had capital sums of between £6,000 and £8,000. The transitional protection will again apply to the vulnerable groups. People can continue to apply for help beyond 31 July, but the full amount of transitional protection will not run beyond that point. They will not be disqualified from applying. The transitional protection will run from the beginning of April until 31 July for those who apply after 31 July. The date of 31 July is not a cut-off point for the receipt of applications. I hope that I have made that point clear.

Far from being apologetic about the time that we have taken, I would argue that in a short time the Department has done a tremendous amount to set up the unit. This has been a considerable achievement. I am not apologetic about the fact that we took on this job. The Opposition's approach has been to ask why we did not ask the local authorities to do the job, but as the Opposition also spend their time telling us about the onerous burdens that we have heaped upon housing benefit departments over the past few months, they can hardly object when the Government decide to take on the job of receiving the applications and of making the payments, a task which may go on for a long time.

The final provision in the housing benefit regulations is to introduce a disregard of payments made to compensate for the loss of housing benefit and of certain premiums which are payable to people taking part in employment and training schemes. That mirrors provisions already in income support and family credit and seeks to ensure that there will be a satisfactory incentive for people to join such schemes.

The Income Support (General) Amendment No. 2 Regulations are also related to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 27 April. The introduction of income support caused difficulties for certain small groups of former supplementary benefit recipients. The regulations contain the statutory improvements that we have provided. One is to provide the same concessions for income support recipients as in housing benefit for those who are taking steps to sell their properties. The regulations ensure that those claimants who lost benefit at the point of change get the transitional protection to which they would otherwise have been entitled. In addition, we have enhanced the transitional

protection rules so that certain people temporarily away from home when income support was introduced can now get the transitional protection that they would have got but for their absence.

The Family Credit (General) Amendment No. 2 Regulations deal only with the introduction of the new disregards of certain types of property in calculating a claimant's capital. The provisions are the same as those in the housing benefit and income support amending regulations and, again, are entirely beneficial.

I spent some time on the detail of the regulations because I wanted to demonstrate that everything that we are doing is of benefit to claimants. The Opposition's attempts to portray the benefit changes in April as cuts have failed. We shall be spending more this year than if the old system had continued. The Opposition's claims that the Government would prove stubborn and unwilling to contemplate change have been shown to be a myth. We took steps within a few days of the changes, for example, to help battered wives leaving home, and on 27 April we announced a number of changes, in particular to introduce transitional protection for certain housing benefit claimants.

Three months after the reforms, I believe that the system is settling down well. Our rapid response to problems in the new system has dealt with most of the serious problems. We are certainly prepared to watch carefully for any future signs of practical problems and to act where necessary.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister's nose is growing.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman may miss something if he does not keep quiet.

I have today announced another small change, but one of importance to those affected, in the treatment of charitable payments to people receiving housing benefit or income support. We intend that such payments should, in due course, be treated as adding to a person's capital, but not as constituting income, in the assessment of benefit. I believe that that will be welcome to the House.

It is in that spirit, assuring the House of the Government's willingness to examine carefully the results of all the recent changes, that I commend the statutory instruments to the House. I very much hope that the House will not divide when all that is at stake is of benefit to claimants.

10.53 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): This is yet another late-night debate on housing benefit changes. It is appropriate that the phrase "transitional protection" should have been used so much by the Minister. Housing benefit—whatever its guise under successive changes by the Government—is in constant transition. The Government appear to be for ever changing the system and going from one transitional period to another, but for many years for claimants and those dependent on the system there has been difficulty, complexity and abject misery.

The Minister began by welcoming the fact that a Division seemed unlikely, and said that it would have been absurd for the Opposition to seek one. Let me put to him the linguistic logic of his proposition. If it would have been absurd for us to divide on these measures, how absurd was it that the measures were necessary, given the Government's original position? It is, to say the least, slightly disingenuous of the Minister to suggest that Opposition Members and, I suspect, some of his hon. Friends—I am thinking particularly of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle)—may not be exactly gushing in their enthusiasm. I refer not to the concessions announced tonight but to the underlying reality of the scheme, which will persist despite those concessions. That is at the heart of the matter, and it will be interesting to hear the views of Conservative Back Benchers.

The Minister says that we should welcome the crumbs that are being thrown, and to an extent we do. The fact remains, however, that although the capital limit has risen from £6,000 to £8,000 it will still catch many people. Moreover, many of us find the method by which the capital limit has been introduced offensive and unacceptable.

I remind the Minister of our recent debate on pensioners, when I moved the motion to which he replied. Before he tries to submerge himself completely beneath the DHSS halo that he has been wearing tonight, let me say that any Government movement on the capital limit came about only because of the damage that many Conservative Back Benchers thought was being done to their people. We often hear the phrase "not one of us" in connection with the Government, but the simple fact is that many Conservative Back Benchers realised that the capital limit introduced in the original scheme would hit hitherto true-blue loyal Tory voters. That was the source of the head of steam for change, and that is why the Government moved with such alacrity. I am pleased that they did move, but I emphasise the motive behind the movement. It was self-interest related to votes in Tory Back Benchers' constituencies, rather than a genuine desire to ease the plight of those affected by the change.

I do not know how the Minister, when he talked about the transitional payments unit in Glasgow, could say what he did with a straight face—and he has a straighter face than most at the DHSS nowadays. How could he say that it was an outstanding example of the Department's achievement? The Department has bought the computers and found the furniture. No doubt it has advertised in the press for cleaners to make sure that nothing is left lying on the floor at night. The staff—said the Minister, with a straight face—have been trained to run the unit. I do not know which DHSS staff he has been talking to. The permanent staff in the DHSS regional offices do not feel that they are yet au fait with the changes. Which staff have been trained? The SAS of the DHSS must have been drafted in.

The Minister knows as well as the rest of us that the staff have been bewailing the changes, in many instances as loudly as the claimants who have lost from them. When he is so laudatory about the transitional payments unit, he should listen to what I can tell him from a constituency surgery of a week ago. Many of my constituents are pensioners living in Scottish Special Housing Association accommodation, and they do not know what is going to happen. They have filled up forms and sent them off to the office in Glasgow. The local citizens advice bureau cannot tell them what is going to happen; nor can the local authority, because it is not sure.

The Minister may talk about his advertising campaign in the newspapers, but for many of the most vulnerable and anxious—pensioners who have never been in debt in their lives and hate the prospect—the issue has not been clarified so far. They are not sure what the future will hold.

I particularly underscore the point made by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that the £2·50 cushion, or limit, refers only to a loss of housing benefit; it does not cover the broad sweep of loss. The fact remains that many of the people who think, albeit in back-dated fashion, that they will now receive a cushion are still under the erroneous impression that it will cover loss as a result of the totality of the changes and not the narrowly drawn sphere to which the Minister has referred.

I do not intend to say any more except that any change is welcome, but the Minister should not complain too much that the Opposition remain critical. We were critical throughout the transition of the original legislation in the previous Parliament. Warnings came from everybody from the Social Security Advisory Committee to pressure groups throughout the land who had commented on the original proposals. Therefore, to say that we are wrong in continuing to criticise is unfounded.

This is not a matter for division, but the basic anomalies, flaws and injustices in the system remain and the Minister bears a responsibility in replying to that reality later.

11.1 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I heard what the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said he expected of me if I caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that I shall not disappoint him, because, although we have heard some criticism from Opposition Benches, the House will recall that I was, and, indeed remain to some extent, a critic of the changes. I was not a critic who suddenly discovered the impact of the changes in 1988, but, if I may partially in self-justification remind the House, one who has been critical in anticipation of the measure over the past two or three years, indeed ever since the Fowler review.

In particular, the House will recall that I was at the forefront of the campaign just a few short weeks ago which aimed to increase the £6,000 capital disregard. It would be churlish if I did not start by saying that I am prepared to welcome the increase that is embodied in one of the sets of amendments on the Order Paper. That was a successful

campaign and Conservative Back Benchers can claim credit for having persuaded the Government that the proposed £6,000 capital limit was too low.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye seemed to think that he had discovered some great truth when he said that part of the reason why some of us took that line was because we were fearful that the proposal would affect some of our traditional supporters. In so far as this is a time for confession, let me be frank and say that the hon. Gentleman is right. I perceived that it would have an impact on some of the people on whom I have relied for election after election. I have no apology to make to the House for that.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the hon. Gentlemen for the candid nature of his comments. My criticism is levelled not at him or indeed his colleagues on the Back Benches, but at the Minister who sought to deny that very point when I raised it in a debate on pensioners in the House last week. He said that nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. McCrindle: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. Perhaps we could find common ground not only across the Floor but between the Conservative Back and Front Benches if I say that, although that was undoubtedly in my mind, and will remain in my mind, so, too, was the recollection that for years, ever since I became a Member of the House, I have been extolling the virtues of thrift. I have been telling people that self-reliance was something to which we should all aspire. I have long taken the view that if one can avoid the necessity of relying on state assistance, that is something to be proud of. Although it cannot possibly be the lot of everybody in this country to be able to do so, those who have been able to accumulate a nest egg are to be congratulated.

I took the view that to penalise thrift, which is what the earlier low limit suggested, was the wrong way to go about things. I repeat that I have been saying that for a long period and not just for a short time. Therefore, it was agreeable to find that after a few years of not being listened to quite as acutely as I would wish, there was a sudden upsurge of support.

Although in the announcement at the end of April we moved to a capital cut-off limit of £8,000 rather than £6,000, which I welcome, I do not find that limit supremely generous. When the announcement was finally made by the Secretary of State, I pressed for a figure of £10,000. Even now I do not consider that £10,000 is a vast sum in 1988. Although this is not a subject on which we can achieve a result tonight, I advise my hon. Friend the Minister that even if we were to think only in terms of a couple, raising the figure to £10,000 at some time in the future would not be taking it too far. I have never understood why a single person and a married couple are allocated the same figure, which, I am pleased to say, has now been increased to £8,000. I leave that thought with the Minister for when the scheme is next reviewed, and assure him that I shall be pressing for it to be so reviewed as time goes by.

Having congratulated the Government on moving in that direction, I should like to focus on a point which has been made by several Opposition Members and was touched on by the Minister. In addition to the announcement that the capital cut-off was being increased from £6,000 to £8,000, the impression was given—I shall not put it any higher—that as a result of the changes no one would be worse off by more than £2·50 per week. I understand all the qualifications that we can now read into that statement and hear what the Minister says in explanation, but although I understood what was being said, I doubt whether it was widely understood outside the House.

In addition to the £2·50 reduction which the Government are prepared to regard as acceptable, we must remember that there is the 20 per cent. contribution to rates, the water rates and, as the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) mentioned in other cases, the question of rent. That seems to have changed the many people whom the Government could rightly claim as gainers into losers. The Government must take that on board.

Although we cannot achieve any change tonight, the Government would be extremely unwise to go on accepting that that is the best way to achieve one of their objectives, which is to interest the people of this country in the expenditure of local authorities. I am at one with the Minister in wishing to persuade people to pay far more attention to local government expenditure than many of them have done in the past. However, I am simply not persuaded that this is the best or the only way in which that can be achieved.

I represent an area of high rateable values and comparatively low rates in the pound and the assumption of £1·30 per week on rates comes nowhere near to being adequate to cover the problems faced by many people in my constituency. Other hon. Members may be more fortunate than I, and may not have as many people coming to their surgeries at weekends to point out that they are considerably more than £2·50 worse off per week, notwithstanding these changes, simply because of high rateable values, the contribution of 20 per cent. and the water rates which, put together, can be a substantial imposition.

I leave this thought with the Minister. Although I accept that we cannot change the provisions tonight, this seems an appropriate moment to say, as I have been doing at successive Question Times ever since 1 April and will continue to do, this is not a matter which will go away. It is not a question of allowing the system to settle down and assuming that, as a result, we shall stop receiving complaints. We are faced with middle-class hardship and that is something which a Conservative Government should not readily overlook.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I agree with my hon. Friend, but does he accept that we face exactly the same problems in the borough of Waltham Forest where we have low rateable values but a high rate in the pound?

Mr. McCrindle: That is all the more reason for our combined representations to be heard carefully by the Minister. We could then persuade my hon. Friend that the system on which the Government have so far insisted is not the only one and certainly not the best one. We should be performing a useful service if we persuaded the Minister to go back to his Department to make sure that a investigation is undertaken to see whether a better system can be found.

In the past few weeks I have been struck by the number of people who have come to my surgeries to tell me that they are in difficult circumstances because of their income. It is extremely difficult to challenge that. On inquiry,

[Mr. McCrindle]

however, one discovers that they have a mortgage-free property—some of those properties are valued at more than £100,000. It makes no sense that such people are income poor but capital rich and yet are unable to release that capital, which is tied up in the brick and mortar.

I was extremely disappointed that, in Committee on the Finance Bill, an amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) did not find favour with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I appreciate that this is not the Minister's responsibility, but I hope that he will understand that the pressures that we are putting on him could be substantially relieved if an easier way could be found to tap the substantial capital resource held by many elderly people.

It cannot be right for people with properties valued in excess of £100,000 to be living a life of penury when judged on their weekly income. I hope that my speech will be heard in the appropriate quarters. Given that the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West was unacceptable, I hope that the Chancellor will see it as his responsibility to bring in a system to unlock such capital.

I realise that my speech has ranged far and wide and I appreciate that I have not made myself unduly popular with the Minister. I have lived with that problem for some years, but I am bound to say that I have not experienced it with this Minister.

I hope that my hon. Friend will appreciate that the capital cut-off is still not generous and that the figure of £2·50 must be reconsidered. A better way must be found of interesting people in the expenditure of their local authorities. We must also find a way to unlock capital so that some pleasure is brought to the lives of people who presently sometimes face financial difficulties.

11.13 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I hope that the Minister will understand the difference between Labour party criticism of the housing benefit scheme that the Government are attempting to operate—under which there are 5 million losers—and our response to these meagre proposals that the Government have been forced to introduce and for which everyone in the Chamber is claiming credit. It will not escape hon. Members' notice that, from whichever side the pressure came, the Government were forced to make amendments to their housing benefit scheme because it was inoperable in certain areas.

It is interesting that when the Secretary of State announced the proposals he told us:

"It is a simpler system that people can understand." —[*Official Report*, 27 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 356.]

He went on to say of the capital disregard, in column 359:

"The increase will bring considerable extra help . . . we shall quickly consult local authorities"

to find out the most effective way of introducing the scheme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary went on to congratulate himself and the Department on the basis that, seen through the rose-tinted glasses worn by people living and working in Whitehall, the conversion had gone well. He congratulated himself on setting up, equipping, recruiting and training a new department in Glasgow.

Exactly what consultations were held with local authorities about these changes? What were the local authority responses to the proposals? What notice did the Government take of those responses? Was it taken in double quick time? How did the responses affect the Government's decision to set up the unit in Glasgow? When housing authorities in my part of the world—Bristol—write directly to Members who represent their districts, all those Members, bar myself, are Conservative. The points that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) about Coventry are far more accurate because they are statements of fact about numbers of claimants, not samples. If the Minister cannot understand the difference between a survey and a specific statement about population, the Opposition cannot be held responsible for that, although we seem to be blamed for just about everything else.

I want to tell the Minister some of the comments made by Bristol city housing committee. He will not be surprised to learn that that committee is not made up entirely of Labour members. The views I shall pass on are those of all members of the committee. They say this about the new capital limit:

"Whilst the rise in the capital limit from £6,000 to £8,000 means that some individuals will now qualify for Housing Benefit, a great number of claimants have had their hopes raised only to find that the calculation of their notional income means that they still fail to qualify for Housing Benefit."

The Government deliberately set out in April, when they were under pressure, to mislead people about the benefits they would derive from the changes. We pointed that out at the time and said that not much money was being put in. By the Government's own admission, only 100,000 people were expected to benefit from the change. People were misled.

The Committee went on to state:

"Identification of people who will now qualify is also placing a considerable administrative burden on staff"

of the local authority

"particularly as we have lost touch with many of the householders"

who in the intervening period believed that they would not qualify.

The committee also stressed the considerable disappointment of many groups of people about the transitional payments. Regardless of what the Minister says about the nuances of debate in the House and the clarity, or otherwise, of the statement, people were led to believe that they would be protected if their loss was greater than £2·50 a week.

The Government did not make any statements correcting reports that appeared in the press or attempt to make it clear that what was said to be the case was not the case. Indeed, their explanations revealed the scheme to be more, rather than less, complicated.

For those who qualify, the procedure by which claims must be made to the unit in Glasgow will result in confusion, and in many cases people will fail to apply. The Bristol housing committee says:

"Claimants in Bristol are particularly disadvantaged because claim forms to date have been in very short supply."

We have 40,000 council housing units in Bristol, well over half the occupants of which are in receipt of housing benefit and we do not have sufficient forms to enable people to make claims. The committee understands that the deadline for making claims is the end of July.

It is also claimed that national publicity about the availability of payments has been limited. This claim is made by the local housing committee, which has been monitoring the publicity in its efforts to ensure that those entitled to claim know about and claim their entitlement. The committee goes on:

"National publicity about the availability of these payments has been very limited and consequently this authority will incur expense by encouraging take-up of entitlement to benefit."

The administration of these payments will place a strain on the local authority's resources because once a questionnaire has been designed, remembering that a great deal of information must be supplied by the local authority,

"detailed information about housing benefit entitlement before and after April will have to be provided to the unit in Scotland. Claimants will, as a consequence, face delay in receiving these payments and the position whereby a claimant receives payments from two sources of what is effectively the same benefit is confusing, to say the least. In conclusion, the view expressed by this committee is that while any changes to the housing benefit scheme which result in increased incomes for Bristol's poorer households are welcomed, these particular changes are limited in their effect, confusing to claimants and difficult and costly for the City Council to administer."

The Government have made a mess of the housing benefit scheme. We were told they were doing an ongoing review which was the culmination of a number of years' work and that it would result in a simpler, targeted and fairer system, which would allow everyone to know where they stood. The Government have achieved none of those criteria. We shall continue to argue that the scheme is inadequate and to press the Government to make the necessary changes.

Will local authorities be provided with an expenditure disregard or with a grant to cover the administrative costs resulting directly from the Government's bungling of the scheme?

11.25 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I shall not speak for long because many of the issues that I wished to raise have already been taken up.

The Minister has no right to present the changes that are before us as an act of great generosity. It is much akin to a mugger throwing the small change to his victim after the crime has been committed.

I am depressed by the number of constituents who have had cause to contact me because of cuts in their housing benefit. Many of them have been in tears when they have done so. Many have been severely disturbed by the amount of money that they have lost as a result of the benefit changes.

I accept that some Conservative Members have argued against the Government's actions. It is true that there was Conservative Back-Bench pressure, but much of it was motivated by fear of the consequences in their constituencies of what the Government were doing, not by principle. They were fearful as a consequence of the political campaign that was mounted by Labour Members. We shall continue to campaign against the thrust of the benefit changes and draw attention to the way in which they affect recipients.

I welcome the Minister's assurance that there will be an increased awareness campaign to inform the public of the availability of form RR4 and the fact that they can claim transitional payments. Even with the efforts that have been made, constituents have come to me who have not been aware of the existence of the forms. Many of them are already confused and fearful. It is fair to say that when these people have contacted the local authorities about the moneys that they have lost by not claiming, the authorities have drawn the matter to the attention of those who are concerned. This has led to people obtaining a form and making an application. Many of those who have come to me have said that they should have been made much more aware of the forms initially. They would then have claimed the transitional payments. I hope that that is taken on board and that campaigns are embarked on to try to persuade as many people as possible to claim.

We should not have to be encouraging the public to make claims for transitional payments. We should have a system of housing benefit that is fair and meets needs in a practical and reasonable way. The changes that the Government propose will fail to achieve that. The Government can claim no credit for presenting these changes, which have been wrung out of them as a result of the campaign which was organised to fight against what they were doing.

I hope that in future the Government will take account of the suffering of those on incomes of about £40 a week who have lost as much as £8 a week in housing benefit under the changes that the Government have introduced. It is intolerable that people on such income levels should suffer percentage cuts of that sort. In some instances there are middle-class victims in my constituency. Many of those who have attended my surgery are from the more comfortable parts of town. These people have worked hard all their lives and receive small pensions. There are widows on pensions. It is the small pensions that are causing the problem, which is a cut in housing benefit. Many of these people have been Government supporters in the past, and they now find themselves victims of the Government's attack on those who are among the weakest and the most vulnerable. The Government must stand condemned for the way in which they have inflicted misery and cuts on them.

11.29 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It used to be the watchword about insurance policies that we should always study the small print. The Government have moved their policy on national insurance towards personal, if not private, insurance. That means that the watchword about insurance policies is becoming even more appropriate.

At Christmas, there was a great row in the National Health Service. There were headlines in the newspapers and a statement from the Government Dispatch Box. We were told that the nurses would be paid in full. We find months later that we must read the small print, where we find that that assurance was false. Concessions were forced on the Government following their housing benefit changes. They seem to be dying the death of a thousand qualifications as it becomes increasingly difficult for recipients to take up the transitional payments. It makes a mockery of "transition" when the transition period is moving so fast that no one has been able to keep up with it to make a claim. If the July deadline is adhered to, many will miss out entirely.

I ask the Minister to look again at the impact of the housing benefit changes on pensioners. That point is not often understood among Conservative Members.

[Mr. John Battle]

Sometimes they have referred to the effect on pensioners of the state earnings-related penson scheme changes in the Social Security Act 1986, when all of us know that those proposals do not affect pensioners. The big proposals in that Act that affected pensioners were the changes in housing benefits. It was disgraceful when Conservative Members, in the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill, on which I served, referred to pensions as handouts when pensioners have worked all their lives and contributed to national insurance.

Many pensioners have turned up at my advice surgeries in Leeds, West who are unable to understand why their income has been reduced and who repeat phrases such as, "We worked all our lives. We served this country in the war. What have we done wrong to be penalised?" I urge the Minister to look again at the impact of housing benefit reductions on pensioners.

I detect a sickening complacency on the Government Benches. We have had the Prime Minister and more recently the Financial Secretary to the Treasury referring to the fact that all—I underline the word "all"—are participating in the increased prosperity and wealth of Britain. We know that not to be true. All are not doing so. Some are losing out and the Government must face up to that fact and do something about it, because the tone that is coming across from Conservative Benches is that if everyone is not participating in that wealth, somehow it is the people's fault that they are not. Surely pensioners cannot be blamed for their fate and for the reduction in their income as a result of the housing benefit changes.

I quietly ask the Minister to look again at the matter and support those people, particularly pensioners, who have had low incomes reduced. I appeal to him to give practical support at the Department of Health and Social Security, whether it is through the unit in Scotland, or through the local authorities, to alleviate the situation of pensioners now because the tone of the Minister's introductory remarks struck me as complacent. He referred to the family expenditure surveys and the statistics, but I refer him to one remark that was made to me recently about arithmetic. A pensioner said to me, "Those of us who pay the price can do the arithmetic." I urge the Government to do the arithmetic. Pensioners know when they do not have sufficient to buy food and fuel as a result of the changes in housing benefit. Will the Government do the arithmetic and make sure that pensioners do not have to pay for the cuts in benefit, but have the right to a decent income that they can live on, so that they can enjoy a healthy and, we hope, happy retirement?

11.37 pm

Mr. Portillo: With the leave of the House, I shall speak again.

On the final point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), if he is asking whether we are willing to monitor the changes in future, the answer is that we are. We have given that undertaking several times. I said in my introductory remarks that the 31 July date is not a deadline for applications. It is a deadline for transitional protection, which can be paid only up to that date, but applications will be welcome beyond that time.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Minister clarify one matter? I think that I understood him correctly the first time, but it is nice to get it crystal clear. From what he said, do I understand that of those who claim for the increase in the capital limit, only those in the target groups for transitional protection will be entitled to that protection until 30 May and those who are not in the target groups will be entitled to it for claims only after 30 May? Whenever the claim is received, that is the only date from which it will be paid. Is that what the Minister is saying?

Mr. Portillo: It is my turn not to understand the question. The vulnerable groups will be covered by the transitional protection. Transitional protection will be payable for those who have lost housing benefit up to 31 July, no matter when they apply. On the capital limit change, the transitional period is up to only 30 May anyway because since 30 May a different capital limit has applied. There we are talking about people being compensated between 1 April and 30 May. I hope that that has clarified the matter for the hon. Lady, but if not I am more than happy to pursue it with her outside the Chamber.

I am always willing to listen to criticism from hon. Members, but I resent the suggestion of a lack of candour. I draw the attention of the House to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the debate on 27 April. When referring to the scheme for compensating housing benefit losses above £2·50, the first thing that he said was:

> "We do not think it right to compensate for those increases in rents introduced to coincide with the new housing benefit scheme, nor increases in rates."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 360.]

He could not have made that clearer, and it was further made clear—certainly in the correspondence that I have had with hon. Members—that that is how the system will apply.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) could do better than read a brief from the Bristol city housing committee. There was a basic confusion in that brief. It seemed to be urging me to use the local authorities for the transitional scheme and yet to be bemoaning the fact that extra work was being heaped on local authorities by the fact that we were requesting information from them. I met the local authorities on 27 April, and we have been in constant consultation about the design of the inquiry form and other matters. I cannot accept her criticism that the procedure is complicated. All that the claimant need do is to fill in form RR4, which is very simple. It requests information such as the name and address and asks for a signature on the back. The entire form is confined to two sides, and the second side is only for the signature. I do not accept the hon. Lady's assertion that the forms are not available, because 8·5 million have been printed and 5 million issued. All orders for new batches of forms are being met within two days. We are discussing with the local authorities how we should meet the administrative costs.

I was pleased that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) joined me in wishing to see the maximum take-up. That puts him on my side in wishing to have a simple advertising campaign that encourages people to come forward.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked about the genuine anxiety and confusion of elderly people. I am at one with him in wishing to end

all that. But it does not help for him to cast aspersions on the training or competence of the staff at Glasgow. I wish to encourage applications and to ensure that advisers are fully informed of how the scheme works. We have issued detailed guidance to the local authorities. We shall place that guidance in the Library. We have issued guidance specifically for advisers. There will be a freeline service that members of the public can ring, and there is a headquarters telephone service for advisers to ring. The information is certainly available.

I do not wish to quarrel with my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), although it is always a pleasure to debate matters with him. He applauds people having put aside a nest egg and not being in need of benefit. He wishes to encourage thrift. But we are talking about people who have amassed capital yet are still receiving benefit from the taxpayer. The question is where one applies the cut-off. On that, he and I will not agree exactly, but I am pleased that he at least believes that there should be a cut-off, although he believes that the figure should be different. He will realise that no figure is for ever, and he will have another opportunity to make his point.

My hon. Friend said that the £2·50 was only a small part of what people will be asked to pay because, in addition, we must consider the 20 per cent. of rates. Many people who are receiving transitional protection for housing benefit and are living above the income support level may already have been paying 20 per cent. of rates, and we do not require them to pay the 20 per cent. of rates on top of what they were paying previously. Where in a local authority the rates are unusually high, for whatever reason, the £1·30 will not cover 20 per cent. of rates. But the 80 per cent. which is rebated will be of a higher value than it would be in another area. Therefore, the taxpayer who subsidises housing benefit and who is making good the 80 per cent. that the claimant is not paying is paying a higher rate of benefit to those people than would be the case in an area where the rates were lower.

The regulations bring extra benefit to people who might otherwise find the changes made in April too abrupt. They provide to the woman leaving her home in distress, perhaps under threat of violence, time to order her affairs and to dispose of her interest in the home without being excluded from benefit meanwhile. Similarly, the old person entering a residential home will have time to sell the home without its capital value excluding that person from benefit. They give statutory effect to the raising of the capital ceiling for housing benefit to £8,000, thus re-entitling a large number of people to help with housing costs. They enable us to disregard transitional payments from the Glasgow unit and training premia from the training schemes.

I trust that all those provisions are welcome to both sides of the House, and I urge the House to reject the Opposition motion to revoke the regulations.

Question put and negatived.

Gipsy Site (Outwood)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.41 pm

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): I wish to raise on the Adjournment the subject of implementation of the Department of the Environment's model rules for the management of gipsy sites at Green lane, Outwood, in Surrey. To do so I must refer to the turbulent history of this gipsy site, to the lawlessness and anarchy that spreads from the site to constitute a threat to all who live round it, to the recent events that have brought this to a head and, I regret, to the bureaucratic procrastination that has allowed this sore to go on festering.

I should explain that the Green lane site is not in my Reigate constituency, but immediately over its border in the east Surrey seat of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. His constituents, like mine, are threatened by what goes on in the site, and he and I have always worked in close liaison to seek a solution. I would like to pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend, who, despite the burden of official duties, has always been ready to listen to complaints and to act upon them, both in representations to Surrey county council and to Tandridge district council, which has the task of administering that site.

In years gone by this site had many more pitches, but they have now been reduced to some 18. Each pitch can accommodate up to four caravans, which means that we have a potential of some 72 caravans being involved. A country lane, appropriately called Green lane, runs right past the site, from which it is separated by an earth banking, or bund, originally designed to hide the camp from the road, but which now serves as a stockade from which passing vehicles are attacked. The site is reasonably well provided with permanent washing facilities and latrines.

The gipsies residing in the camp are not travellers in any meaningful sense of the word, but are in permanent occupation. They divide basically into three large families or clans, who at times are at war with each other.

The Green lane site has a long history of lawlessness. I have police records going back to 1983-84, but the problem goes back further than that. Stolen cars are regularly brought into the camp for burning after being cannibalised; neighbouring properties, especially a timber yard, have been the targets for arson; gipsy youths have fired catapults through the windows of houses in Green lane and in Honeycrock lane leading into it; trees have been felled to blockade Green lane, or cars set alight to achieve the same purpose; passing cars are regularly hailed with stones and concrete blocks from behind the bund or barricade; and physical assaults and threats have been made against law-abiding citizens. Surrey police do all that they can, but more often than not it is impossible to find the culprit.

Just recently, events have taken a much more sinister turn. This began when the police discovered more than a dozen stolen cars in and around the site. They were part of what is known in the trade as a "ringing" operation—legally purchasing insurance write-offs, then stealing cars to cannabalise so that relicensed vehicles can be done up almost as good as new. Some of the cars found had even been stolen from garages before they had been sold.

[Mr. George Gardiner]

Police investigations were immediately resented by the gipsies, who seem to think that the law of the land does not apply to them. The adjacent timber yard was set ablaze again, almost as a demonstration against authority. There were increasing barricades of Green lane, and more incidents of stones and bricks being hurled through the windows of cars brought to a halt. Drivers have been injured before, and an injury happened again on 29 June. A police car containing officers making inquiries into this incident was pelted with stones in broad daylight, so firm was the conviction of some of these gipsies that they were above the law.

Following this incident, 50 police officers mustered from Surrey and Sussex, wearing riot gear, stormed the camp, and were able to make a number of arrests. Since then, the police have warned the public to stay well away from the camp. Green lane may not be a "No Go" area so far as the police are concerned, but it certainly is to my constituents and those of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). This is a scandal that just cannot be allowed to continue.

I have every admiration for the way in which the police have handled this matter, and I am not raising this as a law and order issue in tonight's debate. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East and I have been convinced over a long time that the root cause of this situation lies in the management, or lack of it, of this gipsy site, and related to it the obvious unsuitability of its layout. It is for these reasons that my hon. Friend the Minister is replying tonight for the Department of the Environment.

The camp has been there for many years, until 1986 under temporary planning permission. However, in the summer of that year it was proposed to make planning permissison permanent, to assist Tandridge district council achieve designation under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The proposal was put to the county council's planning committee by the county's own gipsy sub-committee, acting in concert with the Tandridge council. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East and I lodged objections to that planning application on the ground that the site should not be given permanent status until a better management regime had been instituted and been shown to work.

Alas, our warnings were not heeded by the county planning committee, which was moved primarily, I think, by the need to achieve designation under the Act. Permanent planning permission was granted, but at the same time a number of important promises were made to reassure the public. The first promise was that the earthwork bund would substantially be removed, retaining only as much as was necessary to set limits to the width of access to the site. Thus, the barricade would be removed from which attacks can be mounted on vehicles—public and police—by gipsies who can remain unseen. The second promise was that the circular service road inside—which serves as a race-track for the gipsies before vehicles are burned—would be severed, at the same time separating slightly the different gipsy families on the site.

I have to say that absolutely nothing has been done since to honour those two promises. I visited the site when they were made, and last Friday I went back—under police escort—to look at it again. Absolutely nothing has changed over the intervening two years. Tandridge council says that it is waiting for the county council and the county says that it is waiting for the Department of the Environment to agree to pick up the bill. So nothing is done. Meanwhile, the estimated cost is escalating, and it is doubtful whether any contractor would agree to work on the site. Certainly he would need to bring his equipment to the site each day—it could not possibly be left overnight.

At the time planning permission was granted nothing was said about the promises being dependent on Department of the Environment financing. Tonight I urge my hon. Friend to cut through this bureaucratic tangle to get something done, and fast.

A third promise was also made in that discussion two years ago. It was that Tandridge council would institute a reformed management structure for the site. Perhaps it did, but it appears to have had negligible effect. Now the council's spokesman speaks of a new working party to investigate its management and see what improvements can be made. It is, alas, the same old story that we have heard before.

Tandridge council employs a gipsy officer, but, by common consent, he is worse than useless. He seems to regard his role as defending the gipsy inhabitants from the outside world. He can never be found when needed and is regarded as an irrelevance by local residents and by the police.

The gipsy officer does not reside on site. I know that there are many arguments against having resident wardens and that it is generally better to let the gipsies order their their own affairs, but the record of lawlessness on this site is so persistent and serious that a resident warden must be considered. It would not be an easy job, but it must be done.

Then there is the question of the site rules and their enforcement. I have read the Department of the Environment's model rules, or guidelines, in appendix II of its useful booklet "Management of Local Authority Gypsy Sites". Are those the rules that apply on the Green lane site? No one knows. Nearly three years ago, I asked Tandridge council to let me have a copy of its site rules, but this was rejected by the council's housing committee in November 1985. The excuse was offered that tenancy agreements were a personal matter between the council and the gipsy tenant concerned. I still do not know what those site rules are.

If the model rules were applied, the council would have ample power to move in and evict trouble-makers, assuming, of course, that the will was there. The model rules say that the occupier

"shall not (1) cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, and (2) burn car bodies, tyres, cables or other material likely to be offensive."

If those are the rules at Green lane, then they are broken every week. The model rules also say that the council

"shall not interfere with the right of the occupier to quiet possession of the pitch as long as the occupier complies with the residential agreement."

Where the rules are violated repeatedly, there is no reason why the council should not move to evict.

What is needed above all here is a new attitude by the council to the responsibilities of management. In the past, I have found officers at both district and county level far too inclined to make excuses for the behaviour on this site, even suggesting that crimes committed in the immediate vicinity of the camp were committed by the non-gipsy community.

There has also been a reluctance in the past to deal openly with the public. When, two years ago, 11 gipsy tenants defrauded Tandridge council of £7,000 by tampering with electricity meters, it was considered by the housing committee in secret session, when it was decided not to prosecute. If it had not been for a vigilant local press, no one outside would even have been aware of it. Protective behaviour of that kind must go.

It was my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East who first pointed out that successful management of this site demands the closest liaison between both councils, the DHSS, social services and the police. If site rules are applied here, and if the police, in the course of their inquiries, come upon evidence that those rules are being flouted, such information must be provided to the council, which must then act upon it. Meanwhile, control of the site must be far more direct and visible. The public must be reassured that commitments and promises made are honoured and that a new gipsy officer sees it as a prime responsibility to enforce them.

The lawlessness and anarchy that pervades the Green lane site is far too deep-rooted and has been allowed to continue for too many years to be ended overnight. But environmental improvements of the kind promised two years ago, a resolute management regime that has the will to evict persistent trouble-makers, and a determination to deal openly and honestly with local residents both individually and through organisations such as the Outwood Society will ensure that the Green lane site ceases to strike fear in the hearts of law-abiding citizens.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take all the action she can to make local authorities appreciate their responsibilities in carrying out national policy with regard to the management of gipsy sites, so that Green lane ceases to be a ghetto of crime and violence in what should be a peaceful area of Surrey's countryside.

11.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Marion Roe): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) for raising the issue of management problems of a gipsy site near his constituency. I appreciate that this is a matter which he raises with the support of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). It is a problem which affects many people locally and I hope that my reply will be considered helpful.

I begin by stating that the establishment and efficient running of any gipsy site is fraught with difficulties. It is not a new problem, nor is it limited to any particular part of the country. That is why I have spoken often in the House on this subject. The problems involved are not intractable, but they demand much effort and attention if a solution is to be identified. I hope that I will be able to persuade my hon. Friend that we are moving in the right direction. We are all keen to bring to an end the kind of problems he has mentioned.

We are dealing with a number of issues. First, there is a need to provide sites to accommodate gipsies. Following on from that, we have to ensure that the sites are well run, satisfying gipsy need and fitting in with the local community. Finally, we must look at what steps can be taken when that is not the case.

Solutions to the gipsy problem must be considered in the national context. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear with me while I restate briefly what the law proposes on the subject. It is considered that there are about 10,000 gipsy families in this country for whom some form of accommodation is needed. The Caravan Sites Act 1968 places a duty on county councils, London boroughs and metropolitan districts to provide sites for gipsies who reside in or resort to their area.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can be satisfied that adequate provision exists for the accommodation of gipsies in a particular area, or that in all the circumstances it is not necessary or expedient to make adequate provision, he will be able to consider an application that the area should be designated. Under the provisions of the 1968 Act designation gives the authorities greater power to control unauthorised camping by gipsies in their area.

I recognise the difficulties that exist over the provision of sites in some areas, including Surrey, but I think it right that the House should recognise the progress that has already been made. At the beginning of this year there were, countrywide, 258 local authority sites in existence, providing approximately 4,250 pitches for gipsy caravans. Additionally we believe there are some 2,300 caravans on private sites. We recognise, however, that there is still a need for more than 3,000 pitches to accommodate the considerable number of gipsies without an authorised pitch. So we are making progress with getting sites established. But what then? How do we ensure that sites are well run?

The Government have given, and will continue to give, extensive assistance to authorities in the performance of their statutory duties. First, we make 100 per cent. Exchequer grant available for sites provided by local authorities. We have set aside £6 million for this purpose in the current financial year. This allows a modest level of facilities to be provided on each gipsy pitch and encourages pride of identification.

For many local authorities, setting up a gipsy site is a difficult business. To help, my Department has issued advice in circulars and various forms of guidance note. These have covered topics ranging from the location of sites through to detailed aspects of how a site may be constructed. We then supplement formal advice with regular informal liaison between officials of my Department and those of local authorities.

This assistance has been invaluable. The making available of expertise held at the centre has helped many local authorities avoid costly and potentially harmful mistakes. The national record of successful sites deserves recognition. It will not be news to my colleagues that these success stories disappear under headlines about problem sites.

My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that I have not forgotten about the management aspect. Good management of a gipsy site is essential if it is to function satisfactorily, for those living on it as well as for those living near it. Good management is also necessary if value for money is to be obtained from the Exchequer grant expended. Satisfactory management proposals are therefore a condition of grant approval. Management is essentially the local authority's responsibility. Sites may be managed by the staff of the authority concerned or, more usually, by a warden, who is often a site resident.

Management advice is available. It is contained in a booklet, based on the results of a research project commissioned by my Department. That booklet is made

[Mr. Marion Roe]

available to anyone who needs it. It is geared towards managers. It is then up to managers to draw up specific site rules or a code of conduct. These should be easy to understand. They should be easy to explain to an illiterate gipsy. An example of a simple set of rules is set out in one of my Department's circulars. I wish to emphasise that these are practical steps which have been successful. Many sites have rules. Most gipsies follow them.

I have made it clear that site management is important. My Department has now become involved in an excellent initiative to take matters one step further. We are part-funding a course on site management. It is organised and certified by the Institute of Housing, in conjunction with the North-East London polytechnic. It will be starting in London in November this year. The interest being shown in it is considerable. There may be other courses starting elsewhere in the next few years.

I stress that these are all positive steps. We are aware that there are problems and we are confronting them purposefully. It is rare for authorised sites, including private ones, to cause any trouble. Trouble, when it occurs, is normally confined to unauthorised encampments. That is why my hon. Friend might take a little comfort. The problems to which he refers must be solved and there is a good chance that they can be solved.

Problem sites are essentially a management issue. Let me assure my hon. Friend that gipsies are not above the law. If the problems are serious, if they involve criminal offence, remedies are available. The police will exercise their powers, if necessary. They will assess every situation and act accordingly. In most cases, however, it need not come to that. Local authorities should be, and usually are, able to sort out these problems themselves.

Let me turn from the general to the particular. As my hon. Friend knows, the Green lane gipsy caravan site at Outwood was first established in 1964 by Godstone rural district council. This is now part of Tandridge district council. It was a large site with about 50 pitches for caravans. I understand that from the start there were problems in its management: in fact, it rapidly acquired a very bad reputation. There were quite violent disputes between groups who used it, and there was vandalism within the site.

As has already been said, the local authority found it extremely difficult both to provide and to operate proper management. After a fairly short time it was decided that the site was far too large for efficient control. The number of pitches was reduced, first to 25 and later to 18. A specific manager for the site was appointed and further improvements were proposed.

That brings the story up to 1980, when my Department was asked to approve improvement works. These particularly concerned the electricity supply and individual pre-payment meters. My predecessors approved this for grant and then, in 1981, approved an alternative, more expensive but safer scheme, which was subsequently installed at a total cost of £29,949.

Unfortunately, accompanying the efforts made to improve the facilities at the site, the level of management supervision has decreased. There has not been a warden at the site for some years. It has also become clear that the site layout is unsatisfactory, and that has contributed to certain tensions. The recent troubles associated with Green lane are the result of not giving the site as much attention as it needs. The problem must be addressed by the local authority responsible for management. In this respect, the situation is improving. The county council, district council and police are meeting soon to discuss the problem. Proposals for better management of the site are already being prepared. Establishing better relations between all groups concerned is a priority.

I understand that a package of works for the site is being drawn up by the district council, which is acting as agent for the county council. The complete package includes building works, and has been provisionally costed at about £55,000. It will involve changes to the site layout. Some of the occupants will be relocated within the site. An earth bund which has been preventing proper access to the site will be shifted or removed.

If the developments result in an agreement on some scheme of capital works, there may follow an application to my Department for approval and further grant aid. Until such an application is made, I cannot know whether the cost would be eligible for grant. We will naturally consider any proposal carefully and sympathetically.

However, I want to underline strongly my view that the future well-being of the site depends on the management proposals brought forward. The site may need a permanent warden. If this is not possible, the district council will have to come forward with another solution. It is possible that the problems could have been avoided, and it is incumbent on the local authority to prevent their recurrence. Grant aid will be conditional on such an assurance.

I hope that this news will bring cheer to my hon. Friend. Everyone concerned in the matter is working together to help bring an end to the problems that have occurred on the site, and officials are always available to offer advice and guidance. In this case, I feel they can do no more. It is now up to the local authorities, county and district, to act.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eight minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Revolutions of 1688-89 (Tercentenary)

Mr. Speaker: I have to report that the House attended Her Majesty this day in Westminster Hall with its Address, to which Her Majesty was pleased to give this most gracious answer:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

I thank you for the loyal dutiful Addresses which on your behalf the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Speaker have presented to me on this tercentenary of the Glorious Revolution.

In celebrating the Glorious Revolution with you, I too give thanks to Almighty God and pray that we may here rededicate ourselves to the principle of freedom under the law which animated the authors of that constitutional settlement 300 years ago."

2.36 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you tell me where the Labour party might be today, because it certainly does not seem to be in the Chamber?

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Chlorofluorocarbons

1. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the Government's response to the recommendations from the Government-appointed ozone review group of scientists; and, in particular, if the Government support that group's recommendations for an 85 per cent. cut in the output of chlorofluorocarbon gases.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): The Government will be studying the full report carefully as soon as it is available. In the meantime we have taken very careful note of the summary and its warning about the need to strengthen the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Faulds: For the first time in 23 years and four months I have question No. 1 on the Order Paper. I am delighted to ask the Minister whether he accepts that it is time that the Government realised that, despite their usual reluctance to take appropriate analysis and the necessary action, in the coming years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] No. I want to get my facts and figures right. Some of us like to be precise in what we say and not as vague as the Treasury Bench usually is. In the coming years there must be an 85 per cent. cut in the output of chlorofluorocarbons just to stabilise the atmosphere. The Government really cannot dally dawdle any longer on this question.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman having question No. 1 on the Order Paper, it is indeed a glorious revolution.

The hon. Gentleman will know that it is vital to ensure that we bring the protocol into force and, first and foremost, get as many countries as possible to sign it. It is most important that there is flexibility within the protocol to ensure that we can look at new scientific data and take tougher measures if they are required. I take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said, and, as a result of additional scientific research, tougher action may be considered.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that, rather than listening to the ritual kick at the chemical industry from the Labour party, he should encourage the industry to do the research to bring in the necessary products to replace chlorofluorocarbon gases? Will he take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of companies such as ISC in my constituency, which is trying to find such replacements, for the benefit of our people?

Mr. Moynihan: I recognise and applaud all those United Kingdom producers who are actively engaged in research and development work. It is essential that we give those companies time to test for the toxicity of the replacements. The Government have grant-aided a United Kingdom firm to develop a recovery and recycling process for the production of polyurethane foam.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Because of a lack of time the Minister was unable to respond to all the points raised in the debate the other night. Will he take this opportunity to tell us what his attitude is towards the so-called greenhouse effect, which will be caused by the depletion of the ozone layer? Does he believe the scientists who say that there will be tremendous problems in terms of food growth, diminishing water supplies, and so on? Does he take the matter seriously?

Mr. Moynihan: We certainly take seriously the scientific evidence on the greenhouse effect, but the hon. Lady will know that that covers a range of emissions, not just chlorofluorocarbons and halons. It is important that we consider the other emissions, which we are doing, not least through recent negotiations in the European Commission. I undertook to respond to all the points raised during the debate, and today I have cleared a four-page draft, which will be sent to all hon. Members who spoke in that debate.

Mr. John M. Taylor: If we are concerned about the upper atmosphere, can we not use our international influence to conserve the great rain forests from short-term privation? Will the Minister confirm that that is important?

Mr. Moynihan: That is important, and that is why the Overseas Development Administration is actively involved in projects to minimise the effects that have occurred as a result of the depletion of the rain forests. I welcome the ODA's initiative in that respect.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does the Minister accept that we have only one ozone layer and that, if it goes, as the policy makers and scientists at the Toronto conference in June said, we could have been gambling with an unintended

globally pervasive experiment, the ultimate consequences of which could be second only to a global nuclear war? We are talking about saving mankind from the destruction of the ozone layer. *[Interruption.]* We are certainly talking about recent significant increases in skin cancer, which have resulted from the depletion of the ozone layer. Why will the Government not accept the findings of their own appointed ozone review group of scientists, who say that an 85 per cent. reduction is needed? Will he confirm also that the Montreal protocol talked about a cut of only 35 per cent. in production and a 50 per cent. cut in consumption? Will he confirm also that we do not have to attack the chemical industry to want substitutes to be developed to replace CFCs?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman rightly points out that there is only one ozone layer. For that reason, it is important that the protocol has as many signatories as possible. To be too stringent and to lose major signatories, such as the Soviet Union, would be a great mistake. That is why it is essential, first, to get the protocol in place and then to ensure that within it there are review measures and appropriate machinery calling for more stringent measures when we need them. That is provided in the protocol.

Rating Reform

2. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent estimate he has made of the number of people liable to pay the poll tax in Lewisham.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): Almost all of Lewisham's adult population of 179,000 will be subject to the personal community charge.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Minister aware that in my constituency many households consist of three or more adults? Does he acknowledge that 99 per cent. of those households will be losers, even with the safety net masking the real effects of the poll tax, and that 74 per cent. of all the population of Lewisham will be losers? Will he take this opportunity today to show generosity of spirit for a change and reassure the 11,000 people with disabilities in Lewisham that he will accept the Lords amendments and give rebates of 100 per cent. to them?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept the figures given by the hon. Lady. They seem wholly to ignore the effect of rebates. It is through rebates that those who suffer from disability can best have their needs recognised in relation to their liability to the community charge.

Mr. Maples: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that what will most concern those 179,000 people will be the amount of the community charge in Lewisham when the safety net goes? Is he aware that one further year of rate capping has reduced that notional figure from £675 to £575? Does he agree that Lewisham council could easily find savings over the next five years to cut that by another £300, so that when the safety net goes the charge would be about £250?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If Lewisham and the ILEA spent what they should be spending to cater for the needs of their residents, the community charge in Lewisham would be £202 on the current year's figures, as it would be in every other local authority in the country.

Dr. Cunningham: Does the Minister accept the figures published by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently, which show that the average domestic rates bill per household or family in Lewisham is £575 per annum and that the poll tax for Lewisham is £577 per person? There can be no better exemplification of what a rotten deal for Lewisham the poll tax is.

Mr. Howard: The figure for Lewisham, with the safety net, is £320. The purpose of the safety net is to allow authorities, such as Lewisham, time to bring their spending down from the unjustifiable levels at which they presently spend.

Lead-free Petrol

3. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government are to consider the banning of two-star leaded petrol as part of their campaign to promote the use of lead-free petrol.

Mr. Moynihan: We continue to consider the banning of two-star leaded petrol, but our current policy is to use the market to secure the change to unleaded petrol. In his Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer adjusted the duty differential so that unleaded petrol is on sale at a price comfortably lower than both four-star and two-star leaded fuels. We are, however, carefully monitoring the uptake of the new fuel.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Minister aware of the success of the decision in West Germany, which has resulted in 25 per cent. fewer emissions and 2,000 fewer tonnes of pollution in the atmosphere? If the Government are serious about removing such pollution, instead of simply pleasing the big petrol companies, will they take a more realistic approach to excise duty than that displayed in the Budget? Will the hon. Gentleman make strong representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman will know that the West Germans started from a 30 per cent. consumption level of two-star as opposed to 8 per cent. here. While the banning of two-star has been successful in West Germany, many of those who were previously using two-star leaded were queueing at the pumps for four-star leaded, so there is no direct correlation between banning two-star and moving across to unleaded patrol.

Mr. Squire: In conjunction with Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry, will my hon. Friend persuade car manufacturers to ensure that, at the point of sale, all vehicles for use in this country can take lead-free petrol rather than requiring adjustments as they do now, so that those who wish to drive on dirty fuel will pay for the privilege?

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that all new models from 1990 onwards will be able to run on unleaded petrol.

I agree with my hon. Friend's second point about better information at the point of sale. We shall continue to do our best, with the campaign for lead-free air, to ensure that that objective is achieved.

New Towns (Planning Applications)

4. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for new towns he is aware of; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I am aware of some 15 planning applications for free-standing settlements which might involve more than 1,000 houses. We have made it clear that such proposals must be subject to normal planning procedures and must be considered within the framework of existing planning policies.

Mr. Batiste: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the considerable concern that arises when rural areas are faced with a planning application for a substantial new town, because of the expense and the delay of the planning procedure. Will he attempt to short-circuit that process by issuing guidance on the scale of the development that he considers appropriate in rural areas that are not within the green belt?

Mr. Ridley: Local planning matters are for local planning authorities, unless the application is of national or regional importance and is subject to call-in or appeal. It is for the local people first to express a view through their district council. I issued guidance recently recommending the possibility of much smaller settlements than the one to which my hon. Friend refers as a way of rejuvenating life in the more rural areas.

Derelict Land

5. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policies he is considering to encourage the development of derelict land.

6. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider the present arrangements and conditions concerning the making of derelict land grants.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am maintaining support for the derelict land grant programme. Resources for 1988-89 stand at £77·4 million and priority is given to schemes for the reclamation of urban sites intended for private sector industrial, commercial or housing development.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend's Department establish a land use survey of all land, derelict and otherwise, that is developable? Should there not be a presumption against the development of green field sites on a county by county basis until all the developable land has been used?

Mr. Trippier: If my hon. Friend had substituted the words "green belt" for "green field site" I could have met his concern. There is such a thing as the national derelict land survey. I expect the preliminary report to come to me before the end of the year, and I hope to publish it early next year.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister acknowledge that the present regulations governing payment for derelict land militate against the recovery of land and the enhancement of the environment in colliery and coalfield areas such as mine, where 1,000 acres of land may be unimproved and unrecovered? Will he look again at the hard use requirement under the existing regulations, to give areas such as mine a chance of a decent prospect?

Mr. Trippier: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern, particularly about the Dearne valley part of his constituency. As a result of the representations that he and other hon. Members have recently made to me I am prepared to consider the after use criteria attached to the derelict land grant. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that I have announced today that there is to be an urban development grant of about £454,000 to support a housing programme scheme in the Rawmarsh part of his constituency.

Mr. Adley: I welcome my hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). He stressed the green belt versus green field site difference. From his reply, am I to assume that it is definitely not the policy of the Department of the Environment to encourage the development of new towns in existing green belts?

Mr. Trippier: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Minister aware that in the Civic Trust's report, entitled "Urban Wasteland Now," which is to be published tomorrow, there is a recommendation that the Government should commission an urgent study of the taxation of derelict land? With the abolition of rates, will the Minister seriously consider taxing derelict land, which people can hold idle at no cost to themselves, so that local and central Government can benefit from additional revenue to bring back life in the inner cities?

Mr. Trippier: I should not think that that proposal would meet with favour within the Government. As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is wholly a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Churchill: Is my hon. Friend aware of the proposal to tip 7·5 million tonnes of domestic waste from the cities of New York, Boston and Philadelphia on the derelict site at Arpley near Warrington new town? Is he further aware that it is entirely unacceptable that the north-west should be made the world's dustbin?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is aware that, in the first instance, that matter is the responsibility of the local authority, but he may draw comfort from the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport recently met a delegation. I understand that an announcement will be forthcoming in the near future.

Mr. O'Brien: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), the Minister said that he would look at the regulations and conditions that apply to the derelict land grant in mining areas. In view of the rapid rundown of the mining industry—the Minister is aware of the conditions that apply in the Wakefield area—will he ensure that there is sufficient finance to meet the needs of local authorities in areas in which, because of the mining industry, there has been extensive dereliction?

Mr. Trippier: When I replied to the substantive point made by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) I referred to his and other representations. I included representations that were compellingly made to me by the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues of all parties on the

local council. As a result, I am prepared to look again at the fairly narrow criteria that we have had in place for some years now regarding the soft or hard after use, which is within the criteria of DLG. I made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that I could not consider that matter until I had the initial results of the derelict land grant survey, which, as I said earlier, will be in my hands prior to Christmas.

Unused Public Land

7. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the development of unused public land.

Mr. Trippier: The draft planning policy guidance note on local plans were issued on 15 June. I have had very few representations so far. The consultation period continues until 10 August.

Mr. Bevan: In furtherance of the initiative for inner cities, and to assist in the continued refurbishment of the urban infrastructure, will my hon. Friend extend the directions, which now apply only to local authorities, to public utilities and Government bodies generally, so that they list their unused land and ensure that it is brought on to the market?

Mr. Trippier: I can reassure my hon. Friend. Under the inner cities initiative, which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister six months ago, not only local authorities but public utilities and Government Departments should be responsible for maintaining and publishing records of unused and under-used land in their possession.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that such guidance to Government Departments should say that what is needed is not just money but facilities for young people? Does he accept also that the money spent on the Stranmillis training college ground at Shaw's Bridge could be better used on a sports complex in Northern Ireland, along the lines of Billy Bingham's imaginative scheme?

Mr. Trippier: I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Northern Ireland Office. We must be specific about what we are discussing. We are talking about an audit, not only of land, but of buildings, supplied by local authorities and by other public utilities and Government Departments. The direction that it is within our power to issue is another matter, which we shall discuss later.

Mr. Alexander: Has my hon. Friend noticed the number of questions that are being tabled on this subject, showing the close interest in it—not least my question No. 62? Is he aware that a more robust attitude towards unused derelict land is likely to go a long way towards easing the housing shortage about which we all hear?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is right. It was for that precise reason that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the initiative on this audit of property owned by local authorities and other public bodies. We are conscious of the fact that many public bodies are land hoarders and are not pressed to bring that land back on to the market. That intention lies behind the new initiative, and we are determined to see it through.

Mr. Eastham: Why do we concentrate on land owned by local authorities and public bodies and never think about the private landowners, who often sterilise huge chunks of land which are over-priced and consequently never developed? That leaves many spots in major cities that could be developed. Why does the Minister not do something about that land as well?

Mr. Trippier: It would be extremely difficult for us to do that. The hon. Gentleman should think about his suggestion. His back garden would be regarded as private land. Is he suggesting that the Government should register all pieces of private land? That would be unthinkable, and certainly impracticable.

Local Authority Amenities

8. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority swimming pools, sports halls and playing fields there are in England.

Mr. Moynihan: There are more than 1,030 local authority swimming pools, including school pools in full public use, and approximately 1,500 local authority sports halls. No figures are held centrally for playing fields.

Mr. Cook: Would the Minister care to comment on the fact that his borough, Lewisham, has described his proposals for the privatisation of these facilities as "bad for the public and retrograde for sport"? Does he accept that his proposals are simply another means of trying to provide a source of profit for his friends in the City? Would he care to speculate on the effect that increased coaching fees, hire charges and rents would have on education authorities that use these facilities for their programmes?

Mr. Moynihan: This will not be the first time that I have strongly disagreed with Lewisham council. These proposals will yield better value for money for local authority expenditure. We shall have more effective management and better marketing of facilities and greater sensitivity to the community's needs.

As for pricing, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to have a closer look at the proposals, which clearly state that there will be discretionary powers allowing councillors to continue to set prices and to subsidise specific groups if they wish. That matter will be debated at length when the order is published.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Will my hon. Friend look into the practice of Haringey council, which is to close its open air swimming pools and allow the sites to be occupied by so-called gipsies, or travellers, much to the disturbance of the local population?

Mr. Moynihan: I greatly regret that my hon. Friend's council should have made such a priority in spending its resources. It is very important that local authorities up and down the country should continue to make provision for sport and recreation facilities and to make that provision a high priority.

Mr. Pike: Surely the Minister recognises that it is not true to say that local councils will have discretion on charging policies. They will be bound by other sections of the Local Government Act 1988 and they will be affected by the poll tax Bill, which we shall finalise later today. The Bill will force local authorities to increase charges—or at

least the people operating those facilities will put charges up. That will lead to reduced use and many people will be deprived of the sporting facilities that are now available.

Mr. Moynihan: I repeat that it is nonsense to suggest that prices will rise. Local authorities will continue to retain discretionary control over pricing, if they so wish. For the first time, local authorities will be required to identify the specific costs of operating their facilities. That must be good for the community charge payer and for the users of the facilities.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The need for sports facilities—which add greatly to the quality of life—is not in dispute. Is it not the case, however, that there is a world of difference between the capital cost of such provision and the cost of proper maintenance and use of them? Do not local authorities have a duty to recognise the revenue consequences of their capital investment and a duty to ensure continuing value for money?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, they do.

Mr. Denis Howell: Will the Minister accept that, in addition to the figures that he has just given to the House, local authorities and the ratepayers have provided 650 athletic centres, 700 golf courses, 8,700 bowling greens and 33,000 tennis courts? Does it make any sense to prise away the management of 45,000 local authority sports facilities worth £5 billion to £6 billion? Has the Minister gone mad, or will he take away this ideological nonsense and assure the House that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will not impose his pricing on local authorities, as he is empowered to do under the recent Act? Can the Minister name a single local authority association in this country—Left, Right or Centre—which supports this nonsense?

Mr. Moynihan: With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's list of different sporting facilities, the answer is that each and every one of them should benefit from competitive tendering for management contracts. When the right hon. Gentleman has the opportunity to review the responses to the consultative exercise that we did on the proposal, he will note that 216 local authorities have now had their specific concerns eased by the provision of discretionary price control. Ninety one local authorities were concerned about the implications for disadvantaged groups, and their concern has gone as a result of discretionary price control. The right hon. Gentleman said that he wanted the name of one local authority that supported the proposal. If he looks at the list in the Library he will find well over 200 authorities.

Building Societies Association

9. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Building Societies Association; and what was discussed.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning met the chairman of the Building Societies Association at the meeting of the committee on private finance for housing held on 14 July. The committee discussed various ways in which private finance could be introduced into the provision of public sector housing.

Mr. Cousins: The Secretary of State knows that his own bungling over housing and planning and the Chancellor's bungling over interest rates have meant that 9 million home owners face a massive hike in housing costs starting next week. At least he can say—as the officers of Britain's largest building society said yesterday—that he feels sorry for new lenders in this position. When he is in Newcastle tomorrow, will he call at Ridley place, named after his ancestors, to explain to the people there why people with large mortgages get a subsidy organised from the extra paid by people with small mortgages?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman seems to be no more aware of the difference between lenders and borrowers than he is of the difference between losers and gainers. Perhaps he would like to look in *Hansard* and see what an extraordinary question he asked. As he knows, matters to do with mortgage interest relief are for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Heddle: Did the chairman of the Building Societies Association acknowledge that more first-time buyers are realising their lifetime's ambition of home ownership than ever before? Did my right hon. Friend discuss with the chairman the scourge of gazumping, and how practical and immediate steps might be taken to eliminate it? Is he not disturbed by the report of the Public Accounts Committee, published yesterday, that Land Registry delays are at an all-time high, and will he take immediate steps to ensure that all local authorities reply to requests for local searches and so reduce the delay in house purchase procedures as far as practicably possible?

Mr. Ridley: On my hon. Friend's first question, I am glad to be able to tell him that in 1979 the number of first-time buyers was 390,000, whereas last year it was 620,000. I can also tell him that in the first quarter of 1987 there were 34,000 fewer loan approvals for first-time buyers than in the first quarter of this year. The most up-to-date figures show a large increase in first-time buyers. I have nothing to say about gazumping on this occasion, and it was not discussed at the meeting to which I referred. I share my hon. Friend's concern about Land Registry delays, but they are a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State tell the building societies that the massive increase in interest rates facing those with mortgages is a direct result of the overheating of the economy triggered by this year's Budget package? What hopes does he hold out to the building societies of a more stable and even policy on interest rates in the future.

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir, I shall not be telling the building societies any such thing, nor would I dare to enter into territory that is not my responsibility but that of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Yeo: Has my right hon. Friend discussed with the Building Societies Association a problem felt acutely in my constituency, namely, the difficulties faced by people on average earnings who wish to become first-time buyers but cannot find a house at a price that they can afford? Does my right hon. Friend agree that an important contribution to solving the problem can be made by approving a slightly faster rate of residential development, especially in areas where there are plentiful employment opportunities?

Mr. Ridley: The figures that I have just given the House do not bear out my hon. Friend's assertion that fewer people are able to become first-time buyers. There has been

a phenomenal increase. However, I admire my hon. Friend's bravery in urging upon me that I should be more liberal in granting planning permissions in the south-east of England. Perhaps one reason for the current high level of house prices in those areas of the country is that I have not been as liberal as some people seem to suggest.

Mr. George Howarth: When the Secretary of State next meets the building societies, will he discuss with them the fears and difficulties that may arise with the introduction of mixed funding for housing association schemes? There is fear that because values in the inner cities and outer estates have fallen, but costs are high, that will prevent the introduction of housing association schemes for people in housing need. Will the Secretary of State discuss those difficulties, because there are real fears?

Mr. Ridley: Those problems have been discussed on many occasions with the building societies and others. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the proportion of private finance that is suitable for any given housing association scheme will be adjusted between the higher and lower figures. It is extraordinary for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that attracting private finance to supplement housing association grant can only mean that there will be less money in total for the provision of low-cost housing to rent, which I believe to be important, even if he does not.

Mr. Gow: As a former Financial Secretary to the Treasury, will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the truth that the surest way of curtailing inflation is to have interest rates at an appropriate level that will restrain inflation? Has he pointed out to the building societies an elementary truth—that one way in which we shall be able to halt the increase in house prices is to build more houses in those parts of the country in which people want to live?

Mr. Ridley: As one former Treasury Minister to another, I believe that it behoves neither of us to go far into the question of economic policy on an occasion such as this because you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might feel that that would take us beyond the question. The other question asked by my hon. Friend can only be answered by saying that the supply of land for new housing must have a bearing on house prices. If there were to be no more planning permissions granted, at one extreme, or if there were to be an abandonment of planning control, at the other extreme, I cannot believe that there is anybody in the House who would not accept that that would have an effect on house prices, either up or down. There must be a connection.

Dr. Cunningham: Is it not a unique combination of achievements that the Secretary of State's policies have brought us to record homelessness, huge housing waiting lists, spiralling house prices, huge mortgage increases, and the return of Rachmanism and gazumping? Is that not failure just by any test but failure by every test? Before the Secretary of State replies, perhaps he will tell the House whether his reply has been drafted by Sir Alan Walters or by Bernard Ingham.

Mr. Ridley: My reply has been drafted by no one—nor do I accept the hon. Gentleman's premises. Those who do accept those premises, as the hon. Gentleman does, will perhaps deduce the obvious lesson, that we are pursuing a very tight land use planning policy.

Rating Reform

10. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning his latest estimate of the level of poll tax that would be payable in Coventry under the terms of the Local Government Finance Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: None, Sir.

Mr. Nellist: Could that possibly be because people in Coventry are only just becoming aware that were this the first year of the operation of poll tax every adult would be paying £267; that 70 per cent. of all adults would be paying more; that of the 18 electoral wards in Coventry, residents would be paying more in 14 of them; and that those wards that will be hit the worst, such as St. Michael's, and Foleshill, are also those that have the highest unemployment, the worst housing, and the most overcrowding? Finally, may I give the Minister due notice —[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] Could I give the Minister due notice that it is solidarity—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] Could I give the Minister due notice——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt)— *[Interruption.]* It sounded as if the hon. Gentleman used an interrogative term.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Hon. Members: Name him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that points of order are taken after Question Time.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Hon. Members: Name him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. I hope that he will not persist. He knows that, following the practice laid down——

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not persist in challenging my ruling or I shall have no alternative—*[Interruption.]* Order. This is a serious matter and I hope that hon. Members will recognise it as such. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a point of order, he must do so at the end of Question Time.

Mr. Nellist: May I give the Minister due notice that, irrespective of what happens in today's deliberations, in solidarity with the mass campaign of non-payment, which has begun in Scotland and which will develop in England, Wales and Coventry——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has gone far enough. I call the Minister to answer.

Mr. Nellist: I will not pay the poll tax and I will advise my constituents not to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must resume their seats——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When I am on my feet, the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not misleading his constituents. The report on which his assertions are based left rebates out of account. Even that report disclosed that two out of three households in Coventry will pay less in community charge than they presently pay in rates. Are those the benefits that the hon. Gentleman seeks to deny his constituents?

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it not true that Coventry is in a similar position to Derbyshire, in that the projected community charge is far higher than it needs to be because of the profligacy of the local authority?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When that profligacy is brought home to all the community charge payers of Derbyshire they will no doubt make full use of the remedies available to them at the ballot box.

Mr. Rooker: Did not the same report, so gleefully quoted by the Minister, point out that 51 per cent. of adults in Coventry will lose, before the £20 a head surcharge?

Mr. Howard: Since the report left rebates out of account, that finding is completely valueless.

Sports Facilities

11. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since 1974 the annual amount of capital spending on sports facilities by *(a)* English local authorities, and *(b)* the Sports Council; and if he will give his estimate of private sector spending.

Mr. Moynihan: Over the period since 1974 the figures for English local authorities on an annual basis in millions of pounds are as follows: 84·2; 87·5; 74·8; 64·7; 48·4; 71·6; 100·7; 89·7; 122·5; 122·2; 191; 143·4 and 166. For the Sports Council, the figures are: 2·7; 3·4; 4·4; 4·4; 4; 7; 6·4; 7·3; 8·5; 13; 11·4; 9·5; 9·8 and 13·4.

As the hon. Gentleman will have calculated, the figures show a real terms increase in capital expenditure by English local authorities of 38·7 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1986-87 and a real terms increase of 25·7 per cent. by the Sports Council in the same period. Comparable figures are not available for private sector spending. Private sector sponsorship of sport has risen from £60 million in 1980-81 to an estimate of £200 million this year.

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer, which he read with great feeling and understanding. May I suggest that those figures show that the public sector has invested in sport and recreation, and that it is because of the public sector that people in my constituency are able to use leisure centres, sports facilities and swimming pools? His lack of figures and his embarrassment about them show that the private sector has not invested. He and his ministerial colleagues now want to take the rich pickings from the public sector, together with the public sector's care and investment, and give those to the private sector so that it can make the profit and the public will lose as a result.

Mr. Moynihan: There is hardly a lack of figures, but the hon. Gentleman did not listen. If he had listened, he would have heard me say that private sector spending on the sponsorship of sport has risen from £60 million to £200 million over a period of eight years.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend will be aware that, from the end of this month, because of gross mismanagement, the Inner London education authority will be mothballing 250 acres of sports grounds, preventing the young people of London playing sport there. Will he use his best endeavours to ensure that ILEA will work with the local authorities, the Sports Council and the governing bodies of sport to keep those grounds open?

Mr. Moynihan: With my full support, an enormous amount of work is now going on with the local authorities and community-based organisations to achieve management arrangements for all the sites. Since the Sports Council entered the scene, it is now optimistic that it will shortly be possible to settle management arrangements for 10 of the sites and negotiations are continuing in respect of the other two. I am sure that my hon. Friend will celebrate that news.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister accept that an increase in advertising at sports events by cigarette companies is no substitute for investment by the public sector? Does he accept that his figures show that the public sector, local authorities and the Sports Council have invested heavily in sports facilities that are open to all and that, through privatisation, he is handing over the rich pickings to the private sector so that it can come along and make a profit out of sport? *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members find the exploitation of profit-making out of sport and the barring of people on low incomes very amusing, but it is a matter of great concern to us.

Mr. Moynihan: Of course I recognise that both the Sports Council and local authorities have invested in ensuring that we promote sport-for-all policies. I welcome that, but it is wrong of the hon. Gentleman not to give full credit to the substantial amount of private sector involvement in sport and recreation, which is much to be celebrated.

Mr. Heffer: Where?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman asks, "Where?". He should look at the answer in *Hansard*.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that in some areas only one primary school in eight is teaching cricket, that the rest of the public sector is not picking up that problem and that we shall not win Test matches until something is done about that? Will he initiate a national scheme of coaching in the public sector, working together with the private sector, to do something about that, for the sake of the boys and girls of this country?

Mr. Moynihan: I am pleased to inform my hon. Friend that the Kwik Cricket development has helped considerably, not least with regard to inner city projects, and that the initiative being taken by the Test and County Cricket Board and the Sports Council is much to be welcomed.

Simplified Planning Zones

13. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many simplified planning zones have been established in England and Wales since their introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, enabling local planning authorities to

prepare and adopt simplified planning zones, came into effect in November 1987. So far, six authorities in England and Wales are known to be preparing schemes and two of those are near to adoption.

Mr. Riddick: Will my hon. Friend confirm that simplified planning zones can help to cut out unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy and make a significant contribution to the regeneration of rundown urban areas? Will he tell me whether he has received an application from my council, Kirklees, and, if not, whether he would welcome such an application?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is well known as a strong and powerful advocate for this form of deregulation in that area of planning, and I compliment him on his tenacity.

I have not received an application from Kirklees council. I should certainly welcome it. If there were the slightest thought in the council's mind that it should not do so, because a Conservative Government introduced the scheme in the first place, I should tell it that the vast majority of applications that I have received so far have been from Labour-controlled authorities.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has not simplified planning in enterprise zones been a disaster in my constituency of Workington? Will the Minister comment on the fact that the only place in Britain where one can build houses freely without planning permission is in the Workington enterprise zone? Is that not disgraceful? Why have I repeatedly had to come back to the Government, and why have they repeatedly not taken any action?

Mr. Trippier: What is disgraceful is that the hon. Gentleman should castigate the enterprise zone in his constituency, when I know for a fact that it has been an unmitigated success. Having officially visited his constituency three times in the past 18 months, I can confirm that that enterprise zone has physically transformed the landscape and had a significant impact on reducing the level of unemployment.

Mr. Fallon: Is it not high time that England became a simplified planning zone, and is it not in the interests of objectors as well as applicants that we have a simplified and faster planning system in this country?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend's concerns could easily be met if I receive applications from every local authority in the land for simplified planning zone status.

Mr. Soley: Is the Minister thinking of making Horsham a simplified planning zone? Is he aware that Horsham seems to have taken that on itself by giving dispensation to Conservative councillors there to vote so that an empty council house is now used as offices for the Horsham Conservative Association? What is the Minister going to do about that? Does he agree that that is not only corruption but the theft of public property for the private gain of the Tory party? Will the Minister take this opportunity to condemn that action and ensure that the council is prevented from pursuing it?

Mr. Trippier: I am not aware of the specific instance that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. If he thinks that that is in any way connected with the substantive question on the Order Paper, he is stretching credulity to breaking point.

Public Water Supplies (Aluminium)

14. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has recently received regarding the current levels of aluminium contained in public water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

18. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in Britain have water supplies with aluminium concentrations in excess of the European Community directive limit of 200 microgrammes per litre.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a number of representations following the publication of some alarmist press articles. However, medical advisers assure me that current aluminium concentrations in water supplies are not a danger to health. The European Community directive limit was set in relation to the appearance of water. It was not set on health grounds, and the 2 million people in England who receive water with aluminium concentrations above 200 microgrammes per litre are not at risk. Programmes of improvement for these supplies are nevertheless in hand.

Mr. French: Is my right hon. Friend aware that people who reside in areas where there is a high concentration of aluminium will welcome the news that he has given us in his answer? However, will he none the less agree to the establishment of an independent research facility to determine once and for all that there is no causal connection between aluminium in water and Alzheimer's disease, or does he believe that there is still a connection with drinking excess quantities of tea?

Mr. Ridley: There are a large number of alternative theories about the cause of Alzheimer's disease, but only one of that large number suggests a possible link with aluminium, and that theory has not yet been published. It has not been possible to study it because it has not been received. It might further reassure my hon. Friend and his constituents if I say that, on average, people in this country take in less than 5 per cent. of the aluminium that they take in during a year from their water supplies, and that the other 95 per cent. comes from sources such as food.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is so much metal in our water supplies these days that it brings a new meaning to the term "Iron Maiden"? Will he go through the list of those areas where there are identifiable levels of aluminium in the water supply and tell the House where they are? From my point of view, is Newham on the list?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot answer that question without notice, but I shall certainly let the hon. Gentleman have any information that I have. The aluminium is put there as part of a process to kill microbiological organisms, which are far more dangerous than the aluminium salts.

Mr. Favell: The House will be glad to hear of the advice that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received from an expert body. Is he aware that two separate research studies have been carried out by eminent doctors in Southampton and Newcastle, which show a causal link between the aluminium content in water and

Alzheimer's disease, and possible clinical disorders? Will my right hon. Friend further examine this matter and perhaps make a statement, written or oral, at a later stage?

Mr. Ridley: As I have said already, the findings of the Southampton study have not yet been published. It is impossible to comment upon the study until its findings have been published and examined. My advisers will assess it when it is received. The reason for the European Community directive on this subject is to do with the appearance of water, which, with a large amount of aluminium salts in it, is rather unattractive for drinking purposes. The issue is not whether aluminium is dangerous to health. The issue is an appearance standard, not a health safeguard.

Mr. Boyes: The Secretary of State is being especially complacent on this issue, and he should stop misleading the House. There are almost 4 million people drinking water that is polluted by aluminium. Much research shows a relationship between Alzheimer's disease and brain damage. Action should be taken immediately. Money should be made available to make our drinking water safe to drink. The Government can find plenty of cash for other things.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is not right. He should be pleased with good news instead of calling it complacency.

Question Time

3.31 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the middle of Question Time about four weeks ago, the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) raised a point of order, which was conceded by Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker said that he could not rule whether a point of order was in order until he had heard it. He agreed that in those circumstances points of order could be raised during Question Time. In the light of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you like to reconsider your decision earlier this afternoon to refuse to allow me to raise a point of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I follow the usual practice of Mr. Speaker. I hope that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is not challenging my ruling.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the convenience and aural comfort of the House, could one of the colleagues of the Minister for Local Government teach the hon. and learned Gentleman how to use a microphone——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I think that the Minister does too. I think that the House will recognise that the Minister was getting slightly too close to the microphone.

Mr. Faulds: I have a point of order that I should like to pursue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister must not treat the thing like a lollipop.

I have another point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House will remember that some many months ago now I raised with Mr. Speaker, when he was in the Chair, the need for the consideration of the introduction of emergency questions on the Order Paper. We have had a prime example today where, because of the set questions, we could not raise—some of us—a much more important and significant matter that has happened since the printing and putting down of questions. I have now had to suffer in my constituency——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Faulds: If I could finish my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be understood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is raising a matter of procedure and he knows that the way to pursue that is to make a reference to the Procedure Committee, when it is established. It is not a matter on which I can rule now.

Welsh Language (Ministerial Statement)

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are given to understand that a statement has been made by the Secretary of State for Wales. He visited my constituency earlier today and left to make a statement on a very emotive subject in Wales—the Welsh language and future Government legislation. Before you say that this is not a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you assure me and the House that a request was made for the right hon. Gentleman to make a statement to the House about the argument that we had with him recently on another matter——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that we have gone far enough. Can the hon. Gentleman not tell that it is July? I have received no request for a statement to be made.

Conventions of the House

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a convention of the House that an hon. Member dealing with another hon. Member's constituency should give the hon. Member due notice that he will mention it? In this case, is it not all the more reprehensible, considering that the offices of the Horsham Conservative Association are to be knocked down to make way for a road? It is not altogether surprising that the council is offering the Horsham Conservative Association other premises—*[Interruption.]* Is it not surprising that, as there are so few Labour supporters in the Horsham constituency, Labour Members are getting their facts wrong?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a convention of the House that when an hon. Member intends to refer to another hon. Member's constituency he so advises him.

Supplementary Questions

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During Question Time I tried to ask a supplementary question on question No. 10. There was some hub-bub in the House—not least from the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt)—when I attempted to ask a question beginning with the words, "Could I give the Minister due notice that I do not intend to pay the poll tax and that I intend to advise my constituents not to pay either?" Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, confirm that it was in order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think I said at the time that I could detect the interrogatory form of what the hon. Gentleman was saying. If I appeared to reproach him, it was not on that ground, but on the length of his supplementary question and the fact that lengthy supplementary questions are asked at the expense of other hon. Members. Perhaps we can get on because we have a very busy day ahead.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a housing action trust notice has been served on one of the council estates in my constituency, and since both the town clerk and the members concerned were given extremely late notice, am I entitled to put down now an emergency question to discuss the matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that we have no provision for emergency questions. The hon. Gentleman can ask a private notice question, provided that he follows the usual form and submits it at the usual time. It will then be a matter for the judgment of Mr. Speaker and his advisers.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have a busy day ahead of us. I hope hon. Members will recognise that we have much work to do.

Mr. Holt: Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it have been in order for me to table a question in relation to the point—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that some of these points of order are of a bogus character.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is pushing me to the point where I shall have to have regard to his behaviour.

BILLS PRESENTED

Health Authorities (Direct Elections)

Mr. Tony Lloyd, supported by Mr. Jim Cousins, Mr. Peter L. Pike, Mr. Ken Eastham and Ms. Joan Walley, presented a Bill to make provision for the direct election of members of regional and district health authorities and community health councils from among locally-registered electors: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 205.]

Caravan Sites Act 1968 (Amendment)

Mr. Graham Bright, supported by Mr. John Carlisle, presented a Bill to amend the Caravan Sites Act 1968 by empowering local authorities or police officers to require the removal of caravans stationed in contravention of section 10 of that Act and for other purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 206.]

Railway Termini (Privatisation)

3.39 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to privatise railway termini.

I am much encouraged in this respect by the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who recently said:

"We will privatise what we consider is sensible to privatise and what is ready to privatise."

It would seem that with British Steel and the water and electricity industries next in line for privatisation, the railways will have to wait their turn. It may be true that the railway industry is not quite ready to be privatised, at least as a whole, but it is certain that the railways require considerable investment at this time, and that investment could and should be raised from existing, sometimes under-used and certainly under-valued, assets.

In a recent article in the *Fianancial Times*, under the heading,

"British Rail running on successful lines",

I noticed the following comments:

"British Rail's record results in the year to the end of March reflect the boom in the economy and the upsurge in passenger traffic. They come at a time when its detailed performance is under scrutiny by the Government as it considers options, including privatisation, for the future ownership of the railways. The figures were further boosted by a cut in operating costs and higher productivity, higher Government grants and a record sale of assets, mainly property, which produced a gross cash contribution of £263 million to British Rail."

The sale of peripheral activities has been a great success. It includes the sale of Sealink and British Transport Hotels, and more recently of British Rail Engineering Ltd and the privatisation of certain catering activities. However, it is British Rail property that will raise the huge sums that are now required for reinvestment in the railway system. At present, such properties are dealt with in two main ways: first, the sale of surplus and redundant land; and, secondly, station trading.

With regard to the sale of surplus and redundant land, I was interested to note a recent written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who asked the Secretary of State for Transport

"how much land, surplus to operational requirements, was owned by British Rail on 30 September 1987; and what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning progress in selling such land."

The reply was:

"I understand from the BR Property Board that the total was some 17,300 acres. We have asked British Rail to dispose of all its surplus land and property as rapidly as possible. I discussed a variety of matters with the chairman of the BR Property Board in December, including progress in this area."
—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 699-700.]

Quite so.

It is relevant to compare the rail operating profits achieved last year of £109 million with the total of £184 million raised from the sale of properties last year.

I turn, secondly, to station trading, that is, the management of concourse-based retail outlets, which should net about £15 million in rental income this year. British Rail has long been in the business of leasing parts of stations to private sector undertakings, going back to the days of newspaper stands. This is now big business, at

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

least at the larger London stations, which have branches of many leading retailers. The scope for it depends to some extent on the size and layout of the stations concerned.

Waterloo and Victoria both have large concourses and plenty of room for non-railway activities. Paddington, Charing Cross and Cannon Street are all rather smaller and with rather less scope for such franchising. At Euston there are shops on British Rail property around the station, but relatively few inside it. I suspect that most opportunities are already being exploited as part of British Rail's general policy of getting maximum return from the properties it owns.

This is the crux of the matter. If British Rail can lease out parts of stations—that has been proved over many years—it must equally be possible to sell the terminus stations and lease back to British Rail the parts that it needs. Most commercial operations undertake the sale and leaseback of properties in that way, and in this case hundreds of millions of pounds could be raised with few complications and with no effect on the efficient running of the railways. In fact, quite the reverse in this case, because British Rail would at long last be asked to focus clearly on which assets it needs to own and which it does not. The receipts should then be made available and be better used for track or rolling stock, or what might be appropriately called this week the "railway core curriculum".

To bring that about an agreement would be reached with British Rail and, in due course, with others to define the areas needed for the efficient running of the railways. When that had been decided a payment would be made by British Rail, possibly on a per train or per passenger coach basis. In addition, British Rail would accept the liability to maintain the tracks, platforms and signalling equipment.

Secondly, a means of evaluation would be determined. It would, of course, be for each bidder to assess the appropriate figure for capitalisation of the incomes, whether actual or estimated, and to allow a figure for the prospects of future planning permission. Because British Rail would be paying for the usage of its part on a per train or a per coach basis, the income could be assessed and capitalised. The remainder of the properties already produce rental income, and those could also be capitalised. Therefore, an assessment of freehold value could readily be made, and I am sure that many offers would be received for the major properties.

The basic commercial observation must be that any organisation which trades at a loss would be expected to sell off assets either to meet that loss or to provide needed investment. The recently published annual accounts show that last year there was an increase of 8 per cent. in passenger volume. That was the highest figure since 1961. I am not at all surprised that that is the case in the London area, especially since the recent revelation that average motor speeds in central London at 8 mph compare unfavourably with speeds in the days of the horse and cart. No wonder that the chairman of British Rail was recently able to observe:

"British Rail is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success."

The success to which he refers is attracting extra passengers, especially in the south-east.

Increased usage of the rail system highlights a certain and urgent necessity—increased investment. I recently asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail had invested since 1979, and I am obliged to him for his reply, which was £3·7 billion. I understand that another £3 billion will be made available over the next five years or so. The sale of fixed assets, and in particular railway termini, is a promising extra source of finance to meet the increasing demands of the railway system.

The increasing needs of the railway system are no longer caused by an ever-increasing annual trading deficit, but are caused by the need for change, modernisation and capital expenditure within an expanding industry. My proposals will not interfere with the prospects of a properly integrated travel system. British Airways does not own, and does not need to own, Heathrow or Gatwick airports. By the same token, I suggest that British Rail does not need to own Paddington, King's Cross or Euston to conduct its business.

3.47 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) failed to tell us what powers he seeks to include in the Bill or what it is intended to do. He merely reiterated a litany of bits of property that he and his friends would like to grab in order to destroy or weaken the rail network. He showed a woeful ignorance of the history of the railway system and the railway industry. In case the hon. Gentleman is not aware of it, I can tell him that the railway system was built in an ad hoc way by private enterprise. That is why some of the lines run in the wrong places and why so many termini are badly placed.

Because of a lack of investment in the railway system, in 1947 the post-war Labour Government were forced to save the railways by nationalising them. Had they not done that and established for the first time a truly integrated transport system we would be in an awful mess today, as the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well. There would be no rich pickings for him to try to grab.

The hon. Gentleman should also remember that the sale of British Transport Hotels, British Rail Engineering Ltd. and Sealink have two things in common. First, massive amounts of public money were invested in those services, which were then sold off to friends of the Tory party at knockdown prices so that they could make large profits. Secondly, large numbers of the workers in those industries were thrown on the dole. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my hon. Friends the Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) are in the Chamber, and in the House they represent the interests of the National Union of Railwaymen. They have fought strongly to preserve the jobs of railway workers, who are committed to a safe, efficient transport network. The Bill would cause the destruction of the integrated railway network that has developed since 1947.

It is clear that the hon. Member for Stroud has not examined the annual report of British Rail, because it shows that the financial performance of BR depends to a great extent on its ownership of the railway termini and of subsidiary facilities operating on trains or at stations, and that the £130 million surplus owes a great deal to those subsidiary facilities. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly

well that if he gives away the profitable bits of BR the public sector will be left to pick up the cost. In effect, public sector money has subsidised the facilities which the hon. Gentleman is trying to give away to the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman's proposals to give away Travellers Fare are interesting. The annual report fails to give a proper account of Travellers Fare. He is aware that last year Travellers Fare made a surplus of £7·5 million.

The hon. Gentleman also knows that his proposals to weaken, break up and privatise the rail system will mean that £3·7 billion of taxpayers' money, which has been given by the public to develop an integrated transport network, will pass into private hands. That will result in an inefficient transport system, higher fares and job losses.

I believe that the House should show the wisdom that it showed in 1947 when it established a unified transport system. If the rail network is broken up as a result of the piecemeal proposals put forward in the Bill, we will end up with a much weaker transport system and job losses. Frankly, all that has happened this afternoon is that a bunch of spivs have come into the Chamber to make a fast buck for their friends. They have come here to try to give away public assets so that their friends can make large profits.

I believe that we owe it to the people of this country to retain an integrated rail network, because it is safe, environmentally good, cheap and the best way to run a transport network. The hon. Gentleman and his supporters represent the antithesis of everything to do with social planning and the efficient and intelligent management of the economy. I hope that the House will reject the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nomination of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 108, Noes 161.

Division No. 425] **[3.55**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butler, Chris
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Holt, Richard
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rost, Peter
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thorne, Neil
Tracey, Richard
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Nicholson and
Mr. James Cran

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice

Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Dr. John Marek.

Question accordingly negatived.

Local Government Finance Bill
(Allocation of Time)

4.4 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [22nd February], as varied by the Order of the House [13th April], be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting.

(2) The amendments shall be taken in the order shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of the Order [22nd February], each part of the proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the second column of the Table set out below.

TABLE
Proceedings

Lords Amendments	*Time for conclusion*
Nos. 22, 1, 2, 207 to 217 and 3 to 21	6.00 pm
Nos. 171, 23 to 26 and 218 to 233	7.30 pm
Nos. 234 to 265, 27 to 80, 266 to 270, 81 to 87 and 271 to 277	9.15 pm
Nos. 88 to 91, 278 to 291, 92 to 114, 292 and 293, 115 to 117, 294, 118 to 170, 172 to 185 and 295 to 334	10.15 pm
Nos. 335 to 408, 186 to 205, 409 to 414, 206 and 415	Midnight

(3) If this day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, is to be brought to a conclusion at this sitting shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

2.—(1) For the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the question of any amendment moved by a minister of the crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted at any time by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, is to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

I move this motion as the House comes to the end of a long and exhaustive consideration of a Bill that fully honours our election manifesto commitment to abolish domestic rates; to replace them with a community charge; and to introduce fairer and more stable arrangements for non-domestic rates and Government grant.

We shall shortly see scenes of synthetic outrage from the Opposition Members about the time that is allowed for consideration of these Lords amendments, so I want to start by getting some facts on the record. The Bill has already been debated in the House for two days on Second Reading; 147 hours in 35 sittings in Committee; and no fewer than five days on Report and Third Reading—a total of 190 hours before today. Although it has been guillotined, we have used the timetable procedure not to impose unreasonable constraints on debate, but to allow for a sensible allocation of time to the different elements of the Bill. Consideration of part I was virtually complete before the timetable motion was moved. Therefore, we have not curtailed debate on the most novel and controversial part of the Bill.

The Bill has also been examined in great detail during almost 90 hours of debate on 13 days in another place. It simply is not possible to argue that the Bill has not been fully considered. Throughout all that debate, the Government have listened carefully to all the reasonable arguments put to them and promised a number of significant concessions that have required changes to the Bill. Indeed, Lord McIntosh, who speaks for the Labour party in another place, paid tribute to my noble Friend Lord Caithness and his colleagues by saying:

"There has not been a single time in our consideration of the Bill when we have had occasion to doubt their sincerity or their willingness to listen."—[*Official Report, House of Lords;* 13 July 1988, Vol. 499, c. 910.]

So, of course there are changes to the Bill, but it is ludicrous to suggest, as did the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) last Thursday, that the Bill has been

"changed almost beyond recognition by the Lords".—[*Official Report,* 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 557.]

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The Minister keeps mentioning changes to a Bill, but a large number of the amendments—more than 100—that we shall be debating in an hour and a half at the very end relate not to changes to a Bill, but changes to an Act of Parliament. The Abolition of Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 is already on the statute book, and is in the process of being implemented, but here are 100 amendments that Scottish local authorities have to implement not in 1990, but in six months' time. Is it not an absolute disgrace that amendments concerning the people of Scotland, who rejected the Government in this matter, are now being pushed to the end of a very short debate?

Mr. Howard: Perhaps when we reach those amendments to the Scottish legislation the hon. Gentleman will tell the House to which of those amendments he and his party object. The Labour party has tabled no amendments that suggest that it objects to them. That will no doubt be considered when we reach the Scottish part of the business.

When they considered the matters rather than taking the view that was put last Thursday by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, Members on both sides of the other place accepted that the principle of the Bill remains intact. The Opposition know that their prolonged and persistent attempts to sabotage the Bill have met with complete failure.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Does the hon. Gentleman seriously suggest that 66 pages of new amendments to a Bill of 150 pages is not a substantial change?

Mr. Howard: As I shall show, that is a pathetic argument. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) will no doubt tell us about the 417 amendments and the average time available to deal with each of them. That is about as intelligent an approach to these matters as judging a work of art by the number of brush strokes on the canvas.

Of the 417 amendments, well over half—243, to be precise—were accepted in another place as technical or drafting improvements to the Bill. I look forward to hearing from Opposition Members which of those amendments they object to. For example, do they want to oppose the exemption from the community charge for the severely mentally handicapped, the homeless, voluntary care workers, or those who stay in short-stay hostels? Do they wish to challenge the major extension of charitable rating relief or the improved treatment of caravans? Perhaps they wish to restore joint and several liability for the collective community charge, but I rather doubt it.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): That is the biggest load of humbug that I have ever heard in this House, and I have heard a great deal from the Minister. He is saying that he wants to hear what Opposition Members have to say about all the amendments. How can he possibly hear what Opposition Members or anybody else may have to say about them when the guillotine motion ensures that it will be impossible to discuss even a fraction of them?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is an acknowledged expert on humbug. For the most part, the amendments were warmly welcomed by the Opposition in another place. We know exactly the Opposition's attitude to the amendments. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us in due course that Opposition Members intend to oppose the deletion of part IV—23 clauses and three schedules—from the Bill, but I doubt it. We took the decision in response to representations from, among others, the Labour-controlled Association of London Authorities. In fact, if one reads the amendments, one finds that they were almost universally welcomed by Opposition spokesmen in another place, who had ample opportunity to debate them.

Perhaps the best test of the extent to which the Opposition really need time for debate and of whether the complaints that we shall doubtless hear are genuine is to be found in the number of amendments that Opposition Members have tabled. Are they so dissatisfied with the Lords amendments that they have tabled countless amendments of their own? Not a bit of it. Opposition Members have tabled a grand total of three amendments. Of those three amendments, in his wisdom, Mr. Speaker selected two. We shall have ample time to debate those two amendments.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): How many amendments did Opposition Members move in Committee and how many met with any success against the Government?

Mr. Howard: I am afraid I cannot help the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I advise my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that Mr. Speaker recently ruled that if hon. Members were not present during the presentation of a Minister's speech they would not be called or seen. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I call the Minister.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). I always welcome interventions from the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I always welcomed them in Committee, and I hope that I continue to welcome them.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*—

Mr. Howard: I have not yet answered the point raised by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North; the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) should contain himself.

The total lack of success that Opposition Members met with in Standing Committee is something that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North may regret, but it has absolutely nothing to do with today's business, which is consideration of Lords amendments. Once the hon. Gentleman grasps that elemental fact, he will appreciate how misconceived his question was.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister confirm that, when he described amendments to the Lords amendments that were tabled today as Opposition amendments totalling three, he was referring to Labour amendments? My hon. Friends and I have tabled 15 amendments—five times as many as the Labour party have tabled.

Mr. Howard: The contribution of the party that the hon. Gentleman represents had not escaped me. It is characteristic of his party's contribution. It comprises all that clarity of mind and precision that we have come to expect from that party. The vast majority of the hon. Gentleman's amendments simply state that they disagree with the Lords in the amendments.

Opposition Members will oppose the motion not because they want to debate the drafting of the amendments but because they want to delay enactment of the Bill until the autumn. That is why they seek to delay progress today. We cannot accept that. We have promised that domestic rates will be abolished on 1 April 1990, and we keep our promises. If that objective is to be achieved, the local authorities that are to implement it must know where they stand. This is not a Bill that can take effect overnight. An enormous amount of preparation and planning must take place first. Most local authorities are already making good progress. They will soon have to commit themselves to the purchase of computer and other hardware. Computer software designers must get clear instructions about the systems that they are to develop. That means that the detailed regulations must be drafted and consulted on as soon as possible in the autumn.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Some of us heard the Minister on the radio talking with Lord Allen of Abbeydale, who is a man of clear mind. Could he explain —there may be an explanation—his answer to the argument of Lord Allen and others about the blind and disabled? The Minister was referring to details. It is important to clarify the point, as we may have got him wrong. We did not quite understand his answer to Philip Allen's point.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait for the substantive debate on this issue, which will take place

in a short time. He will have the opportunity to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who will deal with that issue when the House considers it.

Community charge registration officers will be under a duty to establish their registers by 1 December next year. That is not a date that can be changed, and, if it is to be met, canvassing will have to take place in the spring and early summer of next year. That in turn will require staff, equipment and systems to be in place.

This major reform was first proposed in January 1986. It was put to the electorate in June last year. It has been debated in detail in Parliament and outside for eight months. The time has now come to deal with the few remaining issues, to move into the next phase of preparation, and to put an end to uncertainty.

4.18 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The motion is totally unnecessary for a Government with a majority of over 100 in the first Session of a Parliament. It insults the whole House of Commons. It shows the nation that the Government are operating as though they own the House of Commons. The motion is an offence to the Chair and the learned Clerks. It corrupts the law-making process and will thereby bring the law into contempt. Frankly, the motion demeans the Minister who moved it, and it degrades hon. Members who were whipped in to support it.

That it is unprecedented is beyond question, in regard to a bill that is guillotined with so much new material and so many amendments from another place. There is not enough time for the Chair to read out the amendments and put the relevant Questions even if we start now and continue until midnight. It is a jackboot motion, the likes of which were familiar under Hitler and Stalin, and, today, under Botha.

We have one parliamentary day to consider items some of which have never been considered or discussed in the House. That shows the arrogance of the power with which the Government operate. In fact, the process is so hasty that the Government not only spent time and money on Saturday scurrying around the homes of Opposition Front Bench Members with printer's proofs of the amendments, but, today, they gave us corrections to the amendments from the Lords.

The Minister had the brass face to say that the Opposition had not tabled many amendments. Members of the House of Commons were given one parliamentary day to look at the Government's amendments and no time to table amendments. Any amendment that we tabled yesterday would have been starred as out of order. We have been given one day—seven hours—to consider more than 400 amendments. What is the use of the Opposition and our advisers spending hours drafting amendments to Lords amendments when we shall not even get the chance because of the guillotine to vote against those amendments that we oppose? That is ludicrous. Today we have been given correction slips. That is not just pathetic; what is happening in this place today is damned dangerous.

We cannot even fully list the items with which we shall not deal today, such as the changes in registration, and in respect of joint and several liability, hostels, co-owners, instalments, the appeal procedure, levying boards and financial administration. Also, there is the lack of rate relief for sports clubs in England and Wales. We would try to get a similar concession to that given to such clubs in Scotland.

We shall not even have the chance to debate the Government's continuing inability, as identified in Lords amendment No. 283, to decide how they will count the population. That information is crucial for the redistribution of Government grant and the business rate. In February this year, at the Standing Committee's second or third sitting, the Minister said that this was under active consideration. There have been hundreds of Government amendments in Committee and on Report and there are hundreds more Lords amendments, yet we still do not know how the Government will count the population.

There is no time to debate this matter. The Government could easily have provided two or even three ordinary House of Commons days which the Opposition would consider reasonable in the circumstances. We do not like the Bill. We do not want it to operate. We seek to oppose it at every opportunity, and we make no apology for that. I presume that the Government do not wish to take that right from us, although they are taking away everything else. Two or three ordinary House of Commons days would have been a reasonable time, in view of what we face, to consider the material that the Lords have put into the Bill.

We have just cause for complaint on this matter, which will cause our proceedings to fester for some time to come. The Opposition have no intention of providing any cloak of respectability for Her Majesty's Government who, in most other democratic countries, would have hit the buffer of constitutional checks and balances on this issue. No checks and balances are operating. Even now, in late July, it is known that somewhere in Her Majesty's Government somebody will be preparing a Government speech for Her Majesty to read out in the other place in November. I suspect that, when Mr. Speaker makes that walk to the other place to hear the Government's speech read from the Throne, he may well understand if the figleaf of respectability given to the occasion by Her Majesty's Opposition has fallen by the wayside.

In 1979 the Tories spoke in their election manifesto of making Parliament effective in controlling the Executive. In 1983, the Tories spoke in their manifesto of keeping the rules and procedures of Parliament in good repair. In 1987, the Tories spoke only about decisive majorities in Parliament and strong government. They change procedures to suit themselves. They control local government and have come close to propounding a divine right. "Why bother with elections?" someone in the Government will be asking before long.

Our fellow citizens will become uneasy as they hear Members of Parliament speak in this place and outside of law-making without adequate discussion. It does not matter whether we agree or disagree with what the Lords have done; we are entitled to discuss the Bill's contents. Later, we shall be expected to ask our constituents to obey the law because Parliament has passed it.

The implied plank of that idea is that Parliament discussed the law before passing it. When I advise my constituents that they must obey the law or face the penalties and consequences built into it, I shall go out of my way to remind them that great tranches of the Bill were not debated in the House of Commons in Committee, on Report or when the House considered the more than 400

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

Lords amendments. This will make my constituents and those of other hon. Members very uneasy about obeying every dot and comma of the legislation, and rightly so.

If this does not make Conservative members of the legal profession uneasy, I fail to see what does. The Opposition do not argue about losing the votes. We understand the arithmetic in this place. The Government will get their Bill in any event. There never was anything that an Opposition faced with a Government majority could do to cause the Bill to be withdrawn or defeated on Second Reading. The best for which we could hope was to amend it, and the second best was to get it discussed. All the evidence is that the more the Bill is discussed inside and outside the House, the more the British people oppose the poll tax. Herein lies the reason for the hasty guillotine today.

The House could easily have sat for the first few days in August or last few days in July. The Government are now prone to bringing us back in the middle of a week. The House could easily have gone into recess in the middle of the week after next by having an extra day or two on this legislation. The Government would still have got the Bill. They would still have got Royal Assent. Why do the Government not want the Bill discussed in the House of Commons? Clearly it is because public opinion has moved so vastly and strongly against it.

I want to give only a few statistics, although the Minister gave us many. When the Lords amendments are put into or thrown out of the Bill, as the case may be, there will be 78 separate aspects requiring regulations. If I remember correctly, only one provides for an affirmative resolution, whereby the Government have to get the approval of the House.

Mr. Maxton: One more than in Scotland.

Mr. Rooker: One more than in Scotland, as my hon. Friend says. Those regulations cover 621 separate matters. Also, there are 23 other matters for orders and 92 instances of determination of other issues by Ministers alone, making 736 powers in hand for the Government in the Bill. That is unprecedented and it should worry everyone, because the number of opportunities for the House to debate the orders and regulations will be minuscule.

Even the children begin to think that something wrong is happening in the House of Commons. Believe it or not, some of our comics have referred to the poll tax. I freely admit that I am not a parent and am not as up-to-date on comics as I was. I discussed the matter the other day with my young friend William Pickering, aged 12¼, because of what he had read in his comic "Oink" about the poll tax. *[Interruption.]* Yes, there is a comic called "Oink". William asked me a few questions. He said, "There is a page in the July issue, Jeff, on 'Ten Things You Should Know about the New Poll Tax'." Time under the guillotine does not permit me to read out all 10, but I promised William that I would raise a few with the Minister:

"1. Everyone who owns a parrot has to pay Poll Tax.
2. If it talks, you pay double the basic rate.
3. If it says rude words, you pay treble the basic rate.
4. If it says rude words about the Labour party you get a full rebate and 1 cwt. of millet.
5. People who are members of the Conservative Party don't pay poll tax, no matter how many parrots they have."

I shall not take up the time of the House with the other five points, but at the end of the 10 things that young children should know about the poll tax it says:

"A government spokesman explained that the new tax is necessary, as the old domestic rating system which it will replace is both illogical and unfair. When we suggested that the tax seemed to favour the well-off, he replied that nothing could be further from the truth and told us not to give the game away."

That is the reason for the guillotine motion.

4.29 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Perhaps we should ask the Leader of the House to conduct an important investigation. Not so long ago we drastically increased the Opposition's Short money, yet all that the Opposition can do is to buy comics to explain their opposition to the poll tax. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and his research assistant could do a better job than read comics. Perhaps it is an indication of the Opposition's disastrous and short-tempered approach that they must now oppose the Bill by using comics and comic sketches alone. Nowadays the Opposition are comics, and comic lines are what we get more and more from the hon. Member for Perry Barr and the Leader of the Opposition.

I am pleased that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government has introduced the timetable motion. I am grateful for one simple reason: the sooner the Bill reaches the statute book, the better. The Bill will make local government throughout the country far more accountable. It is no wonder that the Labour party is so opposed to the Bill, because I believe and hope that it will make local government more accountable.

There has been a lot of talk about the number of Lords amendments, but it must be acknowledged that 243 of them are technical. We were faced with elections in Derbyshire this year and we were quite happy to explain to people what the community charge would do. What happened when we explained that to the people of Derbyshire? Were we roundly defeated at the polls? No, we won the city of Derby for the first time in seven years and we won control of Amber Valley district council for the first time ever. That was the result of telling people what the poll tax or the community charge will do for them. It will bring more accountability into local government.

The problem that is faced by young people in Derbyshire stems from the present ludicrous rating system. On Second Reading I asked the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) whether he thought that the present system reflected ability to pay. He rightly conceded that he did not think that it did. It takes no account of earnings or of the value of property. I believe that the Bill will bring about accountability in local government and that many more people will turn out to vote at local government elections. At the moment the incentive is not there. One of the strongest points of the Bill is that it will make people realise what local government is doing and what the costs of local government are.

I shall give one example from my constituency. Before I was elected as the Member for Derbyshire, West I had the privilege to serve for six years on Staffordshire council. In 1981, both Staffordshire and Derbyshire county councils were Conservative-controlled. The rate in Staffordshire was 112p and in Derbyshire it was 111·5p. They are counties of similar size and with similar problems. Both authorities became Labour-controlled in

1981, with fairly sound majorities. In Staffordshire the rate for 1988-89 is 215p in the pound. *[Interruption.]* I understand why the Opposition do not like what I am saying, but they will have to listen. They want the debate; they must listen.

In Staffordshire this year the rate levy is 215p in the pound and in Derbyshire it is 297p in the pound. That difference is not easy to explain to the electorate. With the community charge it will be far easier to explain.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): May I remind the House that in Staffordshire Labour was returned with a big majority in 1985?

Mr. McLoughlin: I readily concede that the authorities are Labour-controlled. However, this year we won control of the city of Derby for the first time in seven years and we won control of Amber Valley for the first time ever. That is relevant, because the county rate is 90 per cent. of the rates that people pay. The Opposition cannot get away from the fact that what happened in Derbyshire had a considerable effect on the electorate and on the Conservative cause.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Derbyshire has one of the best education services in terms of staff-student ratios? Does he also agree that Derbyshire's provision of meals for the elderly is admired considerably by other areas? Unfortunately, under the present Government, those services can be provided only by rate increases.

Mr. McLoughlin: I find it amazing that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) is praising the county council for its education services, yet at the same time he is urging the Government to overturn the recommendations of the county council on education. I shall not be lectured to on education provision by the hon. Gentleman, who had to come to the Conservative Government to ensure that the parents in his constituency got what they wanted.

In Derbyshire we fought the election on the community charge. We were successful, and the sooner the Bill reaches the statute book the better.

4.37 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The significance of today is that it is probably the last opportunity that the House will have to debate the most fundamental change of principle in the taxation system for 600 years. The Government have seen fit for the second time in the House to introduce in this Bill a guillotine which will limit debate. That is the significance of today.

There are matters that we have had no chance to debate at all and which were introduced in the other place, such as the attachment of benefit proposals, which was originally promised here but introduced for the first time in the other place. That proposal will have an enormous effect on poor people in Britain. Of course, the Government do not like to give much time to debates about the poor in Britain, although they are a large and growing proportion of the population. Some people in constituencies such as mine, who will be paying more than the average poll tax, will have their benefits attached, and will not have a total rebate. Their circumstances will not be properly debated. The people of urban and poor areas such as Southwark deserve to have the implications of the poll tax debated in the House, but they will have to content themselves with the knowledge that the House of Commons spent a grand total of one and a half hours on such a significant amendment.

The Minister was rather disingenuous earlier about the ability of the Opposition to prepare for today. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) made a perfectly valid point. The Government decided to table a guillotine motion only two days before this debate and there was insufficient time for hon. Members to respond in the appropriate and proper way. As it happens, and as I told the Minister, my colleagues and I put down 15 amendments. For the record, the majority of them were not simply motions that the House should disagree with the Lords amendments. Nine of them were substantive amendments.

The most significant feature of today's debate is that the Government have been forced to accept many of the arguments made to them in earlier debate. The more that the Bill has been debated, the more that anomalies have been exposed. In Committee, my colleagues argued that exemptions should be extended to religious communities. Originally the Government said no, but then they said yes. We argued also that voluntary care workers should enjoy exemption. At first the Government said no, and then they said yes. We argued that it was ludicrous that a remanded, unconvicted prisoner would pay poll tax, but that a convicted person would be exempt. The Government eventually conceded that point and gave in.

We argued that it was ludicrous that people who had become mentally handicapped as a result of an accident should be exempt when those who were congenitally mentally handicapped would not be. Again, the Government eventually accepted that argument too. Finally, we pointed out that it was a silly system that said that it did not matter whether one lived in a house, in a cardboard box, under an arch, or in a car, because one would still be liable to poll tax—even though the reality was that in the latter cases people would not have the money to pay, and that local authority officers would hardly have an incentive to collect it. We said that showed how ridiculous was a system whereby those with the least, and not even a home, would be chased to pay for services for those who are saving thousands by this change in local taxation. On that point too the Government eventually gave in.

All those points were made by my hon. Friends and other Opposition Members, and they were accepted by the Government. Therefore, the Government should not be afraid of argument, but should acknowledge that arguments and points put by the Opposition have improved the Bill. They have made a bad principle slightly less bad in its implementation.

The Government cannot be assured that they have the support of the majority of Britain for this Bill's proposals. More than 600 years ago, the only other Government attempt to introduce a poll tax in England culminated with the peasants' revolt, which was commemorated last month on Blackheath. There was guillotining then too. On that occasion, the guillotine fell on the Chancellor's neck. The Government then accepted that the poll tax was a bit of a foolish proposal. Today, there was in Westminster Hall an event celebrating another revolution, this time 300 years ago. That was the so-called glorious revolution, establishing constitutional freedoms. I had thought that one of the constitutional freedoms established was that

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

there would be no taxation without representation. The reality is that, as a result of the Bill, in future there will be no representation without taxation. That is something that the House has resisted, not for decades but for centuries.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Where does the hon. Gentleman get his notion of no representation without taxation? It will be possible to vote while at the same time not paying taxes. Will he explain the basis of his argument?

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. Gentleman does not understand the import of the Bill by now, that is a sorry state of affairs. I tell him, as I tell my constituents, that in future if one registers to vote in a borough such as mine, one will also be registering to be taxed. One will not be possible without the other, because the rebate will not make up the difference—however large is the exemption.

In this contrived House of Commons, the Conservatives have a majority. Just over 40 per cent. of those who voted in the last general election supported the Government—about one third of Britain's electorate voted Conservative. The Government ought to remember that the majority of British people voted against the poll tax and have never accepted the principle of it. It may be that today we shall run out of time to debate the Bill, but the people of Britain know that the result of this Bill will be that it will soon be the Conservative party which will run out of time. It will be Conservative party Members who will always have hanging around their necks the label of being the poll tax party. It is the Conservatives who have pushed this Bill through, and although their new authoritarian, totalitarian revolution may have succeeded for the moment, ultimately it will be roundly defeated.

4.45 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I shall not take any lectures from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), whose canvassers in the recent Kensington by-election were telling voters that everybody will be paying exactly the same for local government. Such an accusation is absurd.

Mr. Simon Hughes *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Leigh: It was in one of his party's leaflets, and the hon. Gentleman produced it last week. Such an accusation is absurd, because the community charge will account for only one quarter of local government costs, and those with means may pay as much as 16 times more than those without means.

The clarity of the SLDP's arguments in that by-election was such that many people who were found by our canvassers to be SDP supporters were putting up SLDP posters, and vice versa. One thing that I will say for the Social and Liberal Democratic party is that at least it has the courage to have a policy, however disastrous that policy of local income tax would be for my constituency, where it would amount to about £500.

As to the brass neck of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), he announced—almost in the style of Mr. Bevan's remark about going naked into the conference chamber—that he would not come to this Chamber without a policy. We still await the Labour party's policy. What we have heard today from the hon. Member for Perry Barr is so much cant and hypocrisy. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister drew an analogy with painting. The hon. Member for Perry Barr may remember the little drawings that one used to do as a child, in which, by drawing lines between the dots, a picture would emerge. Whichever Bill one brings to mind —whether it is that concerning trade union legislation or any of the other popular policies that nine years of Conservative Government have produced—one realises that the Opposition tried to talk them all out. For the most controversial Bills we have had to introduce guillotine motions, and the same arguments have been adduced again and again. The Opposition have used almost the same words as before—it is a well-run groove.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: No, I shall not give way, because I am making a very short speech.

Unlike the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, I sat through all five days of the Report stage, and, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), I sat through 147 hours of Committee. There is one difference with this Bill.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman is a fool.

Mr. Leigh: I am not a fool. I did my duty in supporting the Government in introducing a Bill that was in our manifesto and for which we had popular support. As a Conservative Back Bencher, I was determined to take an interest in the Bill and to speak on it.

There is one difference between this Bill and earlier Bills in introducing a guillotine because of time-wasting tactics. In this case, having given all the time that was needed for clause 1, when the principle was debated hour after hour, and when there was much filibustering by the Opposition, we imposed an early guillotine. Because we did so, there was time to debate every clause carefully. It is nonsense for the hon. Member for Perry Barr to claim that the Bill has not been properly discussed, because it has.

As to the claim made in the Chamber last week by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that there would be an average of only a few seconds to discuss each of the 400 amendments, how can he say such a thing when—and I do not wish to trespass on your authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by suggesting that he was trying to mislead the House—virtually all those amendments were either agreed or were technical? When the hon. Gentleman made that claim he must have known that there was only one substantial point of difference between another place and this House, and that related to disabled people. That is a serious issue and one that we shall debate later today. He must have known that.

The Bill has been debated properly and carefully and has been put to the British people. It will become law, and I support it.

4.49 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The manner of the disposal of the legislation is in keeping with its spirit. It is unjust, anti-democratic and smacks of totalitarianism. The legislation that the House is cursorily asked to consider is in chaos and the product will be unworkable. The proof of that is that it is becoming the same sort of political time bomb under the Tories in England and Wales as it has been for some time in Scotland. Tory

candidates now find it necessary to lie through their teeth to the electorate about the level of poll tax they will have to pay in order to stave off the evil hour when people realise the truth. Perhaps in by-elections they can get away with lying to people about the figures. However, the chickens will come home to roost. The facts cannot be evaded for ever. Eventually people will realise exactly what they will be asked to pay under the poll tax. We know from the Scottish experience that the more people know about the reality, the more deeply hostile and angry they become about what is being visited upon them.

I congratulate the Minister, who, I see from *The Daily Telegraph*, is to have the poisoned chalice removed from him and is to rise to higher offices of state as a reward for his efforts on this legislation. He said in his introduction that local authorities must know where they stand. I welcome his solicitous concern about the information to be provided to local authorities so that they may go about their business. The reality is that the Bill, which is primarily concerned with introducing the poll tax into England and Wales, has gratuitously tacked on to it over 100 amendments relating directly to Scotland. Will the Minister explain the consistency of his line? There can be no delay about introducing the poll tax in England and Wales because local authorities must know where they stand, yet, even at this late hour, four months after the registration process was started in Scotland and less than eight months from the poll tax taking effect, over 100 amendments will be imposed upon Scottish local authorities and they will have to be introduced into their arrangements for the poll tax.

The amendments affecting Scotland which the Minister, who has no responsibility for Scotland, is putting before the House range from the sublime to the ridiculous. They deal with provision for the disabled. In the House of Lords, amendments were successfully introduced in support of the disabled. The Tories are once again coming to the House to kick the crutches from the disabled. One of the most heinous aspects of the legislation is the contempt and hostility with which it treats the disabled. One of the most offensive aspects of the legislation is that it makes no special provision for the physically handicapped, no matter how severe the handicap. The Minister will reinforce that provision from the Dispatch Box.

Another heinous aspect of the legislation is the introduction, for the first time in our society, of a category of citizen hitherto uninvented called the severely mentally handicapped. People will have to queue up, in the original words of the the legislation, for "certification" as "severely mentally handicapped" in order to escape the poll tax. Those are the provisions of the legislation, which is now to be hustled through the House for the administrative convenience of the Government and to avoid the political embarrassment which mounts daily.

Why come back to the House to seek to overturn the amendments? Why not accept the semi-humane amendments of the House of Lords—heaven knows, little enough has been improved in the House of Lords—which would mean that at least the rebates could be topped up so that people who live in areas where there is a particularly high poll tax and who, being severely physically disabled, are particularly penalised, will be helped? The Minister should have the guts and the grace to accept those amendments. If not, he will do his party's bidding and push the legislation through and the ultimate victims will be those in our society who are least able to defend themselves. Whatever high office the Minister and the Secetary of State move on to, they should know that they have done that on the backs of the disabled, the poor and the weakest in society. They will be the greatest losers under the poll tax.

I shall now move on to the ridiculous. The peers in the House of Lords—that great bastion of vested interest—are brought in in their charabancs or on the night train from Inverness to vote for any piece of rubbish presented to them. While the disabled, the poorest in society and those who live in the rural communities of Scotland are hard hit by the poll tax, it is unbelievable that they found time to introduce a clause to exempt from non-domestic rates the salmon proprietors of Scotland. They kick the disabled when they are down but give another £1·5 million handout to the salmon proprietors of Scotland. It is beyond belief. How many of the peers and the great highland grandees brought south to vote for the poll tax a few weeks ago will be direct beneficiaries of the latest handout? We know from our calculations that every Scottish peer who voted against introducing an ability-to-pay principle will gain a minimum of £2,000 from the poll tax. That is not enough for them because we are dealing with the greediest vested interest lobby in society—the sporting proprietors of Scotland. Therefore, they have added a clause to the poll tax legislation for England and Wales which introduces exemption from rates for salmon proprietors in Scotland. It would be beyond belief if we were dealing with any other Government or type of Government. The Minister should say that he will take back the £1·5 million from the salmon proprietors in Scotland and give it to the disabled in Scotland.

In this building today we went through the mumbo-jumbo of freedom and democracy. Yet, in the same building, we are pushing through 500 amendments, most of them undiscussed, in order to impose the poll tax legislation on the country. There will not be a moment to discuss the implications of the uniform business rate upon Scotland. There will not be a moment to reconsider the 100 clauses in the English legislation that apply to Scotland. What is being pushed through, on the back of English and Welsh legislation and without the presence of a Minister from the Scottish Office on the Treasury Bench, is a subsidiary poll tax Bill for Scotland—*[Interruption.]* It has been pointed out to me by my colleagues that there is not a solitary Tory Member representing Scotland sitting on the Government Benches. They have only 10, but one of them could have come back from lunch in time to be sitting in the Chamber while 100 amendments directly relating to Scotland are bludgeoned through the House.

The poll tax legislation is not the flagship of the Tories; it is the coffinship. The message that leaves the Chamber today is that the Government have added another crime to those of unfairness, injustice, unworkability and attacks on local authorities. The crime of the day is bludgeoning through a measure that is profoundly anti-democratic with the most anti-democratic device at their disposal.

4.59 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I listened in amazement to the words of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and his honourable parrot, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). It is as if they have been delving into their dictionaries looking for words of abuse for half the week

[Mr. David Wilshire]

and reading comics for the other half. The performance that we have heard is typical of the performance of the Labour party throughout progress on the Bill in this place. It is hot air and exaggeration of the worst sort, and it is abuse. We have not heard a constructive word from Opposition Members and, even more important, they have not put forward a policy of their own.

The reality is not what we have heard from the Labour party. The reality of the guillotine motion is the exact opposite. It is not an affront to democracy. The guillotine motion is sensible and, from the way in which the Opposition have behaved, it is probably necessary. The question of democracy has been raised by Opposition Members. One can always tell when people are struggling for an argument because they trot out comparisons with Hitler. I can only guess that the reason why the Opposition chose to do that is that they are embarrassed.

Opposition Members are trying to divert attention from the fact that the House of Lords basically endorsed the principles of the Bill. They also want to disguise the fact that this House has endorsed it three times. We must get the Bill on to the statute book as quickly as possible because it gives expression to the democratically expressed wish of the British people and the sooner it is there, the better.

5.2 pm

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) was right, as he usually is, when he described the speeches by Opposition Members as entirely routine expressions of denunciation of the kind that we always hear when such a motion is before us. So lacking in conviction was the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that his hon. Friends, notably the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), could not keep to the issues that arise in this debate and could not keep to the question of the time that would be allowed, but strayed, not surprisingly, into a series of hysterically wild accusations about the merits of our proposals, which will be answered comprehensively this evening.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that Opposition Members made exactly the same comments about the Education Reform Bill, but did not bother to turn up for the debate?

Mr. Howard: That does not surprise me in the slightest.

The quality of the arguments that we have heard is perhaps epitomised by the contribution of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) who is not even in his place at the moment. He complained about the lack of opportunity to discuss the amendments relating to rebates. I see that he has now returned to his place, just in time to hear what I have to say about his contribution. It is true that some amendments relating to rebates have been tabled in another place and that the hon. Gentleman's party tabled one amendment to those amendments. It was not selected, so, quite apart from the guillotine motion, the hon. Gentleman's point about the lack of time available to him to discuss the rebates was as bogus as the points that we usually hear from his party.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr and his colleagues have not dealt with the central argument that I advanced when I opened the debate an hour ago. They have not dealt with the fact that they have tabled just three amendments of which only two have been selected. The time element to which the hon. Gentleman referred is entirely bogus. If he had been following the progress of the legislation in another place, he would have known about some of the amendments for weeks and months. He has had ample opportunity to table all the amendments that he wanted, if he had thought that substantive points needed to be discussed.

Mr. Rooker: Three Tory Members and one Labour Member have spoken in the debate. Let us have a bit of fairness. The Minister knows that we did not know that we would have only one day for the Lords amendments. We were led to believe that there would be a reasonable discussion and that we would be allowed a reasonable chance, as on Report, when we had five days, having originally been offered only four. We were led to believe that we would have more time. One day is unacceptable and we had no notice of it.

It being one hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to the Order [22 February.]*

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 210.

Division No. 426] **[5.04 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Churchill, Mr
Amos, Alan	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Arbuthnot, James	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Colvin, Michael
Ashby, David	Conway, Derek
Atkinson, David	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Cope, Rt Hon John
Baldry, Tony	Couchman, James
Batiste, Spencer	Cran, James
Bellingham, Henry	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Curry, David
Bevan, David Gilroy	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Day, Stephen
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Devlin, Tim
Body, Sir Richard	Dicks, Terry
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Dorrell, Stephen
Boswell, Tim	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bottomley, Peter	Dover, Den
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Dunn, Bob
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Durant, Tony
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dykes, Hugh
Bowis, John	Emery, Sir Peter
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Evennett, David
Brazier, Julian	Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Bright, Graham	Fallon, Michael
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Farr, Sir John
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Favell, Tony
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Buck, Sir Antony	Fishburn, John Dudley
Burt, Alistair	Fookes, Miss Janet
Butcher, John	Forman, Nigel
Butler, Chris	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Butterfill, John	Forth, Eric
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*	Fox, Sir Marcus
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Franks, Cecil
Carrington, Matthew	Freeman, Roger
Cash, William	French, Douglas
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda	Fry, Peter
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Gale, Roger
Chapman, Sydney	Gardiner, George
Chope, Christopher	Gill, Christopher

Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*

Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [22nd February], as varied by the Order of the House [13th April], be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting.

(2) The amendments shall be taken in the order shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of the Order [22nd February], each part of the proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the second column of the Table set out below.

TABLE
Proceedings

Lords Amendments	*Time for conclusion*
Nos. 22, 1, 2, 207 to 217 and 3 to 21	6.00 pm
Nos. 171, 23 to 26 and 218 to 233	7.30 pm
Nos. 234 to 265, 27 to 80, 266 to 270, 81 to 87 and 271 to 277	9.15 pm
Nos. 88 to 91, 278 to 291, 92 to 114, 292 and 293, 115 to 117, 294, 118 to 170, 172 to 185 and 295 to 334	10.15 pm
Nos. 335 to 408, 186 to 205, 409 to 414, 206 and 415	Midnight

(3) If this day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, is to be brought to a conclusion at this sitting shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

2.—(1) For the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted at any time by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, is to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 13

RELIEF FOR STUDENTS

Lords amendment: No. 22, in page 10, line 3, at end insert—

"( ) If a person is undertaking a course of nursing education on each day of that period, the amount he is liable to pay under this section shall be determined by order, no such amount being less than one-fifth of the amount it would be apart from this section."

5.17 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we shall consider the following *Lords amendments*:

No. 32.

No. 33, in clause 27, page 16, line 29, at end insert "and (e) education may include nursing education."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, at end insert—

'( ) The regulations shall include a statement of what courses constitute, in the Secretary of State's opinion, full-time courses of nursing education; but this is without prejudice to the power to provide, or not to provide, that a person undertaking such a course is to be treated as undertaking a full-time course of education for the purposes of this Part.'.

Mr. Howard: This group of amendments concerns the community charge liability of student nurses. This is a topic that was fully considered during the passage of the Bill through this House. Indeed, at Report stage on 19 April the House debated and voted on amendments about student nurses.

At that stage I argued, and the House accepted, that it would be inappropriate to treat salaried nurses—or, indeed, others undertaking training while at work—as students for the purposes of the community charge. During that debate, however, the question of student nurses and Project 2000 was raised. I said, in response:

"If Project 2000 is implemented in due course and student nurses are treated as students on bursaries rather than salaries, we shall certainly reconsider their position under the community charge."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 751.]

As the House will be aware, on 23 May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced that the Government did indeed intend to accept many of the recommendations of Project 2000, including the proposal that student nurses should receive non-taxable bursaries rather than salaries.

The Government also made it clear during the debates on the Bill in another place that, once Project 2000 was implemented, assuming that the qualifying conditions concerning periods of supervised study and similar matters were met, student nurses would automatically become students for the purpose of the personal community charge, and thereby pay only 20 per cent. of the charge. So the question that arises is what the position should be

[Mr. Howard]

before Project 2000 is implemented, at the stage when student nurses are still receiving salaries. As I said during earlier stages of the Bill's consideration, the Government argued successfully that it would be inappropriate to treat as students salaried nurses or others undertaking training while at work.

Having defeated an amendment in Committee in another place, the amendments now before us were added to the Bill on Report, against the Government's wishes. The amendments are intended to require my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make an order determining the level of community charge to be paid by student nurses. The Government accept that there should be such a power and we are not, therefore, asking the House to overturn the spirit behind the amendments. Unfortunately, the Lords amendments are defective in their drafting. It is by no means certain that they would have the precise effect that their proponents intend. It is essential that the defective amendments should be replaced by ones that work, and that is the purpose of the Government amendment.

The Government amendment would still require my right hon. Friend to make regulations setting out the level of community charge to be paid by student nurses. The only difference in the effect of the amendments is that the Lords amendments would allow the payment to be anywhere between 20 and 100 per cent. of the charge. The Government amendment envisages a choice between 100 per cent. payment and 20 per cent. The option on interim levels of payment will not be open, except to the extent that student nurses may be eligible for rebates. That reflects the fact that in practice the Government would choose only 20 per cent. or 100 per cent. In other words, student nurses should be treated as students in some or all circumstances.

More extensive and complicated amendments would have been required to keep open the possibility of an intermediate figure. As I have said, when Project 2000 is implemented, student nurses will automatically become students for the purpose of the community charge. That leaves the level of charge to be paid by student nurses before Project 2000 is implemented. That is an issue on which we have yet to take a decision. We shall be considering the matter carefully in the light of all the issues that arise, including the timetable for implementing Project 2000. We shall then announce our decision and lay the regulations that the amendment requires my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make. The Government amendment incorporates the spirit of the amendments that were passed in another place and improves on their drafting. It is for that reason that I invite the House to disagree with the Lords amendment and to accept the Government amendment.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): It is clear that their Lordships recognised that student nurses were students and, therefore, should qualify for relief from paying the poll tax in full. The Opposition welcome that view and would wish to uphold the Lords amendment.

Why does not the spirit that allows nurses in training to be accepted for relief not extend to nurses in Scotland for the first year of the poll tax in that country? I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that student nurses in Scotland in their first year will enjoy relief.

There are other students—they may be in an apprenticeship or in receipt of training—who have an income that is below the level determined by the Secretary of State for the Environment. In many instances, they have no income. The Labour party has always argued that taxation should be based on the principle of the ability to pay, and a flat-rate tax is unrelated to that ability. It is significant that the Government have no compassion. They are not willing to help those who are in receipt of low incomes. That is compounded by Ministers' arrogant attitude to students and others in higher education.

There are many in their 19th year who attend either a sixth form college or a tertiary college. They are participating in full-time education courses of 21 hours a week. According to the Government's proposals, they will have to pay poll tax, even though there is no family allowance available to them and they have no other income. No rebate will be made available to this group. The members of it are not even considered equal to those who are sleeping rough or others who are having to live in the cardboard city.

It is suggested by the Department of the Environment that there are 3,000 throughout the country who come within the group I have described. I suggest that if a proper count were undertaken, the total would be nearer 10,000. In the area of Wakefield, for example, there are no fewer than 56 such students. If the Wakefield figure is used for the rest of the country, there is a substantial number of 19-year-olds in full-time education who are not being taken into account. I ask the Minister seriously to regard these students.

Unless the Government are prepared to accept amendments, access to higher education and equal opportunities for young people will undoubtedly be removed from many. If these young people are made to pay £6 or £7 per week out of nothing, as it were, or from low incomes, access will be denied to them. The imperialistic attitude that the Secretary of State is taking to those on low incomes, especially to young people who are in higher or further education, ensures that the paying of poll tax will be controversial. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has outlined on earlier occasions how some of his constituents will regard poll tax legislation, there having been little time to discuss it in detail, or the Bill in its entirety. Many young people will fall by the wayside. They will not be able to pay any part of the poll tax.

The difficulty will be heightened dramatically when local authorities such as Westminster city council send in the bounty hunters. I have in mind a headline that appeared in the *Westminster and Pimlico News*. It appears that Westminster council suggests that bounty hunters will be employed to ensure that people pay their poll tax. The articles states:

> "Private companies could be paid 'bounties' to collect names and personal information for Westminster's poll tax register. And outside bailiffs are likely to be used to collect outstanding poll tax debts, Westminster's policy and resources committee was told on Monday . . . each person will have to pay £372 in poll tax. However, each name is worth £1,300 to Westminster when government grant is added."

It seems that Tory local authorities are organising bounty hunters. For every head, as it were, that they can recruit or shanghai on to the register in Westminster, a bounty will be paid by the authority. That practice has arisen because of the Government's methods of financing local government. If it is not the intention of the Secretary of

State or the Minister for Local Government that bounty hunters should be employed by local authorities—especially by Tory-controlled local authorities—they should dissociate themselves from that newspaper article. No hon. Member or anyone outside should accept the practice of employing bounty hunters.

5.30 pm

What will happen when bounty hunters track down people who are experiencing difficulty paying the poll tax because of their low incomes? We all know that the information on the rebate scheme is so abysmal that no one can explain how it will work. Many people will be hounded by bounty hunters. When they are tracked down, councils such as Westminster city council will haul offenders before magistrates who, if they wish, may issue distress warrants.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Are those circumstances any different than those that operate at present, whereby councils employ people to find those who have not paid their rates and prosecute them?

Mr. O'Brien: There is a substantial difference. At present, no bounty is paid. According to Westminster city council, if a poll tax payer does not pay but is caught, the council's income increases from £372 to £1,300, which is the bounty that will be chased.

When bailiffs are called in, what will they collect from a 19-year-old or a student who has been unable to pay the poll tax? What furniture or materials will they collect? Perhaps a record player or a couple of pairs of jeans. That is all that they could expect to collect from a 19-year-old. Bounty hunters will be paid substantial amounts to track down those people, but what is the point of employing bounty hunters to track down people who cannot afford to pay?

I ask the Minister to lend a receptive ear to the request for amendments to be made to include students and the other people to whom I have referred. We welcome the Lords amendment but think that it should be extended to include many other young people and those who will experience difficulty in paying the poll tax. In an area where the poll tax will be £250, the cut-off point for paying it for 18 to 24-year-olds will be less than £51. That is a substantial reason why the Minister should address himself to this important issue.

Any amendment that is made should take into account the anomalies of the low-income groups and people in training. The rebate scheme should be extended to include those groups and people on training schemes. If Conservative Members believe that the problem will disappear when Project 2000 is introduced in September 1990 they are incorrect. Those unfortunate people will have to pay the poll tax within six months of its introduction or 12 months to 18 months in Scotland. To say that the problem will be resolved by the introduction of Project 2000 is incorrect. I ask the Minister to examine this problem and make amendments to ensure that no hardship is suffered by those in full-time education or in training in the first month of the introduction of the poll tax. It will be anomalous if students other than student nurses are not included in the rebate scheme.

We appreciate, accept and welcome the Lords amendment, but we ask that it be extended to include other students. Does the Minister accept that training schemes should be designated to allow young people throughout England, Scotland and Wales who are continuing with full-time education and training to qualify for a poll tax rebate, as suggested in the Lords amendment? We ask the Minister to comment specifically on that point. We shall support the Lords amendment.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): As I understood the opening remarks of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, the Government accept the spirit of the Lords amendment that student nurses should be eligible for an 80 per cent. discount on the community charge. I am not clear at what stage of their training they will become eligible. If they fall into the category of receiving discounts throughout their training, we could create a serious anomaly for other professional student categories who pursue a one-year, pre-registration period of training of a similar nature to nurses before being allowed to practise.

Before the Lords amendment was passed the other groups of professional trainees reluctantly accepted the Government's statement that unless they were in full-time, grant-receipted education they would be eligible for full payment of the community charge. A number of those groups, including dental trainees, optometrists and pharmacy students, having completed their normal tertiary three-year, grant-maintained education, do an extra year of low-paid, pre-registration training. Like nurses, they are employed during that period by health authorities or, in Scotland, by health boards for their final qualifications. Their pay scales are roughly similar to those of nurses—about £5,000 or £6,000 a year.

I and the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) tabled an amendment on the basis of the original Lords amendment at the request of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, to which I am an adviser, which was backed by the British Medical Association and the British Dental Association. Its purpose was to bring the other professional trainees within the scope of the exemption given to nursing students.

The Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), wrote to me on Monday expressing understanding of the anomaly that could be created and intimated that the Government would consider what provision to make. I shall not take up the time of the House, because it is clearly understood that a problem could be created if, in the interim period until the implementation of Project 2000, nurses were to receive exemption from the community charge. I am confident that my hon. Friend, understanding the problem, will be able to find a solution to it so as not to perpetuate an unnecessary anomaly. I hope that he will be able to clarify the position as it affects the important groups of trainees in other medical professions.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I shall be brief in this truncated debate. I rise to support fully what the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) has said and to support the amendment that stands in his name and mine. Since we tabled the amendment, which is in effect an amendment to the Lords amendment, Lords amendment No.33 has appeared. I hope that as we are considering it with these others the Government will be able to do something about pre-registration students.

As the hon. Member for Exeter said, there are doctor, dentist, pharmacist and optician pre-registration students. Those are the basic categories. The dentists and doctors may not be as badly off as the opticians and pharmacists,

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who are paid less on the whole—there are exceptions—and sometimes considerably less, than the top grade of student nurses.

I welcome the Government's acceptance of the Lords amendment that concerns nurses. It would have been disgraceful to do otherwise, but there are these other groups of health care professionals. I am not going as far as my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). I agree with what he said about low-paid people, but I am not taking the matter that far; nor is the hon. Member for Exeter. We are concerned only with a narrow band of people who will be working with student nurses, in the same teams, and who receive as much as £1,000 less than they do, yet will have to pay the full burden of the poll tax. A sledgehammer tax such as the poll tax will always result in such problems.

When the Government make the regulations envisaged under amendment No. 33, I plead with them to extend the same provisions to pharmacists and other postgraduate pre-professional people in training, because such people will be in a difficult position. I wish that, instead of mentioning nursing education, the amendment had used the phrase "health care education", in which case there would have been no difficulty about extending the regulations. I ask the Minister to take care of the anomaly that will inevitably result and that will apply particularly to pharmacy students, but also to many others.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) will forgive me if I do not follow his point about pharmacists. I want to take up the issue of student nurses.

I supported the Government wholeheartedly in Committee and on Report on this matter. It seemed to me that we were in danger of creating another anomaly that would mean that people in salaried jobs would receive an exemption that was not available to others who were in salaried jobs but might be earning less than student nurses. We were being misled to a certain extent by emotion and the word "student". Student nurses are paid employees earning a salary. That will change in September 1990 with the introduction of Project 2000, under which nurses will become students in full-time education, with part of their training done on the wards. They will receive a bursary. When that happens, it will make sense to treat them as other students.

5.45 pm

However, we are not clear about students who begin their training before September 1990 and who, on the old training scheme, will be salaried employees. My guess is that they will continue to be on the old training scheme until the end of their three-year training programme. I cannot believe that it is intended to switch them into Project 2000 halfway through their training. If that is so, and if they remain salaried employees, it would be unfair to treat them other than as salaried employees who may be on a fairly low wage. They should be treated in the same way and receive the same rebates. If they transfer to Project 2000, Ministers will want to ensure that they are treated like other students. May we have some clarification about this?

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I was contacted this week by two student nurses in my constituency in their second year. One of them, Mandy Lumley, said:

"It is unfair that we are singled out to pay this tax whilst students remain exempt."

Karen said:

"I have only just realised what this means to me and I am horrified that it is another deduction from my pay packet."

Jane Brown, the Royal College of Nursing representative, echoed that by saying that the student nurses that she represented were just beginning to realise how serious the problem was. That is no wonder, given the impact of the figures that have frequently been debated in the House at all stages of this Bill. I do not intend to hold up proceedings by going through them again—Ministers have already heard them.

When the Minister started his speech, I wondered whether he had had a change of heart and would not accept the spirit of the amendments. He launched into a strong attack on the principle of the amendments, but he has said that he will accept their spirit. He is to be congratulated on that, as is Baroness Robson of Kiddington, who followed through, on behalf of the Social and Liberal Democrats, the campaign that we have waged at all stages to get student nurses this form of exemption. In that, she was successful in another place.

Lords amendment No. 22 is different from the amendments that we proposed in the House. Here, we sought merely to include nurses in the definition of a student so that they would obtain 80 per cent. student relief as of right. Our colleagues listened to the Government's arguments and tabled a conciliatory amendment in the Lords. It leaves it to the Secretary of State to decide what level of poll tax student nurses should pay, as long as it is at least 20 per cent. That shows that we have conceded ground. By way of return, I hope that the Minister will give a firmer sign of whether he intends to make use of these provisions before Project 2000 is brought in.

Since this issue was debated in the Commons, the Secretary of State for Social Services has announced implementation of Project 2000, which, by implication, means entitlement to 80 per cent. relief from poll tax for student nurses. In that way, the Government agree with the principle. The Minister has said that he agrees with the spirit; the problem remains the gap between the introduction of the poll tax and the full implementation of Project 2000. It is even conceivable, because of the phased implementation of Project 2000, that some student nurses could be paying 100 per cent. of the poll tax while their workmates, who are not on precisely the same form of course, will pay only 20 per cent. because they started their training at a different time, as Project 2000 was being phased in.

I hope that, having taken the decision to allow student nurses the 80 per cent. relief, the Government will implement it in as fair a way as possible. This amendment has had all-party support, although the Government expressed their unhappiness with its wording before Third Reading in the Lords. So what the Minister said about it is not new. The Government tried to persuade Lady Robson to accept further amendments, which she resisted.

The Government say that including student nurses in clause 13 is unnecessary, as clause 30 gives them the power to specify what is meant by "student". That is true, but

before the amendment was agreed to the Government had no intention of including student nurses. So we thought they needed to be persuaded in that direction.

Furthermore, they have said that they have no intention of using the new power to vary the rebate by a percentage intermediate between 0 and 80 as that would lead to unacceptable complications. That may be a fair point, as long as the Government are prepared to make some concession to students who are meant to be covered in this way.

We accept that the wording of the amendments could be improved, and we have no objection in principle to seeing it changed as long as the Government are prepared to commit themselves to granting a poll tax rebate to a significant number of student nurses. So far, they have not been prepared to make any concession on that. Not so long ago, the Government said that they would allow a registration scheme for dogs but they had no intention whatever of putting it into practice. We are worried that that is the attitude of the Government in this case. I hope that the Minister will say something about that.

Our response depends entirely upon the Government. If they show a willingness to offer an 80 per cent. exemption to student nurses from 1990 we can accept their amendment to Lords amendment No. 33. Although the Government say that they agree with us, we have not had that commitment. The student nurses in my constituency that I mentioned will be comparatively well off. In London, nurses might lose up to 17 per cent. of their incomes because of the poll tax.

We are talking about a fairly small number of people prior to the implementation of Project 2000. It would not be enormously costly or a permanent fixture. I hope that the Government will accept my point and that the Minister's reply will be welcomed by student nurses when they read the reports of this debate.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I too should like to speak about student nurses. I agree wholeheartedly with the amendment because I can see problems in the future. The time may come when we cannot do anything to amend the measure and it will be a matter only for the Secretary of State. For that reason, it would be wise to accept the amendment. I agree with the Lords amendment with which the Government disagree.

I am a little worried about Project 2000. Who, and how many, will it cover? At present we have many student nurses of varying technical and academic ability. I understand that some of the best students who are academically qualified will go forward to Project 2000. If my figures are right, the Barnsley authority is thinking about 10 a year. That means that we are not talking about the whole of the student nursing fraternity in that area.

The Secretary of State must determine who is a student nurse. Do we take the word "student" as the criterion? It has been said that they are salaried but, of course, the amount of the salary takes account of the fact that they are students. If that were not the case, they would not be getting such low salaries. Will the legislation cover all student nurses when Project 2000 is introduced, or will it cover only the narrow band of student nurses who will go forward to Project 2000? If it is only that narrow band, then we are creating another anomaly; to avoid that, it would probably be better to support the Lords amendment and the amendments to it.

One student should be treated in the same way as another. The pay of student nurses goes up when they have finished their student days, and to make it easy and simple we should give a rebate to all students whatever their category or occupation.

Mr. Howard: I shall not be able to reply to all the points that have been raised during this short debate, because final details on the precise nature of Project 2000 have not yet been decided. It is precisely for that reason that both the Lords amendment and the Government amendment which we have put down in substitution of the Lords amendment take the form of a regulation-making power that will enable the Secretary of State to make an order fixing the community charge that will be payable by student nurses. It was recognised that that is a sensible way to deal with the matter so that when all the details of Project 2000 have been settled an order can be made in the light of the decisions.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) asked me to deal with the situation that would arise in Scotland. We welcome to our deliberations after his long perambulation the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). *[Interruption.]* I hope that he ran all the way. We are delighted to see him with us. He reiterated the point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Normanton. Of course there is a similar but separate order-making power for student nurses in Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be required to make an order determining the level of community charge to be paid by student nurses there. He will make that order in good time for the start of the new system north of the border on 1 April 1989. At this time I cannot say what order my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will make, because he will have to take into account the kind of factor about which I have spoken and which will be the basis of the Government's decisions on this matter.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) was quite wrong to suggest that the Government would not have moved as a consequence of the introduction of Project 2000 had it not been for the amendment moved by Baroness Robson of Kiddington and passed in the other place. The hon. Gentleman may remember that when the question of Project 2000 was raised when the Bill was in the House, I said in direct response to an intervention that I think he made that we would have to consider the effect of Project 2000 if the recommendations that it envisaged were accepted. I said that that might have a significant effect on the liability of student nurses for the community charge.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister is right, but as I understood it he was talking about what would happen to student nurses under the Project 2000 proposals. The main question today is what happens to those who are not on Project 2000 while the project is being phased in? We are not clear about that.

Mr. Howard: That is true; it is not clear because no decisions have yet been taken. It was because of that state of play, recognised in the amendment put forward by Baroness Robson of Kiddington and passed in the other place, that the amendment takes the form of a regulation-making power. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will

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be able to take into account the evolution of the Project 2000 proposals before making an order under that regulation-making power.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister's answer sounds good. He says that he accepts that there will possibly be differences between students during the implementation of Project 2000 and that it is his intention to use these changes potentially to ensure that students will not be treated in different ways at the same time.

Mr. Howard: I have said a number of times that that is the kind of consideration that we shall take into account. We have not decided how to exercise the order-making power. We shall consider the problem of anomalies that may arise but have not yet taken any decisions on the matter.

The hon. Member for Truro should be somewhat cautious in his observations about student nurses. Student nurses become qualified. I hope that he tells his constituents in Truro that qualified nurses paying local income tax under the proposals that his party favours would end up paying £260 a year towards the cost of local authority services compared with a community charge of £190. When the hon. Gentleman pretends to be the champion of student nurses, I hope that he makes it plain to student nurses in his constituency just how much more they would have to pay under the proposals advanced by his party when they become fully qualified and have to pay his local income tax.

We accept the spirit of the Lords amendment. I believe that the one distinction between the effect of that amendment and the effect of the amendment that we are seeking to substitute for it is generally accepted and has not led to particular criticism. For that reason I commend the amendment that the Government have advanced to the House.

The hon. Member for Normanton also asked about 19 year-olds at sixth-form colleges. They will, of course, be entitled to the maximum 80 per cent. rebate depending on their income, or if they have no private income. In an area where the provision of the standard level of services results in a community charge of £202, such students would be expected to make a 20 per cent. contribution. That means that they would be paying something like 80p per week and I do not believe that that is an unreasonable contribution for them to make.

It being Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 306, Noes 211.

Division No. 427] **[6 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John

Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin

Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 22 accordingly disagreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendments Nos. 1, 2, 207 to 217, 3 to 10, 12 to 16, and 18 to 21 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 11 and 17 agreed to.

Clause 116

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AS TO CERTAIN AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 171, in page 64, line 3, at end insert—

"(3) Each relevant authority which is a charging authority in relation to the Personal Community Charge shall, in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State, make arrangements for—

(a) the administration of the Community Charge Additional Element as specified in paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 13 below; and

(b) the calculation in each year from 1 April 1990 of its Personal Community Charge in relation to the national average charge for that year, for the purposes of determining whether any person in its area may be eligible for the Community Charge Additional Element."

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 300, 302 to 304 and 390.

Mr. Ridley: Throughout the passage of the Bill we have been able to modify it in sensible ways to reflect genuinely held concerns and many amendments have been made. We have demonstrated our flexibility and our desire to meet good cases, but these amendments come up against one of the fundamental principles of the community charge and no compromise is possible. Therefore, I invite the House to disagree with them.

The amendments are complex, but their purpose is straightforward. They provide that people who are disabled, as defined in Lords amendment No. 303, and who receive rebates should receive in addition to their rebate an element equal to the difference between 20 per cent. of the average community charge and 20 per cent. of the community charge that they have to pay. In a somewhat roundabout way the amendment seeks to ensure that disabled people on low incomes are fully compensated for the fact that they have to pay the charge, whatever it is. The amendments adopt this indirect approach because in Committee the other place defeated an amendment by Lord Allen seeking 100 per cent. rebates for disabled people which would have been a straightforward way of achieving the same purpose.

The amendments as drafted are defective and would not achieve the effect they intend, but it is because of the policy behind them that the Government cannot accept them. Under our proposed rebate arrangements people whose net income is at or below income support level will be entitled to 80 per cent. rebates and income support recipients will also have an element included in their benefit, reflecting 20 per cent. of the average community charge. That means that someone living in an area where the community charge is below the national average will be in pocket, while people who live in areas where the charge is higher than the average will have to use a small amount of their income support to make up the difference. The fundamental principle which the amendment breaches is that everyone should have a direct interest in the level of their community charge.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the Secretary of State aware that in Scotland there is a charitable hospital, the Erskine hospital for the military disabled, for people who have been so severely wounded during their military service that they cannot continue to live outside? There are houses within the grounds in which some disabled people live. Under this law those in the hospital itself will be wholly exempt. Those living in the houses, who at present pay no rates because they are part of a charitable hospital, will have to pay the community charge. Because they are on war disability pensions, they will certainly pay above the 20 per cent. level, if not the full charge. How does the Secretary of State explain to people who have given so much in service to their country that the Government will force them to pay taxes which they have never paid previously?

Mr. Ridley: I do not know of that hospital or the circumstances of the people to whom the hon. Gentleman refers. The rebate system is available and, as he knows, benefits have been uprated to meet the 20 per cent.

Mr. Maxton: It is absolutely shameful.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman gets the local authority in which the hospital is located to have a reasonable community charge, many of those people will be in pocket as a result, and not losing.

Our whole policy aims to ensure that in taking spending decisions local authorities know that they will have an impact on all charge payers in their area who can then pass judgment in local elections. We have provided exemptions only where accountability clearly cannot work—for example, in the case of severely mentally handicapped people. There have been some serious misunderstandings on that point. In the past few days several individual cases have featured in press and radio discussions of these amendments and all the cases of which I am aware concern mentally handicapped young people living with their parents. All those individuals on the facts described would be exempt from the personal community charge. Under no circumstances would they be required to pay anything, so no question of a rebate would arise.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: I am not giving way.

I hope that I have cleared up those misunderstandings about mentally handicapped people. Obviously, those who

do not have the capacity to comprehend the community charge should not be asked to pay it. The same is not true of people who are physically handicapped. That is the key reason why we must disagree with their Lordships over this amendment.

In moving the amendment in another place Lord Allen of Abbeydale made clear the thinking behind it when he said:

"to my mind, it is unrealistic to believe that the people I am talking about—namely, the blind, the halt, the lame and the mentally handicapped—should be seriously considered to be reasonable voters, balancing and assessing these nice considerations."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 July 1988; Vol. 499, c. 148.]

I find that an extraordinary statement, and one that I suspect many physically handicapped people would find patronising, if not offensive. A physical handicap is no bar to playing a part in local democracy, as many people have proved. I do not accept that the majority of such disabled people would agree that they should be given special treatment in this one respect. I emphasise the words "in this one respect", because our proposed rebate system is specifically directed towards meeting the special needs of those disabled people who are not exempt, including their need to meet the 20 per cent. contribution. The rebate system is based on the net income levels used for income support.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West) *rose*——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) but, as this is a short debate, I shall not give way again.

Mr. Dalyell: Anyone who has the privilege of knowing Lord Allen of Abbeydale knows that one thing he is not is patronising. Is the Secretary of State saying that he is wrong in his assessment of the human reaction of the blind and other disabled people?

Mr. Ridley: I strongly disagree with anybody who says that disabled people have not the ability to play their part in democracy, whether it be local or national. As the basis of the charge is that people put in funds to the minimum extent necessary to pay the minimum 20 per cent. of that charge—they have an incentive to vote according to which party they think will be the better stewards of the council—it would deny those people the respect that the House should accord to them.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I said that I would not give way again.

The rebate system is based on the net income levels used for income support. Those are £13·05 a week higher for disabled people than for their able-bodied counterparts. Moreover, £15 of any income that disabled people have is disregarded for rebate purposes, as opposed to £5 for able-bodied people. The whole of any mobility or attendance allowance is disregarded as well as the first £5 of any war pension. Those are very generous arrangements, which, when applied to our proposed rebate system for this charge, will ensure that all will be able to afford their 20 per cent.

Understandably, there has been concern about the position of disabled people who live in some high-spending inner-city areas. That has been based on forecasts of the community charge at current spending levels. There is ample scope for reduction in spending by 1990. Last month we announced illustrative figures for the community charge based on budgets for this financial year. In the extreme example of Camden, which has already been quoted in this context, the figures show a reduction of £143 from the illustrative charge based on last year's spending. There is no reason why that reduction should not continue and every reason to believe that it will. It is in the hands of the local authority to reduce it still further if it is concerned about disabled people or people with lower means.

That people in some areas will pay more community charge than others is not arbitrary, nor an accident of geography, but the result of deliberate spending decisions by local authorities. It is not true that Camden needs to raise more from its community charge payers because, as an inner-city area, it has greater needs. The Government grant system acknowledges that different areas have different needs. For example, Camden's assessment shows a need to spend at the rate of £1,181 per adult, which is more than twice that of an area such as Guildford, with an assessment of £576. Therefore, the grant system acknowledges such variation in need and is so arranged that an authority, whether urban or rural, spending at need would require a community charge of £202. The gap between that and the £639 that Camden would have to charge if it spends at this year's level is quite simply a measure of overspending.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I said that I would not give way. I want to let the debate take place.

It is an essential part of our proposed system that those who take such spending decisions should be accountable to all those capable of taking part in the democratic process. Physically disabled people certainly fall within that category. We have ensured that their special needs are taken care of in the rebate system and we have provided that people who are unable to play a part in local democracy because of severe mental disability will be exempt.

I accept that these amendments were made in another place because of a genuinely held anxiety about disabled people, but I believe there may have been some misunderstanding about the basis of the exemption for severely mentally handicapped people. The Government's record of helping disabled people is superior to that of any of their predecessors. Their needs are fully taken account of in our proposals and this extra help is unnecessary and goes against the principle of the Bill. I suggest that the House reject the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I should inform the House that this amendment involves privilege.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I shall begin by putting the words of Lord Allen of Abbeygate into their correct context. I thought that it was not permissible within our Standing Orders to quote those in another place who are not Ministers, but, as the Secretary of State has been allowed to do so, I presume that I shall be allowed to do the same. Lord Allen said:

"Whatever the complexion of the authority, it is difficult to see how many authorities in the inner-city areas with high social needs will ever be anything but above the average . . . It is not practicable for the poor disabled people of whom I am talking simply to up sticks and move to another area."

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

Immediately after the words quoted by the Secretary of State—

"assessing these nice considerations"—

Lord Allen said:

"That is simply not the real world. Most of them will never struggle to the polling booths at all or wrestle with postal voting papers. Moreover, if they do, although I am no politician, it seems to me that they and their families are more likely to vote against the political party which has put them into this mess rather than trying to turn out the councillors responsible for supplying them with their much needed social services."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 July 1988; Vol. 499, c. 148.]

That is a fair assessment of Lord Allen's speech.

If this were a matter of either an 80 or a 100 per cent. rebate for the disabled, we would be speaking to another set of amendments altogether. These amendments have been tabled only because, in some panic during the general election last year, the Government announced that all poor people on means-tested benefits would have the minimum 20 per cent. poll tax added to their benefits. That was announced by another Minister. It was made clear later that the amount added to the national benefit scales would be 20 per cent. based on the national average, not the actual 20 per cent. of the poll tax. If we are not saying that every local authority, every village, every town, every shire or every city should be the same, clearly for some the poll tax will be more than the average and for some it will be less. The amendment ensures that the poor disabled on means-tested income support will not suffer by having to pay more than 20 per cent.

The Secretary of State mentioned accountability, but he has not said that in those areas where the poll tax is below average the poor disabled will receive not a 100 per cent. rebate, but a 105 per cent., 110 per cent. or even more. They will make a net gain. How does that improve their accountability with the local council? The argument about accountability is complete fiction.

On 5 July the Lords carried an amendment to make sure that the poor disabled get what was intended. During the general election, Ministers sought to imply, "We will operate the benefits to take account of the 20 per cent." I want to use only one set of figures.

Mr. Ridley: During the general election, and indeed on a television broadcast with the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who is not here, but I do not blame him for that, I made it absolutely clear that it was 20 per cent. of the average and not of each community charge. There was no doubt about that.

Mr. Rooker: Whatever the Secretary of State might have said on television, that was not implied in the original statement. He did not spell it out in the reality of the pounds that people must spend. On last year's figures, the national average poll tax figure that was given to us was £225. We know that 20 per cent. of that is £45. That will be added to the national benefits scales.

6.30 pm

A poor disabled person may live in an area in which the poll tax is £325. I am not talking about the type of authorities to which the Secretary of State referred. There will be many areas above and below, within a margin of, say, £100. Many will be way above—several hundreds of pounds in some inner London authorities. Let us say that it is £325, and of course 25 per cent. of that is £65. The poor disabled will have to find £20 for food and fuel. That is the reality, and this amendment will prevent that reality coming about. They may live in a poll tax area that is below average. A good example is Kensington. The new hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) mentioned £122. That is what the Conservative party said. Twenty per cent. in Kensington is only £24, yet the benefit will be increased by £45. It does not seem fair. As Lord Allen said, disabled people cannot pull up sticks and move. It is not as simple as that in the world outside, whatever the Secretary of State might think.

Mr. Wigley: Is it not coming over clearly to the House that the Secretary of State is using disabled people as a lever in high rate areas that might have high poll taxes? Is it not disgraceful that disabled people should be used in that way for the party political purposes of the Conservative party?

Mr. Rooker: It is the intention of the Conservative party—it is obscene, but it is its intention—to force poor disabled people on means-tested benefits to spearhead campaigns in local authority areas to cut the poll tax to destroy their own services. That is what the Conservative party wants. It wants the bizarre situation in which poor disabled people lead campaigns to cut the very services on which they depend.

The other place should at least have an opportunity—I suspect that it will—to look at the obscenity that the Secretary of State is proposing to the House. After all the concessions that the Government are alleged to have given—as one of my hon. Friends said, they give millions of pounds to salmon owners in Scotland—they come here to screw the poor disabled, while seeking to give the impression that such people will have their benefits made up. They will not. It is a fraud and we should support the Lords.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The panic in the last election occurred on Opposition Benches, when Opposition Members found their credibility ebbing away, largely because of the Government's record on spending on the disabled. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) looked at the spending figures, he would see the Government's record, with an 80 per cent. increase in real terms. Two thirds may represent an increase in numbers, but one third, representing £1 billion, represents real terms increases per person. The hon. Gentleman should bear that point in mind.

We are not debating whether we should help the disabled but how we should best help them, and whether we should help them through social security benefits or by tampering with the basic principle of the community charge, which is fair and means that everybody should pay. Disabled people can play their part in society the same as everybody else. There is no reason to suppose that we should tamper with the community charge. We should look at the benefits and consider whether social security benefits are good enough.

The average increase in reforms is £4·50 per week for the disabled and long-term sick on income support. We are talking about an average increase of £4·50 a week. If we look at the extra payments that might be called for in high-spending areas and work out the figures for Camden, on the present figures—there is scope for them to improve

—the maximum amount that people are likely to pay is £1·30 per week. The two figures are completely out of kilter.

It may be that an individual does not get the £4·50 per week, because of the way in which the social security reforms work, but is liable to pay the £1·30. We know that the social security reforms will be monitored. I look for changes in the administration of social security rather than a blanket increase to help the small number of individuals who may be affected.

Their Lordships were confused. If they had looked at the social security legislation they would have realised that that is the area in which we should act to secure benefits. If we rule out the ILEA element, we are talking about only 70p a week in Camden. In Greenwich, it is 30p a week less, so there we are talking about only 40p. They are relatively small sums of money to set against an increase on average of £4·50 a week.

That is the Government's record. The Government are helping the long-term disabled and sick. Conservative Members are helping them properly, through the social security reforms, not by tampering with every other piece of legislation. We do not ask that electricity should be cheaper for the sick and disabled. We ask them to play their proper part in society and to pay their bills the same as everybody else does. But if they need help, we should help them through social security reforms. If hon. Members find examples of people who are not being properly helped, I ask them to call for changes in social security arrangements, not to look for massive changes in the administration of the community charge. That is the way to do it.

Hon. Members should remember the Government's excellent record on the long-term sick and disabled, with an 80 per cent. increase in spending. There are increases in invalidity benefit, attendance allowance, mobility allowance, industrial disability benefit, and the earnings limit allowances to which my hon. Friend has referred. High-spending councils should consider the ways in which they have been profligate, and should not load burdens on to the disabled. They should cut their spending accordingly.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The Minister's speech was insensitive and, some may think, deeply unworthy of any debate on these important amendments. It gave the impression that we on this side of the House—and, by implication, the majority by which Lord Allen's amendments were approved by the House of Lords—are engaged in party warfare against him. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the amendments were carried in another place with the support of Conservative peers who were acknowledged to speak with a lifetime's experience of the problems of disabled people.

This is not principally a conflict between the two sides of this House, but one that divides the Secretary of State from voluntary organisations of such renown that they have become household names in this country. The conflict is also one between the Secretary of State and disabled people themselves.

My purpose in intervening in the debate is to let the House hear what disabled people and their organisations are known to feel about the Government's decision to oppose Lord Allen's amendments. In a letter sent to me for this debate, Ian Bruce, the director general of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, states:

> "On behalf of the estimated 40,000 visually handicapped people on income support, I would ask you to encourage the Government not to take this backward step. Poverty does not foster accountability: there is no greater barrier to involvement in the community for disabled people than financial hardship. We believe that the benefit system fails adequately to recognise the additional costs of disability. Rejecting this amendment can only increase those costs for many elderly blind people."

That is not the language of party politics but one of anxious concern for some of the most vulnerable people from a distinguished representative of their cause.

Listen also to Brian Lamb, speaking for the Spastics Society, and the very severely disabled people whom it represents. He was quoted last weekend as saying:

> "A total rebate would cost the government peanuts but the alternative may cost some disabled people their independence."

For MENCAP, Sir Geoffrey Dalton, its secretary general, has put it to me as follows:

> "May I . . . point out that these amendments will promote community care . . . We believe that the Bill as amended in the House of Lords will enable . . . disabled people to play their part in community accountability, and will . . . provide appropriate compensation to . . . people on low incomes, irrespective of geographical location. We urge you to resist any attempt to reverse these amendments."

For the Secretary of State to have given the impression that this is simply an exercise in party politics is an outrageous misrepresentation of those in the voluntary organisations who conceived and, by persuasive advocacy, won majority support for the amendment in another place. I hope that the House will do them as much justice tonight.

There can be no doubt whatever that, if the amendments are now defeated, more disabled people will find themselves in residential institutions where, as the House knows, poll tax will not be payable. The Government sloganise about community care, but the reality of their approach to these amendments is that they are content to condemn more and more disabled people to institutional care. Their policy is not only wrong but self-defeating and inhumane. It will cost the public purse more than the extremely modest cost of the amendments and is thus irresponsible in financial terms.

The amounts that we are discussing are trivial to the Treasury but, as Brian Lamb said for the Spastics Society, they are huge to people desperate to stay in their homes and to parents caring for their severely disabled adult children. It has been estimated that, in some localities, they will have to find in excess of £100 a year. They are people for whom every pound is a struggle to find.

This is a timely debate. It comes on the day of the publication by the King's Fund Institute of an independent report by Virginia Beardshaw entitled "Last on the List: Community Services for People with Physical Disabilities". I quote the first two sentences of the report's conclusions:

> "This report paints a bleak picture. It highlights substantial inadequacies in the health and social services currently available to disabled people."

That is a report that the Secretary of State should read. If he does, he must agree that to defeat these amendments will pile handicap on handicap for disabled people. The Government promised to single out disabled people for special help. The defeat of these amendments will single them out for special hardship.

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that these amendments seek only to ensure that disabled people on low incomes will receive a genuine 100 per cent. rebate, irrespective of where they live. We were told by *The*

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

Sunday Times last weekend that the decision by the Secretary of State to resist the amendments will trigger a Tory rebellion at the end of the debate. Much to his credit, the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) was quoted as saying:

"We will be doing what we can . . . to persuade the Government not to reverse these amendments. A considerable number of disabled people will be hit hard."

I hope very much that the hon. Gentleman's views, speaking as he does as an hon. Member who has given outstanding service to many organisations of and for disabled people, will be listened to with respect by Conservative Members. I ask his colleagues not to act party politically but to join in supporting amendments which, outside the House, have won enormous support from people of all parties and of none.

6.45 pm

Mr. Hannam: I have listened carefully to the explanation given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for asking the House to reject the Lords amendment, which seeks to give parity to all disabled people on low incomes. I regret to say that I cannot accept the Government's position. I say that with some regret because, like my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), in all other respects I have the greatest admiration for the help given to the handicapped by the Government.

Here we have a compassionate measure introduced in the other place by Lord Allen of Abbeydale, the president of MENCAP and a former much respected senior civil servant. It was supported by 124 peers of all parties and has the backing of all the major disablement charities, plus the Royal College of Nursing. The amendment provides a formula whereby the maximum rebate level not only applies where the community charge is lower than or equal to the national average but ensures that disabled people on low incomes in all areas get the 100 per cent. rebate. The amendment is designed primarily to help those people who are disabled and on income support—the poorest of the disabled. Only those people will receive 100 per cent. rebate, regardless of where they live. That is the crux of the debate.

The Government's position, which I can understand in theory, is that these people will receive a 100 per cent. rebate only if they live in an area where the community charge is average or below average and that in higher spending authorities the principle of voting accountability must apply. Being what it means, an average has to produce a large number above the median level and a large number below, and the highest charges will generally fall in deprived inner-city areas where greater concentrations of low-income disabled people inevitably live.

In effect, the Government are saying that a disabled person on a low income living in a local authority area where the community charge will be average or below average will get a 100 per cent. rebate, or even, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has admitted, more than 100 per cent. A poor disabled resident who lives in an above-average spending area will, for the sake of a theoretical voting pressure, have to pay the extra and will not get a full rebate, and this extra will amount to £75 or £100 each year.

What are these people supposed to do? Like most severely disabled, blind or mentally subnormal people living in the community, they cannot easily move across the boundary into another area. First, the cost of moving is far too great, and, secondly, suitable housing and support facilities would have to be available in the area. This is particularly unrealistic if we look at the number of special needs housing and mobility starts made now compared with 10 years ago. The number has decreased from 10,560 then to only 1,239 last year. We have reached a plateau of special needs housing, which means that there is not the flexibility to allow those disabled people to move easily from one area to another. In inner-city areas there are more low-income disabled, and their needs are one reason why those areas often have higher than average expenditure.

The alternative for those disabled people and for the mentally subnormal, who are often included in this category, is to stay in institutional care. This is one of the great worries of disablement organisations, especially the Royal College of Nursing, which has written specifically about this to me.

People in residential care do not have to pay the community charge, but if they move out into the community they will be liable to pay it. That runs counter to the Government's philosophy on the care in the community programme. Surely we should not penalise disabled people for moving into the community just because that area happens to have a high-spending local authority as opposed to a low-spending one.

The principle of accountability for this small group of people, which runs through the debate and about which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is anxious, is liable to act as a direct disincentive to the care in the community programme. Going back into residential care would, of course, cost astronomically more than the amount that would be required to make up the 100 per cent. rebate.

What kind of disabled family are we talking about? Often, we find that one disabled person marries another disabled person. As we know, the community charge multiplies the payment that has to be made by the number of people in the household. Many disabled people are married, and they may have a handicapped child. There are many cases of families with two or three disabled and handicapped people living in the same house and needing special care at home. Often, they are not sufficiently severely mentally handicapped to qualify for exemption. From postbags and constituency experience, all hon. Members know of the stresses and strains inherent in looking after such handicapped adults in the family. Is it right to force another financial burden on those families, just because they happen to live in an inner-city area rather than in one where the community charge is lower than the average?

When the Scottish Bill was going through the House of Lords, Lord Glenarthur, the Minister, gave a commitment that certain groups of disabled people would be eligible for 100 per cent. rebates. He repeated the commitment when he was questioned, but it was never honoured, although the Government carried out their side of the bargain, to the extent that they wanted, through the income support level and its uprating. The increase of £1·25, which is the national weekly average of the community charge, is hardly 100 per cent. compensation for the community charge in high-spending areas. A disabled person in a

below-average area will get more than 100 per cent. of the charge, whereas others, who are equally poor and disabled but who live in above-average areas, will be penalised.

Lord Allen's vital amendment seeks to ensure that disabled people on benefit will not face a new financial burden because of the community charge. The crucial point is that that does not contradict the basic principle of the Bill. Disabled people on low incomes will still have to make an initial payment of their community charge for the cost of local services. They will then have to apply for the rebate, which they will receive at a later date. All of them will receive the initial impact of the expenditure of their local authority and the amount that they will have to pay, so accountability will be preserved, and that is what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is so anxious to ensure.

The amount of money involved is not large from the Government's perspective, but for the disabled person on the bottom level of income and who faces all the extra costs associated with disability, an extra £10, £20, £25, £50 or £75 can represent an impossible burden. I understand my right hon. Friend's concern about accountabilty and I support that principle. But when it is applied differently in different areas to people with similar disabilities it is wrong. I ask my hon. Friends to join me in voting for the retention of this worthwhile and compassionate amendment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: When we discuss Lords amendment No. 171, we must consider Lords amendments Nos. 300, 302, 303 and 304, although they are timetabled to be debated later on. Lords amendment No. 171 is essentially a paving amendment to others that seek to help people with disabilities.

The amendment was proposed in the other place by the Cross Bencher, Lord Allen of Abbeydale, and it seeks to help elderly and disabled people to pay their poll tax. It is similar in that respect to amendments tabled by myself and others in the House of Commons. There are, however, crucial differences between the amendment that I moved and Lords amendment No. 171. I sought to introduce a potential 100 per cent. rebate for those on certain benefits. The Government's response was that the amendment was unacceptable because it undermined the concept of accountability. Lord Allen did all that he could to take that point on board and he modified his amendment as a result.

Under the amendment, all old and disabled people, as defined by eligibility by certain benefits, will still have to pay 20 per cent. of their poll tax. In theory, they should get that 20 per cent. contribution back through upratings in benefit that the Government have promised. As has been said, the problem is that the uprating will be based on the national average for the poll tax, so that people living in areas of higher than average poll tax will be out of pocket. Those people—by definition—will be the most vulnerable members of the community. Without exception, they will be those least able to pay the poll tax.

The Lord Allen amendment proposes a community charge additional element to help those who would otherwise lose. It would bridge the gap between the amount that they receive in their benefit towards their 20 per cent. contribution and their actual poll tax liability.

In promising benefit upratings, the Government acknowledge that the very poorest need help in paying their 20 per cent. poll tax contribution. It is on the basis of need that that help will be given. However, by linking the upratings to the national average poll tax level the Government would create a hopelessly imprecise system. Some people will not have enough to meet their poll tax bill, whereas others will gain. By contrast the amendment seeks to target resources precisely. It would carry through what the Government said they would do and what they acknowledge is necessary. After all, they are giving the money because it is needed; it is not a handout. It is not a reward for living in a low-spending authority area. Its non-payment is not a penalty for living in a high-spending authority area. It is based on need.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that the Government and the Bill will not cause people to be out of pocket? It is the high-spending authorities that will cause the problems.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that we are talking not about the present arrangements but about the arrangements that the Government wish to introduce, and that is an end to the matter.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Does the Lords amendment prescribe that excess relief in low-spending authorities should be withdrawn and, if not, where is the logic in that?

Mr. Taylor: If the Government or the hon. Gentleman should wish to propose such an amendment to help the disabled people who will lose, it would be a perfectly reasonable thing to do. However, that is not the basis of the Government's argument, which is that there should be a penalty and an attempt to bribe people into voting one way or another—or more accurately, as they cannot do without the money, to force them to vote one way or the other.

The precise targeting of benefit is one of the stock lines of the Department of Health and Social Security. We hear it from the Government whenever they threaten to abolish the universal payment of child benefit. Ministers tell us that resources must be directed to where they are needed most. Why, then, do they propose to add amounts to benefits that will be more than some people need but much less than others need? It is not even sensible in the Government's financial terms because it will force people out of community care and into residential care. That will cost more in the end because those disabled people will be unable to vote for proper community care services within their local authority.

Perhaps the most despicable argument advanced by the Government against the amendment is that it would cost too much. A report in *The Guardian* on 19 July—no doubt the result of a Department of the Environment briefing—said that the Government found Lord Allen's proposal unacceptable because it could cost up to £100 million in lost poll tax revenue. But that £100 million of revenue represents the amount paid by the very poor among the old and the disabled.

Mr. Ridley: I may make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that in no circumstances should *The Guardian* ever be taken as representing what is one word of Government policy.

7 pm

Mr. Taylor: Perhaps the Secretary of State will elaborate. Can he tell the House whether the figure of £100 million is one that the Department of the Environment calculated, and whether it gave it to *The Guardian*? Can he confirm whether that is the scale of the expected cost? If the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to answer that question, obviously the answer must be yes.

As I have said, that £100 million is the amount that will be paid by the very poorest and the oldest in meeting the differences between the help they receive in benefit to pay poll tax and their actual poll tax bill. It is not money from benefits but money from their own pockets. It is money that the Government said the very poorest—let alone the elderly and the disabled—would not have to pay. It is money that the Government said they needed to live on, to heat their homes, and to clothe themselves. Yet the Government will not allow them that money if the Lords amendment is rejected. If those payments add up to £100 million, that in itself is a condemnation of the poll tax. It is a £100 million tax bill being dumped on the elderly and disabled, with no rebate, no extra benefit, and no assistance being given.

Conservative Members who have voted for a certain level of benefit, because the Government recognised the needs of the elderly and the disabled, should reflect on the fact that if they now back the Government in rejecting the Lords amendment, they are saying to them, "We said that you needed those benefits, and that you could not get by without them. But if you are unlucky enough to live in the area of a local authority that spends above the average, you will have those benefits taken away from you." Do Conservative Members accept that there is still that need for benefits, or will they reject that and go for the greed of a Government who would rather buy votes than accept their responsibilities?

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I hope that the House will leave the Lords amendment untouched. I listened with interest to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he advised the House to resist the amendment. His argument rested on accountability, and that the philosophy behind the Bill was that councils should take spending decisions in the knowledge that they will have an impact on all the community charge payers in their area. He commented that it was patronising towards the disabled to exempt them and that they wanted to be treated as ordinary members of the community.

My right hon. Friend's case begins to disintegrate, however, because the Government have accepted exemption for a group of people who have a lesser claim than those for whom the amendment seeks exemption. I refer to residents of nursing homes and residential care homes, many of which hon. Members have visited in their own constituencies. Everyone in such homes is entitled to vote. Many of them benefit from local authority services, particularly if the residential care home is run by a local authority. Many have substantial sums of money and are well off. Others suffer no disability but are simply fragile. They are all totally insulated from the community charge, and the Government have said that they are not part of the accountability argument.

If such people are to be exempt, and if they are to be no worse off because of the community charge, the poor and disabled have at least as strong a case for exemption. I have general reservations about the whole impact of this policy, but if the Government have exempted well-off people in nursing homes—who can vote, who benefit from local authority services, and who know what is going on—then, in fairness, the Government ought also to insulate the poor and the disabled, whom another place has quite rightly identified in this amendment.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Tonight is an occasion for frank speaking. We ought to recognise and remember that we hold in trust the hopes of many thousands of very severely disabled people. The House must choose between defending their interests and being spurred on by political claptrap. We have heard a great deal of political claptrap from the Secretary of State, who should be ashamed of the speech that he made. He was wise to refuse interruptions because, although he doubtless read his brief very well, he made one of the worst cases that I have heard for a very long time.

It really gets my goat when the Government say it is a matter of pride for the disabled to participate in society, but then proceed to kick them, to hit their pockets, and to pretend that they are concerned with the pride of disabled people. If we are concerned about the disabled, the way to help them to keep their pride is to give them enough cash to live decently. The Secretary of State greatly upsets me when he claims that giving assistance would be to patronise the disabled. It is only patronising if one talks down to the disabled and says, "Of course they can play their part in society", but then refuses to help them. I am very sorry that the Secretary of State unfortunately made the kind of speech that he did.

Lords amendment No. 171 gives to very disabled people on income support a 100 per cent. rebate of community charge, regardless of where they live, whereas the Government are forcing them to be reluctant participants in a monstrous lottery. In that enforced gamble, the disabled will win or lose according to where they live. The Secretary of State was wrong to say that it is not a matter of geography, because it is. The outcome will depend entirely on where a person lives as to whether he will gain or lose. The Secretary of State knows as well as I do that most disabled are very poor and cannot afford to move. They find themselves hopelessly and helplessly trapped where they are, and they are being cornered by the Government. I believe that that is the Government's intention.

I do not want to get too personal, but I wish to warn the Secretary of State that people are very worried that the Government are not doing what they can to help the disabled. In the House of Lords, Conservative peers were simply trying to help the severely disabled. I refer not to someone who has lost a finger or who is hard of hearing, but to the severely disabled.

Tonight, the House must be left in no doubt about the consequences of voting down this amendment. The first consequence will be the imposition of severe and, in some cases, unbearable burdens on the losers among the severely disabled. I accept the Secretary of State's assurance that the mentally handicapped will not be included. He was right to correct their Lordships on that point, and I accept his correction. Nevertheless, there remain the gravely disabled who are paralysed or fragile and who are unable to wash, dress or feed themselves. They are in a dreadful situation. I am not speaking of people suffering only from

minor physical blemishes. They will be the losers if this amendment is defeated, and I hope that Conservative Members will bear that in mind.

Rejecting the amendment will mean dividing families, because some disabled people will be forced into institutions. There is no shadow of doubt about that. That will be at enormous personal cost to the people involved and tremendous financial cost to the Government.

Forcing severely disabled people into institutions is to rob them of their independence. That is the crime of totalitarian Governments across the world—I place it as high as that. It is serious to rob anybody of his or her independence, yet that is what will happen if the amendment is defeated. I beg the Secretary of State to reconsider and I beg his supporters, who are entitled to back him on other issues, to think again.

The defeat of the amendment will expose Ministers as dogmatic and heartless political theorists acting on a bogus political principle against people who are helpless. It will also establish the amazing precedent of a Government admitting their willingness—indeed, determination—to hit some very severely disabled people. No verbal dexterity can rationalise or excuse that.

The defeat of the amendment will provoke the House of Lords into bringing it forward again and embarrassing the Government. If the Secretary of State wants to challenge that group in the House of Lords, it is a matter for his political judgment. I think that he is making a terrible political error, and I urge him to think again. I urge Conservative Members to ensure that the amendment is not defeated. If they obey the party Whips, they will be condoning a disgraceful and shameful attack on the most vulnerable members of our society. Only a sick society and a pathetic House of Commons would allow that.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) is always listened to with great respect when he speaks on this subject. He has, as always, spoken with great conviction and passion on behalf of the disabled. His arguments may amount to a good case for more generous treatment of the disabled by our social security system, but I do not think —I hope that I can demonstrate why—that his arguments amount to a case for a blanket exemption from a general system of local taxation, which is different.

The Labour party's enthusiasm for the amendment makes one wonder why it did not propose it and why it waited for an Independent peer to do so. It makes one wonder whether their enthusiasm is slightly artificial and whether it is yet another opportunity to make mischief and drag out the debate.

The provisions in the amendment are unnecessary and misconceived. They are unnecessary because already under the rebate system substantial additional provisions are made for the disabled, designed to take account of their additional needs, and that is right. The applicable amounts for deduction from the incomes of disabled people are considerably higher. If disabled people were receiving the additional social security benefit to which they are entitled, they could be receiving an income of up to about £80 a week more than an able-bodied person before losing any of their community charge rebate. Therefore, a substantial move has already been made towards making the system easier on the disabled.

We are talking about relatively small sums of money. I know that what may appear to be small sums of money for most of us may not be so for those on benefit. However, in this case we are talking about small sums of money. The large community charge figures bandied around are notional figures. They ignore the safety net. I think that I am right in saying that of all the community charge areas in London that will have high figures, very few of them will be over £300 or £350 in the first year of the safety net. Therefore, we are talking about £20 or £25 over the year, or about 40p a week.

I do not believe that the community charge in areas such as mine—Lewisham—will be equivalent to the figures bandied about. Enormous savings can be made and there are five years in which to make them. The scope for the reduction of the community charge is great. Lewisham at present has a notional figure of £575. Incidentally, it is £100 less than last year, with no appreciable pain and suffering among the users of Lewisham council's services. The scope for reducing that by a further £100 a year for another three years and having a community charge of about £275 is easy to realise. If that is the case, one would be talking about the amendment saving people about 30p or 40p a week. Therefore, we are talking about a minimal sum.

7.15 pm

The amendment is misconceived for two reasons. First, it runs counter to the principle of accountability, which is central to the idea of the community charge. That principle is that people should play some role in local government by their vote or their participation in it. It makes sense to exempt the mentally handicapped on the ground that they cannot participate, but it is palpably untrue to say that the physically handicapped cannot do so.

Secondly, there may be arguments for providing particular groups in our community with additional social security benefit. However, those are not of themselves arguments for exempting those people from particular systems of taxation. I believe the contrary. It is part of the universal benefits argument. It results in the misapplication of money. If disabled people ought to be receiving higher social security benefit, let us have an argument about that. However, it is not an argument for exempting them from part of a general system of taxation. There are plenty of other groups which I am sure the Opposition could latch on to in the same way if they so desired.

If this is such an important matter and such an important principle is at stake, one cannot help wondering why the Opposition did not think of it themselves. I cannot understand why they did not propose it in respect of the 20 per cent. of rates that people have to pay in the intervening period.

Mr. Rooker On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that we are under a guillotine motion, but what the hon. Gentleman is saying from a Central Office brief is not true. The Labour party proposed the amendments in Committee and the Government rejected them.

Mr. Maples: I do not think that that was a point of order and I am reading, not from a Central Office brief, but from my own handwriting. I asked why the Opposition needed an Independent peer to propose the amendment and why they did not do so themselves.

Mr. Rooker: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Maples: It leads one to believe that they are jumping on a bandwagon that somebody else has set in motion. The Opposition are dragging out this debate on something that is unnecessary and misconceived.

Mr. Douglas: I was interested in the remarks of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who referred to a group of people who will be totally exempt from the community charge—those who live in residential homes. What do politicians do when elections are called, either for local government or central Government? One of the first groups of people that we ensure are covered by the provision of a vote are those who reside in old folks' homes. We want them to vote. The Secretary of State's principle of accountability is nullified in relation to that group of people.

In my constituency we would be foolish politicians if we did not make darn sure early in the campaign that everyone who is eligible is given a postal vote. However, the Secretary of State says that he is exempting that group of people. Where is the principle of accountability?

The Secretary of State said that we have maligned the disabled because there is a suggestion that they are not fit to participate in the affairs of the community. What does the Secretary of State have to say about the severely mentally handicapped who are exempt under the Bill? Does that mean that someone who is exempt under this obnoxious Bill should be removed from the electoral roll? Is that a quid pro quo?

Earlier, the Minister of State alluded to my perambulations. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members want to cry, "Stupid," from a sedentary position, let me tell them that the Minister of State alluded to my perambulations. I do not want to detain the House in this important debate, but my impression, within the past two or three weeks, is that the more the people of this country know about the Bill, the less they like it. I challenge any of the pussy-footing guys on the other side of the House to come back with me to Edinburgh and explain the Bill to the folk, particularly in England.

My last speech of the last Parliament related to the subject of the severely mentally handicapped. The Bill states:

> "A person is severely mentally handicapped if he is suffering from a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind which involves severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning."

That must be certified by a medical practitioner. The Secretary of State is not just asking people to identify the poor, which is bad enough; he is also asking people with elderly relatives to identify them so that they can obtain exemption when this spurious piece of legislation is on the statute book. I believe that, on other occasions, the Secretary of State is quite humane.

This is a farce of a Bill. The more people get to know about it, the less they like it. If it is so good, why do we not all have it at the same time? If it is so good, let us all have it in 1989 or, conversely, let the people of Scotland wait until 1990, like the rest of the people in the United Kingdom, so that we can all suffer equally.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) has won the argument to date. He has a record of working very hard on issues of this kind; that is well recognised on both sides of the House.

I am sorry to have to say it, but the principle of everyone paying at least 20 per cent. is not the only valuable principle. It has its merits, and I certainly support it as a general principle, but that does not mean that there cannot be any exceptions to it. Legislating is to do with general principles. It is also to do with making human exceptions to those. It is a matter of balance. That is what our legislation is about, and I have to say that the balance of the argument goes to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter and those who have supported this important set of amendments—people from all parties in the other place —and that is why I shall find myself in the Lobby in favour of the series of amendments passed from another place.

Mr. O'Brien: A couple of points should be placed on record on the important subject of the poll tax and how it applies to the disabled. The hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) raised a number of issues which were not new. They were raised by Labour Members in Committee. Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman has not read the *Official Report* or taken note of what was said in Committee and I must put it on record that the points that we raised were turned down by his colleagues in Committee.

I also want to make it clear to the Secretary of State that, when the Labour party was in office, it increased expenditure on the disabled over five years by over 300 per cent. One of the issues with which we dealt was the mobility allowance, which is very much appreciated by people. The Labour Government therefore made considerable provision for expenditure on the disabled.

We also hope that the Minister will clarify the issue of the uprating of the compensation element year on year because no provision has been made for the uprating of the element and it will soon lose value in relation to the poll tax if there is no assurance that uprating will take place each year.

I hope that the Secretary of State will take note of some of the points made by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the important issue of the application of the poll tax to disabled people. I hope that we shall uphold the decision of the House of Lords on this important issue.

Mr. Ridley: I shall first answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) about the compensation element. All DHSS benefits, of which that is one, are uprated annually in the annual social security review according to the figures at that time.

Typically, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) scored a pretty good own goal at the beginning of our debate. He quoted Lord Allen and went on to say that it was difficult to see how many authorities in the inner city would ever be anything but above the average. Let me draw his attention to the fact that, in Birmingham, on this year's figures, the charge is £218, whereas the average is £246. I congratulate that inner city area of Birmingham.

Mr. Rooker: What about the surcharge?

Mr. Ridley: Throughout the debate, we have referred to figures without including the safety net. The hon. Gentleman will not get away with that.

That is an inner-city area where the disabled benefit from what we have proposed, as have other people who will be on rebates because they have a council that performs effectively at a low community charge rate. If

councils want to help the less well-off, whether or not they are disabled, they will have it in their own means to have a below-average community charge, like the inner-city area of Birmingham.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: That is not the fault of disabled people.

Mr. Ridley: I pay tribute to that. The way that the Opposition have suggested that it is an accident that there are high community charges in some places and not in others is absolutely monstrous.

Mr. Wigley: The Secretary of State does not give a damn for disabled people.

Mr. Ridley: If the Opposition want to have low community charges for people on low means, they have the solution in their own hands.

Mr. Wigley: The Secretary of State is using disabled people.

Mr. Ridley: Let me deal with the crux of the argument.

Mr. Wigley: The Secretary of State should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) got the point right. He pointed out that the highest amount in Camden by which anybody could fall short on their 20 per cent. payment was £1·30 a week or £83 a year, not the £100 that has been quoted.

Mr. Wigley: That is a lot of money to disabled people. Has the Secretary of State ever tried living on that sort of money?

Mr. Ridley: That figure is the highest of all councils in this country. I challenge Camden council to reduce its figure. It is up to Camden to do that.

I should like to make it quite clear that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) has said, the amount that the Government have added to the average weekly income of disabled people in the social security review is £4·50 per week, which in many cases leaves disabled people £80 per week better off than their able-bodied counterparts——

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: The way to help disabled people is the way that the Government have chosen over the years—to give disabled people more disposable income of their own——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: That is the right way to do it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Resign".]—and Opposition Members know it.

It being half-past Seven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 216.

Division No. 428] **[7.30 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael

Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert

Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment 171 accordingly disagreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their amendments Nos. 24 and 26:—

The House divided: Ayes 283, Noes 177.

Division No. 429] **[7.46 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*

Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ernie Ross and
Mr. William McKelvey.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 24 and 26 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It should be noted that the Government offered a concession on the last group of amendments on which the House was forced to vote. Have we not just been through an enormous waste of time——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I have taken the hon. Gentleman's point. It is a debating point, not a point of order for the Chair.

Question put forthwith, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their amendments Nos. 23, 25 and 218 to 233: —

The House divided: Ayes 268, Noes 157.

Division No. 430] **[7.57 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*

Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*

Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Maria Fyfe and
Mr. George Galloway.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 23, 25 and 218 to 233 agreed to.

SCHEDULE 2

COMMUNITY CHARGES: ADMINISTRATION

Lords amendment: No. 234, in page 87, line 51, at end insert—

"13A.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may include provision that no duty of confidentiality shall prevent the Secretary of State from disclosing relevant information to a registration officer for a charging authority.

(2) Information is relevant information if—

(a) it was obtained by the Secretary of State in exercising his functions 1986 c. 50, under the Social Security Act 1986,

(b) the Secretary of State believes it would be useful to the registration officer in exercising his functions under this Parliament, and

(c) it falls within a prescribed description."

Read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment (a) and Lords amendments Nos. 235 to 237, 246, 249, 253 to 255, 257, 259, 260, 261 and 265.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), at end insert—

"(3) Where the relevant information is personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act 1984, any interpretation of the meaning of the first data protection principle, or any restriction in the exercising of the powers of the data protection registrar in relation to any of the data protection principles shall not apply, and any disclosure of personal data shall not be subject to the non-disclosure provisions of the Act.".

It would be helpful perhaps to explain what Lords amendment No. 234 is about. It means that

"no duty of confidentiality shall prevent the Secretary of State from disclosing relevant information to a registration officer"

for the collection of the poll tax. Then it describes the relevant information. If it is obtained by the Secretary of State under the Social Security Act 1986 for social security purposes it can be passed to the poll tax registrar. If the Secretary of State believes that such information would be useful for the collection of the poll tax, or even if it falls within the prescribed description and was previously not allowed to be passed on, the Secretary of State can do so. That means that he can pass that information to the poll tax registrar.

The amendment gives the Secretary of State remarkable powers that are not just excessive but almost dictatorial in nature. My amendment *(a)* seeks to correct the situation and to bring some sense to the measure. If it is not changed, Lords amendment No. 234 would dramatically compromise three of the eight data protection principles. That compromise would be fundamental and the other principles would also be adversely affected. The first principle to be compromised is the principle that personal data shall be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully. As a guide to interpreting this principle, the data protection registrar was advised that data users should, first, explain to the person why the information was required; secondly, ensure that people are not misled about why the information is required; and, thirdly, explain why the information would be used or disclosed. Those recommendations are in the data protection registrar's guideline No. 4.

The problem is that in the public sector most personal data are deemed to be collected fairly and are often required to be collected according to some statute or other. That is often true of personal data collected by the Secretary of State for the purposes of carrying out his statutory functions. The Secretary of State need not follow the registrar's advice that I have mentioned and need not explain to a person why information is required. The worst part is that it is quite lawful for him to mislead people about why the information is required, used or disclosed. It is unacceptable for such a state of affairs to be enshrined in statute.

The possibility of duping people should never be an acceptable means of administration and it could have damaging consequences. For example, people might be afraid to come into contact with officialdom in any way, shape or form and, for that reason, might not get the rights to which they are entitled. Secondly, it could well lead to the build-up of hatred against an untrusted and untrustworthy administration. Those are the dangerous consequences of allowing people to be duped. In any case it is against the whole philosophy of the Data Protection Act 1984, which aims at fair treatment and protection for people against the misuse of information held about them. It is wrong that the Secretary of State should be able to breach that first data protection principle.

8.15 pm

The third data protection principle is seriously compromised. For example, section 34(5)(a) of the Data Protection Act describes the non-disclosure condition whereby personal data are disclosed by or under any

enactment. Section 26(3) of the Data Protection Act says that such a disclosure is not subject to the enforcement powers of the registrar. The registrar has such powers for any other sort of disclosure but not in this respect.

The section also says:

"by reference to any data protection principle inconsistent with the disclosure in question."

The key word in that part of the Act is "any," because it means that all eight of the data protection principles are at risk. These non-disclosure exemptions need not be registered with the data protection registrar, so there is a reduced chance of his ever finding out about them. That is a complex aspect of the matter. In short, it means that the registrar is utterly powerless to prevent abuse and in many cases he will be ignorant of the myriad disclosures of personal data that will be required to produce the poll tax registers. The data protection registrar's important role as a quasi-ombudsman and investigator of data abuse is seriously undermined in respect of information obtained for collecting the poll tax under this Lords amendment.

The final data protection principle to be abused is the fourth one—that personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purposes for which the data are used.

The principle allows the data protection registrar to investigate the reason for an item of personal data being held. That is not the case for the poll tax register and the Secretary of State's powers. The Bill is littered with powers enabling the Secretary of State to make regulations about the personal data to be kept. It is the Secretary of State who will decide the items of data to be kept. Those could very well be excessive and not relevant to the purpose for which the personal data are held. That is intolerable. It drives a coach and horses through the principles underlying the Data Protection Act.

Lords amendment No. 234 provides that information is relevant information which can be disclosed for poll tax purposes even

"if . . .it falls within a prescribed description."

That is information that would otherwise not be allowed to be disclosed under the terms of the Data Protection Act. The amendment would give the Secretary of State carte blanche to decide what is to be prescribed and what is not. It also empowers him to breach the duty of confidentiality under which the information might originally have been obtained.

No personal information is sacred to the Secretary of State if he wants to pass it on to the poll tax registrar, and that includes information which the Data Protection Act says shall be secret. It must be wrong for the Government to seek to enact such a blanket power. It is worth reiterating the problems about the amendment. The data protection registrar cannot exercise any of his enforcement powers in relation to disclosures by the Secretary of State. The disclosure made by the Secretary of State may not appear on the registration and is therefore hidden from the registrar and the public.

According to the clause, personal data are always deemed to be obtained fairly by the Secretary of State, however unscrupulous or immoral the means used to obtain such data. That applies even if the data subject is blatantly misled about why information on him is being collected. The registrar cannot serve an enforcement notice about the obtaining of personal data by the Secretary of State in the way that he can do for many items of information collected by other data users. He cannot act if the items of data to be collected by the Secretary of State for poll tax purposes are excessive or not relevant. He cannot prevent gross breaches of confidentiality by the Secretary of State.

As a result of the amendment the Government will be given an appalling list of powers. My amendment to amendment No. 234 solves all the problems, and the registrar will have his powers restored to safeguard an individual's privacy. My amendment ties up the relevant information with the Data Protection Act 1984, which the Government are trying to separate from the poll tax legislation. The relevant information is

"personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act 1984".

My amendment provides that

"any interpretation of the meaning of the first data protection principle, or any restriction in the excercising of the powers of the data protection registrar in relation to any of the data protection principles shall not apply".

That would restore the powers of the registrar so that he could act if there were abuses, especially in relation to the first and fourth data protection principles. My amendment also states that

"any disclosure of personal data shall not be subject to the non-disclosure provisions of the Act."

That restores the powers of the third data protection principle.

In their haste to impose the poll tax, the Government are trampling on the privacy and data protection rights that are essential for the protection of individuals. Lords amendment No. 234 will create a secret service state, which has no bounds or restrictions. Data on everyone, however confidential or personal, are permitted if the Secretary of State wants that information. Such information may be wildly excessive for the purposes of poll tax collection. It is a draconian and expensive tax and the Government are giving themselves draconian powers to impose it. My amendment will restore sanity to this matter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): In the past half-hour we have seen the extent to which the debate on the Lords amendments has been reduced to a farce by the Opposition. The start of this debate was delayed by half an hour by two completely pointless Divisions. They are certainly pointless if the Opposition are serious about needing time to debate the issues. The first Division was on a concession that was granted pursuant to an undertaking given by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government, and implemented in another place. The second Division was on nothing more than a drafting amendment. Now the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has tabled amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 234 and his amendment is obscure and defective. It does not even provide what the hon. Gentleman intends.

Effectively, the hon. Gentleman's amendment would disapply the first data protection principle of the data protection act 1984 by providing that

"any interpretation of the meaning of the first data protection principle"—

whatever that may mean—should not apply. The amendment would also disapply any restriction of the powers of the Data Protection Registrar, although it is not at all clear what those restrictions might be. It would also disapply the principle enshrined in the Data Protection Act 1984 that data must be fairly and lawfully disclosed. At best, the amendment is confused, and it is difficult to comment on it in detail. However, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that disclosures of community charge

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

information for the purposes of the community charge will have to conform to the provisions of the Data Protection Act. That Act provides all the protection that is necessary in such cases and there is no need for an amendment of this nature.

The first data protection principle will not be compromised, because individuals whose details are passed to the registration officer will always be told by the Department of Health and Social Security that the disclosure is taking place. The hon. Member for Leyton has got that wrong.

The third data protection principle will not be compromised. It is perfectly true that the Data Protection Act disapplies the third principle in certain circumstances, but that is a provision of that Act—it does not flow from anything in the Bill. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the DHSS will register the disclosures with the data protection Registrar. Nothing in the provision restricts the powers of the data protection registrar, and information transferred will have to be up to date, relevant and not excessive. The hon. Gentleman has got it all completely wrong.

On Report my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government announced that the Government intended to amend the Bill to allow for two things: the disclosure of information to community charge registration officers by DHSS local offices, and direct deduction from income support as a remedy where an income support recipient defaults on his community charge payments.

People receiving income support will have included in their benefit an element reflecting the fact that they will have to pay 20 per cent. of their community charge. Surely it is perfectly reasonable to ensure that they should actually register for the charge. Amendment No. 234 accordingly provides that no duty of confidentiality shall prevent the Secretary of State from passing information to the community charge registration officers.

We intend to make regulations that will prescribe the information that local offices may pass on. It will be restricted to the names and addresses of income support claimants. People who are eligible for income support are automatically entitled to an 80 per cent. rebate of their community charge. Claimants will therefore be invited to complete a rebate application form. If they do so, and if their claim for income support is allowed, the DHSS local office will send the form to the local authority, which will arrange for their rebate to be paid. In most cases this will be done through a reduction in the claimants' community charge bills.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): How much will that additional exercise cost?

Mr. Chope: It will not cost anything like as much as it would if the money that was being paid to those in receipt of income support did not end up in the coffers of the local authorities, thus enabling them to provide services. If, however, a claimant does not wish to apply for a rebate, the DHSS local office will pass his or her name and address to the CCRO to enable him to check his register. That is a sensible measure designed to provide an extra source of information to CCROs in carrying out their statutory functions and ensuring that benefit paid for a particular purpose is actually used for that purpose.

The Lords amendment also provides that people on income support who default on their payments and get into arrears with their community charge may have sums deducted direct from their income support and paid to the local authority. That again is a sensible measure, which parallels the provision for the attachment of earnings of people who are in work. Without that provision there would be no alternative to distress or imprisonment, which would put people on income support at a disadvantage compared with those in work—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] It would. Because we are a sympathetic Government, we have provided that a local authority that has obtained a liability order may apply to have deductions made from income support and may ask the debtor to provide information about his income. Regulations will set out the circumstances and manner in which direct payments may be made, and will set a limit on the amount that may be deducted.

I do not believe that either of the two measures discriminates at all unfairly against people who are receiving income support. Everyone has a duty to register. Income support is a passport to a maximum rebate and will contain an element to reflect the remaining 20 per cent contribution. It is therefore right to seek to ensure that those receiving it are properly registered. As for direct deductions, those merely parallel the existing provisions for attachment of earnings and provide a way in which income support recipients who get into arrears may remedy the situation without the need for distress.

In case hon. Members think that there is something novel about that, let me remind the House of some of the other purposes for which deductions may be made from income support. They include housing arrears and current costs, miscellaneous accommodation costs, service charges for fuel and rent, gas arrears and current consumption, electricity arrears and current consumption, water arrears and current consumption, recovery of over-payment of benefit, including housing benefit and social fund loan repayments. All those categories are purposes for which deductions can be made directly from income support.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The difference between the poll tax and the other charges that the Minister has listed is that the recipient of income support must give consent for deductions to be made for the purposes of electricity arrears, rent arrears and so on. However, the community charge arrears will be deducted compulsorily from income support. It will mean that food will be taken out of people's mouths because the Social Security Ministers have been too mean to give them the full benefit in the first place.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Lady is talking nonsense. We are talking about money that has been paid by taxpayers to recipients of income support. The hon. Lady seems to be suggesting that, although that money has been paid specifically to enable people to pay their community charge, they should have the freedom to spend it on whatever they like. We cannot accept that proposition.

I hope that the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Leyton will be rejected and that the House will agree with these sensible Lords amendments.

8.30 pm

Mr. Rooker: That was another disgraceful performance by the Minister. He has learnt nothing since Committee and Report stages while trying to defend the indefensible.

Amendment No. 234 is a classic example of what has been happening. Earlier today we were told, "This is what was discussed earlier and it is only what you asked for." First, we did not ask for amendment No. 234, and, secondly, the transfer of information from the DHSS to poll tax officers was not discussed in Committee. It was hinted at in the media and referred to on Report. We were told that applicants for income support would be given a rebate application form and that if they did not submit it, someone would chase them up. That sounds administratively convenient for the civil servants involved, but that is not what is stated in the amendment. It provides that all information collected by the Secretary of State under the Social Security Act 1986 can be passed to poll tax registration officers. Why has it been drawn so wide?

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Why not?

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman may not understand that one of the great prerequisites about information on the poll tax was that all national sources of information would not be available to poll tax registration officers; all local sources of information would be available. In other words, no income tax records, no health authority records, and no gas or electricity records would be available, but all local authority information of births, marriages, deaths, schools, housing, roads and rebates—the whole gamut—would fit the bill. All of a sudden, all DHSS information is to be available to poll tax officers, and we have not had a satisfactory explanation why.

Mr. Harris: If the DHSS makes that money available for a specific purpose surely it has every right, and indeed a duty, to pass that information on to poll tax officers. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Rooker: Why does that not happen today?

Mr. Harris: Perhaps it should.

Mr. Rooker: The more this Bill is debated, the more we learn about what is in the minds of Conservative Members of Parliament.

Mr. Harris *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman voted for the guillotine and we did not, and I have already done him the courtesy of giving way once.

Amendment No. 234 is drawn much wider than was hinted at previously. We never had any amendments along these lines, so we could not amend the proposal. We had no inkling of this until the Bill went to the Lords. The debate there was on 30 June, so only then was the Government's plan known. We have not had a satisfactory explanation.

It is interesting that recipients of social security benefit and income support are not automatically checked for attendance allowance and mobility allowance. My hon. Friends and I constantly find people, whom we are seeing in another connection, who have been dealing with the DHSS, social workers and health visitors yet who are not paid mobility or attendance allowance when they should be. Nobody has ever bothered to check. Why is there no amendment to deal with people who are not receiving sufficient money from the DHSS? There is nothing along those lines. This provision is one-sided, which is why we object so much to it.

I have another point to raise with the Minister about the DHSS and the transfer of information. The DHSS is responsible for running the census, and its Ministers are responsible for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Every citizen now knows that DHSS information will go to poll tax officers, and people will be worried. I alluded to this on Second Reading. The Bill threatens the accuracy of the census, and there are many reasons why we need a census to be accurate—for example, locating schools in the right places. People will co-operate with the census only if they are absolutely certain that the information is locked into it. The DHSS runs the census and tonight it will receive new powers under amendment No. 234 to disclose information to poll tax officers.

Before the Minister or any Conservative Member jumps up and says, "That is all covered by the Official Secrets Act," I must say that I do not believe them. I do not trust the Government any longer; indeed, I do not think that I ever did. I do not trust them to conduct public administration fairly and above board.

I have a constituency interest in this. In April 1989, when the poll tax register for England will start to be assembled two years ahead of the census, a test will be carried out on 85,000 households, 23,000 of which are in my constituency in Birmingham and in four wards in the constituency of Birmingham, Small Heath. It is voluntary, and I shall advise my constituents to have nothing whatever to do with it. At the same time as census officers will be knocking on their doors, poll tax officers will also be at their doors. They will be falling over each other in my inner-city wards, where single people will have to pay more in poll tax than they now pay in rates.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend is making a series of excellent points. Is he aware that under amendment No. 234 poll tax officers who knock on the doors of his constituents can dupe those constituents and claim to be census officers? They could choose to do that under these powers.

Mr. Rooker: I am coming to that. It would save a lot of public money for one person to do both jobs. That is common sense. I shall advise my constituents not to trust the Government over the voluntary census in April 1989. They cannot be trusted with that information. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) takes the same view.

Ministers cannot say that they have not been warned about the census being affected. We want it to be accurate, but British people will not respond to the census in 1991 in the full-hearted way that they normally do because of the operation of the poll tax. They simply will not trust the Government for this intrusion into their privacy. If the Government wish to shift ministerial responsibility for the operation of the census to another Department, that is for them. It may be a good idea because the letter dated 19 July sent by the Department to the chief executive of Birmingham was addressed to a person who ceased to be the chief executive back in March.

The Minister claimed that amendment No. 249 comes as no great surprise to us, and that we already knew about it. We did know about it, because we found out about amendment No. 249 in a newspaper report. When we were

[Mr. Rooker]

discussing attachment of earnings and other poll tax matters in Committee, the guillotine was about to fall. It is not true, as the Minister of State said, that we had dealt with the poll tax in Committee. We had dealt only with a substantial part of the clauses relating to the poll tax in the early part of the Bill. If I remember rightly, just as we were discussing the rebate system, the guillotine came down. There were other later clauses relating to the poll tax.

I will plead guilty, and my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) will share the guilt, if guilt there be, but we did not ask about attachment of benefit, partly because of the constraint of time and partly because it never crossed our minds. However, Ministers were unhappy about the matter and told their friends in the Press Gallery that attachment of benefit was talked about in a Cabinet Sub-Committee. The story then appeared in *The Independent*, which is where we found out about it. It was never discussed in Committee. No Minister ever proposed it and it was not in the Bill.

That happened in February, but the Government could not even get the amendments ready for Report in April, so that the House could discuss the matter at length and we could try to amend the Government's proposals. Tabling amendments tonight would have been a complete waste of time, as the debate will be for only an hour and a half. We would not waste the time of the House, the Clerks, *Hansard* or the printers of the Order Paper. This debate on amendment No. 249 is the first opportunity that the House of Commons has had to discuss the attachment of benefit to poor people—those who already have the so-called 20 per cent. in the benefit, which we learned from an earlier debate will probably be half the population. Constituents of all hon. Members will be affected.

This measure is ludicrous because the very poorest people in the country, by definition, will be on income support. There are no poorer people in the country than those on income support—formerly supplementary benefit. They have been given this little extra in benefit —which we think will be eroded, but that is a matter for another time—to pay their poll tax. However, they cannot quite make that payment, because they have not yet had the full 20 per cent. because they live in an area with a poll tax slightly above average. Perhaps they have had a few extra bills for gas, for electricity or because their iron has broken. They do not receive money to replace capital goods. However, they choose to buy a new iron instead of paying the 20 per cent. of the poll tax.

The Minister intends to deduct from the income support—plus any fine or penalty—the money that the Government have already put in in the first place. There is a natural solution, and one that would save a lot of trouble. If the 20 per cent. is put into the benefit and is taken out before the people get their hands on it, because they may want to spend it on some emergency and transfer is straight to the local authority, would it not make more sense to stop people using the money as a piggy bank on the mantelpiece when it is not poll tax day but crisis day?

The Minister's argument will be accountability. Because people have not paid the pennies with their own hands, they will not understand about voting at local elections. That is ludicrous, as is the Minister's defence of this proposal. He is a member of the legal profession and must know about the courts of this country. Do we still have free courts? I cannot believe that the magistrates and the courts will stand any nonsense. The proposal is impractical. It is nasty and mean. I cannot understand for the life of me why the Minister is prepared to defend it. He is the only Minister who has had to defend it, as it is the first time it has been debated in the House. Where are the Secretary of State and the Minister of State? The attachment of benefit is a disgrace.

8.45 pm

I invite the Minister in the short time available to put up a better and a more honest case than he was able to put earlier. I do not accuse him of personal dishonesty, but I invite him to put up a more honest and open case to explain to my hon. Friends and the millions of people outside why this system is necessary, especially as it has not been deemed necessary under domestic rating. The treasurers I have spoken to think that the domestic rating system is good administration and they never dreamed that they would have to have recourse to this kind of decision to collect the rates. If a system has been good enough for the rates, why cannot it not be good enough for the poll tax? There must be a simple answer somewhere.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I have deliberately chosen to speak on this group of amendments, because it includes two important principles that I feel should be rejected. We are all aware that the Government have allowed insufficient time to debate the important changes made in the other place. We have been forced to skip over many today. There has not been time to put many of them to the vote. The two important principles, included in the amendments against which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) spoke, are very different, compared with the time when they were dealt with in Committee.

Attachment of benefit was not debated in Committee at all. Although the Secretary of State and the Minister of State referred to it on Report, we were precluded from debating it because we had no amendment before us. This is the first opportunity that we have had to discuss the principle involved in amendment No. 249. During the debate that we had on attachment of earnings and other matters, I put one question to the Minister of State. I said that we were opposed to the principle, and asked what, if the Government were forcing us along this line,

"will be the position if the attachment of benefit to pay the poll tax reduces that person's level of income, through benefit or income support, below what the statute decrees that person needs for his or her requirements?"—[*Official Report*, 20 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 876.]

That is another issue that the Minister needs to explain. Amendment No. 249, in subsection (2)(b), says:

"which may include provision to secure that amounts payable to the debtor by way of income support do not fall below prescribed figures".

I stress that it uses the word "may". It does not say "it must not". Even if we are forced to accept the principle, to which we are completely opposed, if the amendment is passed, in some cases it will be possible for magistrates to reduce a person's income—which may affect the family —to a level below that prescribed by statute as being the absolute minimum for his or her requirements. We all know that many people live in poverty and degradation. In relative terms, a few pence or a pound a week are of crucial importance to them. The Government cannot callously dismiss them, as they have done on other occasions.

The matter is extremely important. Opposition Members believe that the principle behind the amendment is completely wrong. The benefit should be paid. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) said that there was a considerable difference between the Minister's points about electricity and gas. That is an essential point for people who choose to have their benefit deducted to pay gas and electricity bills. That option should be available if people believe that it helps their money management and budget control, while recognising the difficulties in which they live. That must be a personal choice.

The amendment does not involve any choice on the part of the people involved. They will be compelled to go along a certain line if a magistrate so determines. That is appalling and should be strongly opposed. Conservative Members—I note that they are not in evidence here to debate the matter—should recognise the importance of the principle involved.

We all know that the Government introduced the amendment in the Lords and introduced the attachment of earnings amendment on Report because the tax is unpopular throughout the country as it fails to take account of ability to pay. There will be many court cases. Many people will choose to go to prison rather than pay. To try to prevent the legal and prison systems being clogged up, the Government introduced the attachment of earnings. and attachment of benefit provisions. The Government know that people will not accept that the poll tax system is fair. It shifts the method of support of local government from ability to pay. The people who can afford to pay now pay more. Whatever anomalies and faults may exist in the present system, it is certainly fairer than a system that will make the poorest people pay an ever increasing share of local government expenditure.

Amendment No. 234 deals with the passing of DHSS information to community charge poll tax officers—call them what one will. It is an important issue. Despite what the Minister said, it is not true to say that the Government have stated that his was the direction in which they intended to go all along. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr is absolutely right. Time and again in Committee and on Report the Secretary of State, the Minister and the Under-Secretary of State emphasised that, although information will be available from other local government sources, whether it be from housing departments, grants departments, libraries and so on—we have many criticisms of such aspects, but we are not debating them today—information will not be available from Government Departments such as the Inland Revenue and the DHSS. Of course, they said what will happen when a person asks for a particular benefit.

Amendment No. 234 is quite different. The Department will give information to the local authority. I have no doubt that, when they consider it necessary, the Government will change the legislation. They may as well open the door and say that information obtained may be from everywhere. As several of my hon. Friends have said on many occasions, to make the system work the Government will have to accept the inevitability of identity cards or some other form of national registration. A Library research note, which is available to all hon. Members, states:

"This amendment was promised during the Commons proceedings."

I do not believe that that is strictly correct. It goes on:

"It will allow regulations to be made which would permit the Social Services Secretary to disclose prescribed information to registration officers. The Minister promised that the information would be restricted to the names and addresses only of those people in receipt of income support who have not applied for a community charge rebate."

That is a dangerous precedent. We all know that once the first foot is in the door of the DHSS, other information will be available. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr referred to the census. If we operate a fair system, there will be a willingness to co-operate. The Government know that this system is not fair, that there will be difficulties in getting people to register, and that they will have to take increasingly draconian powers to ensure that information is given to community charge registration officers if they are to be able to collect the poll tax.

The amendments are completely wrong. They should be defeated because they are not acceptable. As I have said, I hope that some Conservative Members will be prepared to reject the amendments, because they move along a dangerous line. Conservative Members should carefully consider the implications of the amendments before they decide to go into the Division Lobby with the Government.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Whenever we have debated civil liberties and the poll tax, the Government have repeatedly assured us that information will not be passed from one body to another without restriction, and, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, that national information will not be passed to local bodies. The amendment seems to give the Secretary of State just such carte blanche to pass information to local authorities. It states:

"no duty of confidentiality shall prevent the Secretary of State from disclosing relevant information".

If personal social security information is given to officials in good faith, should it not remain confidential? Does not the amendment make any reference to confidentiality by DHSS officers completely worthless? It may be that the personal information involved is sensitive —for example, information regarding personal relationships—but of no interest in terms of poll tax liabilities. Should not claimants be guaranteed confidentiality? Clause 13A would prohibit such a guarantee. We have tabled an amendment precisely to take out the clause.

If an hon. Member on the Labour Front Bench could get me a glass of water, it would be helpful. Meanwhile, I am sure that I shall survive.

The main Opposition party has many purposes, and one of them is to give glasses of water to those hon. Members who are too far away from the Table to do so for themselves.

Mr. McKelvey: The hon. Gentleman would not get a glass of water from that bunch of gangsters over there.

Mr. Taylor: Water will be privatised as well and there will be a tax on it soon, so we had better take the opportunity while we have it.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has tabled a constructive amendment. The Minister has said that there are drafting problems, and I would not like to say that he is wrong. However, the intention behind the amendment is good, and the Government should accept the spirit behind it.

Although confidentiality is important, the essential issue arises in Lords amendment No. 249. The

[Mr. Taylor]

Government's intention to introduce a provision for attachment of benefit was leaked in the press on 26 February, by which time the House of Commons Standing Committee had missed the opportunity to debate it. By the time the Bill reached the Floor of the House on Report, Tory Back Benchers had already threatened to revolt on other key parts of the Bill and, not surprisingly, the relevant Government amendments failed to appear. After all, why risk trouble when the Government already had trouble? As a result, we had no chance in the Commons to discuss the amendments.

The Government's caution is understandable because adding attachment of benefit makes an already appalling Bill even worse. The Government's statements defending their position completely miss the fundamental difficulty.

9 pm

Ms. Primarolo: The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) makes a point about confidentiality of information and attachment of earnings. Is it not legitimate for us to say that we expect to see in the next Finance Bill clauses that will instruct accountants of those who attempt to evade payment of taxes to disclose that information to the Treasury? The Treasury can then put an attachment on the earnings. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that would be a comparable measure? If we were talking about tax evasion, we would see the Conservative Benches full.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Lady is right. I am appalled by the way in which benefit fraud, which accounts for much less than tax fraud, is more fiercely treated. The Conservative Government are not the first to act in that way—it has had a long history. I do not understand why they allow it to happen. It is not right.

The position is even worse than the hon. Lady suggests. It is not a simple question of whether one gives the money that one should. The Government will assume that all those who do not pay their poll tax have sufficient funds to do so. One would assume that that was right for the income tax system, by definition. But that will not happen by definition under the Government's poll tax system. All those asked to pay the poll tax may not be receiving through the benefit system the money that they need to pay it. That point was put appropriately in the debate on disabled people and the elderly on low incomes.

The uprating will be based on the national average poll tax. The amount added to benefits will reflect average poll tax liabilities. Unfortunately, the person who has to pay that tax may not be Mr. or Mrs. Average. In fact, he or she may be the poorest in society and may be unfortunate enough not to live in an average local authority area. Such people are likely to live in an especially poor local authority area. The average poll tax bill in poor local authority areas will tend to be rather higher than the average nationally. These people will be asked to pay cash that they have not received and asked to pay bills that they are unable to pay.

Examples of the losers may be found in Southwark and Bermondsey.

Mr. Harris: What about Cornwall?

Mr. Taylor: According to the poll tax figures for 1988-89 issued by the Department of the Environment, the poll tax in Southwark will be £515 per annum. Every person in Southwark on income support will have to find £53·80 per annum they do not have to pay the poll tax bill.

The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has rightly asked about Cornwall. This will not happen there. People in our area are fortunate. This is neither the fault of the people who live in the inner cities nor anything that people in Cornwall have deliberately set out to achieve, although people in Cornwall have good councillors. Unfortunately, because of the way in which the grant system works, sensible councils in other parts of the country will not necessarily have the same benefits. Many people will not be able to affect the running of their council. Perhaps all the people who are badly hit will change the way in which they vote, although it is difficult to understand why they should change their vote to vote for a party that introduced the problem. Their vote might not change the complexion of the council in any case. There is no guarantee that someone who has lost out as a result of the poll tax will be able to affect the running of the council.

The clause will force people to pay money that they do not have in circumstances in which they cannot change things. As was said earlier, it will literally take the food out of people's mouths. The prospect for such people is grim. They will have to pay more in the first instance than they have. If they are unable to pay the poll tax, an attachment order will be placed on them.

Ms. Primarolo: That is why the attachment order is unfair.

Mr. Taylor: As the hon. Lady said, the attachment order is unfair. It cannot be fair to ask people to pay the poll tax when they do not have the money to do so.

The Minister referred to electricity and gas bills, but the principle behind them is rather different because people can directly affect the amount of their gas and electricity bills. I would argue in fact that that system is not perfect. There should be a right to supply, and people should get the heat and warmth that they need as they pay. However, in the case of the poll tax, people have no such direct effect on what they pay. They cannot be careful with their poll tax, although the Government argue that they can through the vote. It will not work as simply as that. Individuals cannot make a decision on it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Was the hon. Gentleman in the Chamber a couple of hours ago when my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) said that the rates in a certain London borough had already fallen by £100 in anticipation of the poll tax and that they can be expected to fall still further in other districts that are ill-governed at present?

Mr. Taylor: I only wish that it was as simple as that. It does not work like that, and even if it did, I am sure that it would not be because poor old Joe Soap living in a certain district on income support thought, "I shall have to pay out a fortune if I do not change my vote." The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) knows that it does not work like that. If she thinks that she is too highly rated—I suspect that she does—and wants to change that, there is nothing that she can individually do about it. She can vote until she is blue in the face——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) agree that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E.

Kellett-Bowman) has no idea about the kind of people to whom he is referring? She has enjoyed a European salary as well as a salary from this House, her husband has also enjoyed a European salary and she has farming interests. How can she expect to understand poor people's problems?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Gentleman was so insulting in his reference to me, I remind him that I have not been in the European Parliament for five years, and neither has my husband. I am full-time in this Parliament and I gave up my career at the Bar to be full-time. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would withdraw.

Mr. Taylor: I am delighted to hear that unlike many of her colleagues the hon. Lady is a full-time Member of the House—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am keen to hear the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Taylor: I congratulate the hon. Member for Lancaster on being full-time; I only wish that more of her colleagues were. I must gently remind the hon. Lady, however, that the income that she receives from this place is rather different from income support. Unless I am much mistaken, she does not sacrifice much of the salary that she earns in the process of her duties to try to understand the difficulties of those whom she attempts to represent. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) is right that the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends do not understand. Perhaps I can explain to her with some mathematics. It is generally accepted that income support is the very least that is needed to sustain someone. If one tries to take more away from the poor than they have, they cannot survive. This penal measure should be dropped from the Bill, and I hope that Conservative Members will recognise that.

Mr. Harris: The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) normally speaks about the poorest of the county of Cornwall. On this occasion it is noticeable that he did not volunteer Cornwall as an area that would be clobbered by the community charge. Because rates in Cornwall have historically been kept at a reasonable level, people on income support there will benefit from the average nature of the DHSS contribution to their community charge. The hon. Gentleman will know, because it is his party that is basically calling the tune in Cornwall, that a rate increase of 14 per cent. has been suggested for Cornwall.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Harris: I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene, because the Minister must reply shortly.

Under the influence of the hon. Gentleman's party there is to be a 14 per cent. rate increase, and Cornwall is catching up fast in that regard.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Harris: No, I cannot let the hon. Gentleman interrupt me.

I link those remarks with the comments of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who talked a lot—as Opposition Members have done in this debate and before—about inability to pay. The question that is never posed is whether under the existing system councils consider the ability of people to pay their rates—rates that are subject to the 14 per cent. increase that is now being levied by Cornwall county council. Such a consideration never enters the argument.

I refer to the remarks of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), as it is because of them that I intervene. The hon. Gentleman advanced the proposition that it is no business of the DHSS to tell the poll tax officer that the Department had paid someone an average 20 per cent. contribution towards his community charge. To my simple mind, it seems to flow from that that the hon. Member for Perry Barr is claiming that it is no business of the DHSS to pass on such information, and that if people can evade the community charge they should be left free to do so.

Mr. Rooker *rose*——

Mr. Harris: I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene, for the reason that I have explained, and he would not give way to my intervention.

Mr. Rooker: I did.

Mr. Harris: Not to my second intervention. I must continue, because my hon. Friend the Minister has only three minutes in which to reply.

The DHSS has a duty and a moral obligation——

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman should not talk about morals.

Mr. Harris: If the DHSS has made a contribution to an individual's community charge, that information should be declared to the poll tax officer. That is only fair. We must remember always that it is not the Government who are paying, but people not on income support who are helping to finance those contributions. Many are themselves on very small incomes. In fairness to them, information about DHSS contributions should be made available to the poll tax officer in order to cut down on evasion once the community charge is introduced.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is absolutely right and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) is absolutely wrong. The hon. Member for Truro spoke about poor local authority areas, but it is poorly administered local authority areas that will result in large community charges. There will be needs assessments of all areas so that those that are poorer will receive more grant than others that are not so poor. However, that grant system will not make up for the extravagance or poor administration of individual local authorities. For example, on this year's figures, Southwark would receive £711 per adult support grant, compared with a national average of only £264.

Much of this debate was wasted by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) boxing with shadows. I give the House an absolute assurance that there is no question of census data being made available to community charge registration officers. Nothing in the Bill, and nothing in these amendments, would empower those officers to have access to census information. To suggest otherwise is nothing short of evil scaremongering. The hon. Gentleman said that all the information collected by the Secretary of State for Social Services would be passed to the community charge registration officer. As I have already explained, only names and addresses will be passed on. We shall make that clear in regulations made under this provision.

[Mr. Chope]

I referred earlier to farce, and I shall refer to more Opposition humbug. The hon. Member for Perry Barr expressed concern about census information. I assure him that no census data will be made available to CCROs. I point out that any system of local income tax, which I believe his party supports, would require a register to be drawn up showing the address of every taxpayer, and a lot more information besides.

It being a quarter past Nine o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 204, Noes 288.

Division No. 431] **[9.15 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen

Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question negatived.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their amendment No. 234:—

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 204.

Division No. 432] **[9.29 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony

Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*

Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 234 agreed to.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in their amendment No. 33:—

The House divided: Ayes 280, Noes 202.

Division No. 433] **[9.42 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony

Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 33 disagreed to.

Amendment (a) made in lieu of Lords amendment No. 33 disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 239 to 241, 29, 30A, 32, 36 to 41, 44, 45, 47, 49, 50, 53 to 62, 65, 66, 72, 76 to 78, 78A, 79, 80, 266 to 270, 87 and 271 to 276 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 235 to 238, 242 to 265, 27, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 42, 43, 46, 48, 51, 52, 63, 64, 67 to 71, 73 to 75, 81 to 86 and 277 agreed to.

Mr. McLoughlin: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will be aware of the great arguments earlier about whether we should have a guillotine. Having heard the Opposition argue so much against it, it seems strange that they have taken up so much time on Divisions. Could it be because today the Labour party announced changes in the rating system and is having great internal arguments which it does not want to bring into the Chamber?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a question for the Chair. The Standing Orders have not been breached in any way.

Clause 49

SPECIAL PROVISION FOR 1990-95

Lords amendment: No. 88, in page 27, line 35, leave out "before the beginning of the year"

Mr. Chope: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 89, in page 27, line 36, leave out subsections (2) and (3) and insert—

"(2) The regulations may contain such provisions as are mentioned in subsection (3) below as regards any case which falls within a prescribed description and where—

(a) as regards a hereditament or hereditaments the chargeable amount for a chargeable day falls to be determined under section 39, 41 or 46 above, and

(b) the day falls within the financial year concerned.

(3) The provisions are that—

(a) the chargeable amount shall be such as is found in accordance with prescribed rules, and

(b) sections 39(4) to (6) and 40 above, sections 41(4) to (4B) and 42 above, or section 46(4) to (7) above (as the case may be) shall not apply.

(3A) A chargeable amount found in accordance with rules prescribed under this section may be the same as or different from what it would be apart from the regulations.

(3AA) Rules prescribed under this section may be framed by reference to such factors as the Secretary of State thinks fit."

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 19, at end add

'having regard to the need to promote local employment'.

Lords amendments Nos. 90, 91, 195 and 196.

Mr. Chope: These amendments are all concerned with the transitional protection that we should give to those businesses which would otherwise face large rates increases in 1990, resulting from revaluation or the introduction of the national non-domestic rate. The amendments discharge commitments given when the Bill was before the House. Before explaining their purpose and effects, I should put them in context.

There have been many predictions about the effects on business of a revaluation and introduction of the NNDR, and it is time to consider the facts. The first is that, as the Government are committed to raising broadly the same from the NNDR as is raised from business rates now, there is no question of a rates increase for business as a whole. The second is that the greater impact on rates bills in most areas will be that of revaluation. Revaluation will be necessary irrespective of the introduction of the NNDR, and it will be necessary whichever party is in office. On 3 March the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) confirmed in Committee that his party accepted the need for revaluation.

The third fact is that after 15 years without a revaluation rateable values are undoubtedly out of line with commercial rents and with the relative economic strengths of different sectors of the economy and regions. Many businesses, often in the most hard-pressed areas, are paying too much, which is why revaluation is expected to confer major benefits worth hundreds of millions of pounds on manufacturing industry, especially in the north and the midlands.

The fourth fact, contrary to the forecasts of some organisations, is that there is little evidence that small businesses will face larger rates increases than large businesses. The big increases are likely to be confined to areas which have prospered most over the past 15 years and whose rates as a result are way below what they should be—the prime high street retail sites and, possibly, out-of-town superstores. These are activities where large businesses predominate. The secondary neighbourhood shopping centres and corner shops are likely to face appreciably smaller increases, since it is commonly accepted that they have done less well than prime shops in the past 15 years. Small manufacturers are likely to gain, but it may be more difficult for small businesses to absorb increases quickly, and I shall come to that point.

The introduction of the NNDR linked to the retail prices index will ensure that businesses throughout the country can plan investments in a climate of unprecedented rates stability.

Mr. McLoughlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that we are being criticised by Derbyshire county council for the alleged problems of the health authority? Southern Derbyshire health authority allocated a 4·5 per cent. increase for its rates this year, but was landed with a 13 per cent. increase, which cost the authority an extra £234,000. It was difficult for it to budget for that, and the money has to come out of that allocated for other services. The proposed link to inflation will help authorities, such as health authorities, plan their budgets sensibly.

10 pm

Mr. Chope: As usual, my hon. Friend makes his point very well. It is spot on, because the stability that will be introduced by these changes will be welcomed, not only by businesses, but by all ratepayers, including hospitals.

Small businesses stand to gain from this more than most, as they are less well equipped to cope with unpredictable increases and cannot trade off high rates in one area for low rates elsewhere. We are thus moving to a simpler, fairer and more stable rating system for all businesses, as many of the business organisations have come to recognise. We are determined though that it should be done without any businesses having to face the sort of rate shock so frequently forced on them in recent years by local authorities run by the Labour party. We are determined that, for the limited number of businesses that will face large rate increases, these will be introduced gradually in stages to give them time to adjust.

We are especially sensitive to the difficulties of small businesses. We have made it clear at all stages that there will be generous transitional arrangements, taking the form of a ceiling on the percentage by which rate bills may rise from one year to the next. We have had some representations from the business organisations about what that ceiling might be, but we shall not reach a final decision until after we have better forecasts of the likely effects of revaluation, which will be available in the autumn.

The Opposition amendment to Lords amendment No. 89 would require the Secretary of State, in setting the rules for finding the chargeable amount due under the transitional arrangements, to do so

"having regard to the need to promote local employment".

If only the Opposition would practise what they preach. Our whole policy has

"regard to the need to promote local employment".

That is why the Government have succeeded in reducing unemployment by more than 500,000 since the last general election.

As I have just explained, we are eliminating two major factors which discourage local employment where it is most desperately needed—in the north of England and in the inner cities. We are ending once and for all the situation in which inefficient Labour authorities can bleed local industry dry to pay for their profligacy. We are creating the stability necessary for investment, and through revaluation we are ending the situation in which monstrously out-of-date valuations result in businesses in these areas paying far more in rates than they should. Our whole policy encourages employment in those areas where it is most needed—those areas where the policies of the Labour party have often had the freest rein.

We had made a start through rate capping. For example, in Waltham Forest we have reduced rates this year by 28 per cent., and in Ealing by 22 per cent. We do not want to delay the benefits due to those who have been paying too much any longer than is necessary, but the transitional arrangements will have to be self-financing. There is no reason to make other taxpayers or community charge payers pay for protection for businesses.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman please have the honesty to explain the consequences of self-financing? Self-financing means that manufacturing industry in the north and the midlands will pay relatively more to finance the transitional arrangements of much more prosperous business, commerce and industry elsewhere. Will the Government be honest and concede that the self-financing mechanism is one that claws back many of the advantages about which the Minister has just been talking?

Mr. Chope: It is true that the full benefits of the large reductions will not come through straight away for some businesses, but they will come through in due course.

Mr. Allen McKay: How long?

Mr. Chope: We estimate that within about two years most businesses will receive the full benefits of the reductions, but for some businesses it will take a little longer.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I should not have intervened but for the fact that I am deeply worried because the amendment gives my hon. Friend—in whom I have a great deal of faith—the opportunity to introduce regulations. I know that basically the amendment relates to regulations with regard to non-domestic premises, but we have heard today that the Labour party proposes to replace the community charge with two taxes. Would that enable the Opposition to replace what my hon. Friend honourably and decently is trying to do to make things more helpful with two, three, four or even five taxes? If that is the case, we have every right to be worried and concerned, because it is rather open-ended.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend is right to express concern about these matters. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) may tell the House that his party proposes to have two new taxes to replace domestic rates or the community charge, but Opposition Members have not yet made it clear what will happen with non-domestic rates, which is what we are discussing.

I expect the substantial majority of the rates increases and reductions to go through completely within two or three years. Moreover, all businesses due to benefit will have their rates reduced at the outset, and they will be able to plan their business in the knowledge of the full reduction that they will eventually receive.

As the Bill left this House, it contained provisions for setting such a ceiling for the years 1990-95 and for the costs to be met by a premium on the NNDR poundage, which would have been phased over the same period. As a result of the views expressed in the House and by business representative organisations, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on Report on 21 April that we would make some modifications to the arrangements. These amendments give effect to those commitments.

The debate was originally timed to go on for much longer, but, because of the antics of the Opposition, much of that time has been wasted on pointless Divisions. Notwithstanding that, I shall make my remarks shorter than I otherwise would have done.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister has a damned cheek. Earlier this afternoon, with other Conservative Members, he voted to stop us debating the Lords amendments and thereby deprived us of the chance of voting against any or all of those to which we object. He then complained when we, Her Majesty's Opposition, decided—it was not the Government deciding for us—what we will vote against,

without orders from the Government. He had a damned cheek to make that remark. We choose what happens when he has cut our time.

Mr. Chope: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: No, I shall not give way. The Minister took too long anyway. The debate finishes at 10.15. The Minister has a damned cheek, and I am entitled to make a complaint about his remark, just to set it on the record.

On 9 June, in another place, the Earl of Caithness said:

"This is not to deny that there will be some businesses in particular locations that will face large increases."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 9 June 1988; Vol. 497, c. 1539.]

I wait in due course—it will not be this year, but some time before the howls of protest from Conservative Members—for the time when the effects of revaluation and the operation of the national business rate—I do not know why we changed it, but it is still our unified business rate—come together. That will cause horrendous problems in many parts of the country.

It is not only industry that will gain. Obviously, old factories, which, tragically, not many people want to rent, will tend to fall relatively in rateable value. But not all old factories are in the north. There are many manufacturing areas in the south. Rates will go through the roof. In Committee, reference was made to an enterprise in Canterbury—not a factory, a nursery. The effect of the national business rate and revaluation will put up rate payments by 722 per cent. It is the case that I always remember, because we did not have a higher example. The increase will be 722 per cent. because of the operation of revaluation, along with the unified business rate.

It is true that many aspects of business have been led to believe that, on paper, they will gain. That is right. In the midlands and in the north, on paper, many businesses, particularly traditional businesses, will gain, and new businesses—high-tech offices, high street shops and so on—will pay more.

The gainers will have their gains capped to buttress the losses for those who are to lose. Business men in the north of the country were told, "There is a stack of money coming off the rates. People down south are going to pay a lot more". That is not true. The business men in the midlands and the north will pay such a surcharge so that, for example, people in that nursery in Canterbury do not have to pay that 722 per cent. all in one go. *[Interruption.]* The fact that they will not get all the gains that Ministers said they would get has not been fully explained to business men in the midlands and the north. I do not say this as a criticism; I must take this brief opportunity, which is all I am permitted, so that in 1989 and 1990, when the scheme is introduced, no Conservative Member will be able to say that the Opposition did not warn them.

When the howls of protest come from small and large businesses all over Britain, it will be the Opposition—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Even in the south, some businesses will be hit. The Opposition have warned about this—to their credit, so did one or two Conservative Members—in Committee and on Report. We have said that the system will not quite work as the propaganda says. We do not have the details. The Minister still cannot tell us the length of the transitional periods when the gainers have their money capped. He said that it would be two years for some but a lot longer for other businesses.

Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), applauded the fact that the poll tax will be tied to the rate of inflation. That is fine, as long as Conservative Members can say to their constituents in due course that the personal poll tax went through the roof exponentially in two or three years, even under Tory authorities, because the business rate was capped artificially in line with inflation. We all know that by no stretch of imagination can local authority expenditure normally be compartmentalised in the retail price index. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why."] For the same reason that NHS expenditure cannot be compartmentalised in the RPI.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Lady voted to limit our remarks and to stop us from debating, so I do not intend to give way to her.

Local authority expenditure cannot be compartmentalised, for an obvious reason—its nature. It is labour intensive. Even some local government capital increases by much more than the RPI. The same applies to the health authorities, as the hon. Lady knows. If the business rate and Government grant are capped in line with inflation, for every 1 per cent. that local authority expenditure is above the Government's imposed norms—what Whitehall thinks is best for the hon. Lady's local authority—the poll tax of her constituents will increase by 4p. That is 4p for 1p. The hon. Lady will have a job explaining to her constituents that it is not a matter of one for one. She will have to explain why the business rate is capped. Businesses will not be paying a rate that is at all relative to what they receive from local authorities.

It is important that local authorities talk to businesses. I want that to happen. We support the revaluation. It should have occurred in the domestic sector, let alone in the industrial sector. But revaluation at the same time as the national business rate causes the problem. In due course, the Government may decide to go ahead with one and not the other. They cannot say that they will not because they do not yet have the figures and will not have the sample survey until later in the year.

The Minister told businesses that some will lose and some will gain, but overall the Government would be merely collecting the same amount, so it would be OK. Exactly the same argument applies to the poll tax. It only collects the same amount as domestic rates, although there are massive differences in how people will lose and gain. It will be the same in the business sector. It is no good the Minister saying, "We are only collecting the same amount of money," when small business men and others are queueing up in his office saying, "You did not explain, Minister, that you were putting us out of business by what you did. You did not tell the House of Commons how much extra we would have to pay, but you pushed the legislation through without proper debate. You said that you would give us some transitional protection, but we now find that that does not work for our businesses in our part of the country." That is bound to happen, as the Minister knows.

In the interests of good order and good debate, I draw my remarks to a close so that all hon. Members who voted for the guillotine can actually participate.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Thirty seconds of the debate remain. That shows the ludicrousness of the guillotine procedure.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

The Government have come to the House with no figures and have resisted the demand made by small businesses for a lower rate. The Minister knows that he and his Government will still be in power when small business men say, "You did not tell us the truth." The figures do not add up. They have never been given, and the Government have not——

It being a quarter past Ten o'clock MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 88 agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Question put forthwith, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in their amendment No. 300:—

The House Divided: Ayes 293, Noes 206.

Division No. 434] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*

Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 300 disagreed to.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in their amendment No. 302:—

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 205.

Division No. 435] **[10.29 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek

Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George

Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 302 accordingly disagreed to.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in their amendment No. 303:—

The House divided: Ayes 287, Noes 205.

Division No. 436] **[10.43 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David

Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wiltshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat

Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question agreed to.
Lords amendment No. 303 accordingly disagreed to.

Lords amendment No. 304 disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 89 to 91, 278, 281, 283, 284, 92 to 114, 292, 293, 115 to 117, 294, 118, 119, 139, 142, 182, 183, 296 to 299, 301, 305 to 311, 313 to 316, 319 to 321, 324 and 327 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 279, 280, 282, 285 to 291, 120 to 138, 140, 141, 143 to 170, 172 to 181, 184, 185, 295, 312, 317, 318, 322, 323, 325, 326 and 328 to 334 agreed to.

Schedule 15

AMENDMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 335, in page 139, line 25, leave out from beginning to end of line 44.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 206, 339, 405 and 408.

Mr. Lang: Lords amendments Nos. 335, 339, 408 and 206 are drafting amendments to the structure of schedule 15, which presently consists of two parts. Part I contains amendments relating to England and Wales and part II refers to amendments relating to Scotland. However, several of the Acts amended in part I apply to Great Britain, and therefore it is preferable that a third part of the schedule should contain the amendments to those Acts. That is achieved by Lords amendment No. 408. No policy change is involved.

Lords amendment No. 405 is a technical one intended to clarify the wording of the power under the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 to enable the Secretary of State to provide a grant "safety net" for local authorities so that the changes to the grant system that have been brought forward can be phased in rather than for the full effect to be felt within a single year. Again, no change of policy is involved.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I do not wish to detain the House long because there are a number of other matters that we wish to consider.

If the amendments are purely technical, why are they being introduced at this stage? Why were they not spotted earlier? I understand that amendments Nos. 335 and 339 are taking sections of the Commonwealth Secretariat Act 1966 and the International Organisations Act 1968, as well as others, out of the Bill. Those sections are being replaced by amendments Nos. 405 and 408. Will my hon. Friend confirm that that is so?

I understand that the International Organisations Act 1968 relates to diplomatic exemption. That is a controversial matter in terms of taxation and criminal charges. Widespread concern has been expressed about those issues. How many organisations are covered by the International Organisations Act, which is the subject of the amendments?

Mr. Lang: With regard to amendments Nos. 335, 339, 408 and 206, I have already made it clear that part I of the schedule contains amendments relating to England and Wales and part II contains amendments relating to Scotland. Some of the Acts that are amended by part I apply to Great Britain and, as a result of the progress of the Bill through the House, it has been considered appropriate to redesign the schedule to clarify what applies to Great Britain and what applies to Scotland. If my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) can contain himself, we shall cover diplomatic exemptions in a later amendment.

Amendment No. 405 relates to the clarification of the safety net provision. Paragraph 2(4) was included in the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 to allow the Secretary of State to provide a grant safety net. We were concerned that the changes in grant distribution among local authorities as a result of that Act—although not large in comparison with the total sums involved—might cause short-term problems for some authorities and obstruct a smooth transition to the new system of local government finance.

The intention is to allow the Secretary of State to phase the shifts in grant entitlement rather than to have a sudden change. The original paragraph 2(4) was confusing in that context. For the sake of clarification, we are proposing amendment No. 405. I hope that my hon. Friend will find that it makes the position much clearer.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 335 and 340 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 336 to 339 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 341, in page 141, line 8, leave out from "prescribe" to end of line 9 and insert—

"(a) the manner in which and the principles, rules and considerations by reference to which the net annual value of lands and heritages is to be arrived at under subsection (8) above;

(b) that the principles, rules and considerations referred to in paragraph (a) above or any of them shall be such as are determined in accordance with the regulations."

Mr. Lang: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 342 to 344, 346 to 349, 351 to 354, 409 and 410.

11 pm

Mr. Lang: The amendments deal with several aspects of rating and valuation. Amendment No. 341 provides power to prescribe principles of valuation, and it may be helpful to explain the purpose of the provision and outline the area in which the regulation-making power may be used.

The amendment provides a means whereby the Secretary of State may, if necessary, introduce measures further to harmonise valuation practice north and south of the border. We do not envisage that wide use will be made of the power, but there is one area of difference which requires to be brought into line before the 1990 revaluation and the power provided by amendment No. 341 may be used to achieve this. It is the decapitalisation rate used in the contractor's principle valuations in Scotland and the contractor's test valuations in England and Wales.

Amendments Nos. 342 and 343 deal with provisions for de-rating. Amendment No. 342 deals with the exemption from rating of certain church buildings. The broad intention underlying the amendment is to provide de-rating on certain buildings used for church administration, and there will be consultation before the relevant order-making powers are used. Amendment No. 343 deals with exemption of certain salmon fishings from ratings—*[Interruption.]*—on the same basis as the

equivalent provisions for England and Wales. It prevents the element of double taxation which could arise in circumstances where fisheries board assessments are payable as well as local authority rates.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): If no district fisheries board rate is assessed, will normal rates be paid by the salmon proprietor?

Mr. Lang: That will be the case. Our expectation is that the number of district fisheries boards will probably increase considerably, although special features apply to the Tweed and the Esk which may be of particular interest to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): As the only representative of the impoverished aristocracy, may I say that we recognise that the Government are making an important concesssion to a needy group? Can the Minister give us some idea of the value of this concession and how many people will take advantage of it? Will they include people such as the Duke of Roxburghe? Can it be that this concession is being made on the same night as the Government resisted an amendment to benefit disabled people?

Mr. Lang: I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman the number of people involved, but I shall write to him if he wishes to pursue that matter. We estimate that the loss of income to local authorities may be in the region of £1 million to £1·5 million.

Amendment No. 344 increases the level of mandatory rate relief for charities to 80 per cent., in line with the increase proposed for England and Wales.

Amendments Nos. 348 and 349 are part of the same measure, and I shall explain them together. Amendment No. 348 requires a ratepayer to pay his rates bill in full, pending the outcome of his appeal, which is in line with the existing provisions in England and Wales. If the appeal is successful, amendment No. 349 requires the rating authority not only to repay the amount overpaid, but, where that amount is in excess of a prescribed limit, interest on that amount at a rate prescribed by the Secretary of State. The remaining amendments are technical.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): It is late and many people are tired, but this is not a routine measure. The Minister has plodded through his notes haplessly with his characteristic elan and spirit, but for all that we should pause and consider what we are about.

I believe—and I speak for many of my hon. Friends—that this is not a routine or ritual occasion, but a serious one. Often in this Chamber there is anger and sometimes it is ritualised. It is often contained and formalised within the rules of the House. Tonight there is a very real edge to anger and discontent, because we are seeing in this thicket of amendments an abuse of process and contempt for the House that is made no more palatable by the fact that English colleagues have been treated equally badly.

We have in this group of amendments and in the others that we will be considering in the very short time available perhaps 70 or more amendments. Some may be technical, but others will raise matters of substance and of acute public interest. There is absolutely no way in which the House can look at them sensibly, in depth or in the sort of detail that the people of Scotland would expect of us when we consider a matter of this importance. The group that we are discussing deals with a whole range of matters—for example, the principles of valuation, harmonisation, the rating of charitable premises and, as the Minister has said, the concession to the owners of salmon fisheries.

The debate on salmon fisheries alone would take many hours in Committee, perhaps many sittings, yet we have been placed in the position where at the most we have a little more than an hour to consider this group. However, if we were to take that time, it would be at the cost of not debating a whole range of important amendments dealing with, for example, exemptions, joint and several liability, the severely mentally impaired and other matters which I know many hon. Members feel strongly about. It is a disgrace. That word is often used very lightly in political debates, but I use it with its full weight—it is a disgrace in every sense that we have been placed in this position. I am entitled—no, more than entitled, I have a duty—to protest about what is happening.

These amendments have not been debated before in the House. They were not debated in the Committee that considered the Bill, although a number of my colleagues were members of that Committee specifically so that they could deal with any amendments to the Scottish legislation. The amendments were introduced through the back door. They have been squeezed in almost by stealth and they make a mockery of any attempt at proper parliamentary scrutiny. Conducting our business in this manner makes a farce of our proceedings.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): And of the glorious revolution.

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend mentions the revolution of 1688. Ministers were in serried ranks upon the golden carpets this morning hearing about our essential liberties, while in the House of Commons we are proceeding in a way that makes a mockery of those very same liberties.

There has been a good deal of debate about the concession on salmon fisheries, and I will take that as an example—not because it is the most important, but because it is reasonably accessible even within this group of amendments. The Minister has said that about £1·5 million a year is being handed out to a very special and limited group of Scotsmen, Englishmen and foreign nationals of every description—a ragbag of humanity, whose only similarity is that they could not possibly be considered as needy.

The explanation for this concession comes in the note on amendments, which says that the amendments were introduced

"In fulfilment of undertakings given to Lord Moran and to Lord Kimball"

in another place—and I remember Mr. Marcus Kimball as he then was. We do not know the circumstances in which those undertakings were given, but I know that Ministers could not have any idea of the opinion of the elected representatives of Scotland or other hon. Members, because amendments were not debated in the House, and cannot be properly debated tonight.

We are told

"that the amendments are being introduced to provide that salmon fishings which are subject to a fishery rate shall no longer be subject to a local authority rate".

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that Conservative Members do not take this seriously, but is it in order for one hon.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

Member to be resting her eyes, and for another to be reading a novel with his feet up during the debate on this important group of amendments?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I always assume that when hon. Members are reading they are preparing themselves for the debate.

Mr. Dewar: Your legendary reputation as an optimist will be reinforced by that assumption, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We are told:

"salmon fishings which are subject to a fishery rate shall no longer be subject to a local authority rate, thus avoiding an element of what is arguably double taxation. In Scotland fishery rates are payable to district fishery boards constituted by the proprietors of fishing rights on particular rivers."

Using a voluntary organisation constituted by the proprietors as a reason for exempting hereditaments from local rates is an extremely suspect principle. We shall not have time to probe and discuss this proposal, just as we shall not have time to probe and discuss many more important proposals, to which we might have been able to come, given decent time to work our way through the massive list of Lords amendments.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that he and his colleagues would have had 30 minutes more in which to debate these matters if the Labour party had not insisted on two wholly unnecessary Divisions on the last group of amendments?

Mr. Dewar: That is insulting, and the smirk on the hon. Gentleman's face makes the point. He is suggesting that we could have had 30 minutes more to debate this massive group of amendments if we had not voted against some offensive, unpleasant and unwanted amendments. If that is his idea of how to expedite business in a democracy, I can only say that he is in the right party.

I recognise that many of my hon. Friends, and hon. Members in other parties, will want to speak to these amendments. I am glad to see that the Secretary of State is here, so that I can tell him that these proceedings reflect no credit on this Parliament and make it no easier to work the business of the House. They are bad for Parliament and for the democratic process. The House depends on a delicate balance. Its rules are often illogical and sometimes indefensible, but they are workable only when there is trust and Governments recognise the rights of the Opposition and of the electorate in Scotland. If the tacit agreement is to operate, it must not be put under the strain that this charade and farce are putting on our business.

We are concerned not only about this exercise tonight. I cannot go into the details, but I remind the House that this is just another chapter in a sorry story. We have no Select Committee—it was killed off because hon. Members like the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) have neither the commitment nor the sense of duty to serve upon it. They have shown a disgraceful abdication of responsibility.

Even during the negotiations on the Scottish Grand Committee debates, the Government showed no enthusiasm or willingness to go to Edinburgh to debate matters of central importance to Scotland. There was a perverse refusal at the end of the day. Now the Government are bulldozing through this tangled mass of amendments without giving the House the opportunity to debate them. That is a recipe for confusion, and it will bring down on the Government not only our anger but the anger of anybody who has at heart the interest of good government and the tidy creation of the body of the law in Scotland.

This may be a small point, but it is worth making. I hope that the Minister will at least be able to give an assurance that a new copy of the Scottish Act will be published soon, one that incorporates this extraordinary confusion of changes that we shall rubber-stamp in the next hour or so. It would be ridiculous if those who wanted to check on the law of Scotland could not do so in one Act, and had to chase their way through the labyrinth of English legislation.

The whole exercise is cynical and indefensible. Ministers often lecture us about the law, our duty and the constitution of the kingdom. But they, too, must recognise that they have responsibilities, and in flouting them, as they have tonight, they become the enemies of the very principles that they so often preach. I believe in making systems work. There is no secret in that. I talk unashamedly and as an individual. Opposition Members have had a lively debate about the best way forward. I advise Ministers that bully-boy tactics affect the balance of that argument for me and for many of my colleagues. If Ministers continue in that way, they do so at their peril.

11.15 pm

The amendments do nothing to alter or soften the bleak outline of the poll tax in Scotland. There is no attempt to tackle the basic objections to a regressive tax, with all its built-in administrative problems. Perhaps there is a tacit admission that it would be impossible to tackle the problems. The surgery would be so radical that it would be better to scrap the whole ludicrous exercise. We should like to do that. We know that we cannot do it tonight, but we certainly intend to continue the fight against a form of taxation that is unwanted and unworkable. We shall continue to argue the case for sanity and social justice. We shall do so responsibly and persistently, because that is what we were elected to do. I again warn the Government that if they continue to treat Opposition Members, the House and Scotland in that way, they will inevitably bring about friction and problems that they will regret.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I do not know what the past 20 minutes have added to the debate. They seemed to consist of a tirade. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) talked about bully-boy tactics. If he had not used such tactics last November, we might well have a Select Committee. *[Interruption.]* That is what I said. If the hon. Member for Garscadden had not started dictating to Conservative Members about who should be a member of the Committee, we would probably have a Committee. The fact that we do not have one is entirely the fault of the Labour party.

I shall talk for a short while about salmon. I am quite open about the subject. I have no salmon fishing interest to declare, except the rights of my constituents and all others in Scotland who are interested in tourism and developing fishing for the many people who enjoy the most important recreation in the country.

Mr. Maxton Many Opposition Members find it sickening that the hon. Gentleman, who went through the

Division Lobby to ensure that blind and disabled people pay the poll tax is now supporting fishermen who can well afford to pay every tax that they must pay.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his view. There are many less well-off people in my constituency, and there are many such people in Scotland, who enjoy fishing at a cost of so much a day. The fact that it will be less expensive in future should be welcomed by all hon. Members, particularly those hon. Members who are interested in one of the largest recreational sports in the country.

Mr. John Home Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. His constituency contains the largest stretch of the most important river in Scotland. He should know quite a lot about the subject that I am about to discuss.

Mr. Home Robertson: For that reason, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: No.

I wish to refer to a subject about which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) recently blatantly misinformed the Scottish Grand Committee. He tried to bring in the issue of rating relative to district boards and local authorities. His remarks were totally out of context and were made from great ignorance. It is important to get to the heart of harmonisation of sporting rates throughout the United Kingdom. I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, all sporting rates will be harmonised, including those for shooting, which are more expensive in Scotland than in England. *[Interruption.]* I shall not hurry if the Opposition natter away the whole evening.

It is important to be clear about what the Government are doing. They are removing one of two forms of rates imposed on all river fishing in Scotland where a district board is in place. Those hon. Members who have taken the trouble to read the debate on the Salmon Bill in the last Parliament will know that hon. Members, especially the Opposition, argued about the importance of high-quality fishing in Scotland to develop the tourist industry and thereby Scotland's economy.

One of the main thrusts of the Bill was to encourage the formation of district boards to improve the fishing, and thereby to encourage more angling, to the benefit of those interested in that recreation. If riparian owners pay high rates to local authorities, it seems unreasonable that they should also pay substantial sums to the district boards to improve the rivers. I am glad that the Government agree that it is important to separate the two issues and that the rates paid to the local authority will be paid only if a district board is not in place. We should do all we can to encourage district boards to promote the sport of fishing, which is so popular throughout Britain and so important to Scotland's economy.

The Opposition think that only wealthy people with titles own fishing areas. My local authority, which has a Liberal majority, owns stretches of river and netting. That authority has always been keen to promote fishing. The income goes to the common good and is dispensed to all local ratepayers. It is wrong to say that all fishing is owned by the wealthy.

Many stretches of Scottish rivers are owned by local fishing associations, which for a few pounds a day or a season let out water for salmon, sea trout or brown trout fishing. That should be encouraged, and the Government's actions are very satisfactory.

I want to come to one point of detail.

Mr. Foulkes: Sit down.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall not hurry just because the hon. Gentleman moans. If he would stick to looking after his constituency instead of everyone else's, we might make some progress.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the River Tweed, which has always been given special consideration through the Tweed commissioners. As my hon. Friend knows, the River Esk in my constituency is managed by the North West water authority. I want to know whether special arrangements are being made because of the changes in valuation. Will my hon. Friend ensure that, in next year's water legislation, the National Rivers Authority will take account of the River Esk?

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister supports Lords amendment No. 433, because it will be of great value to angling in Scotland. Many thousands of people will benefit from the fact that fishing will be cheaper and of a far higher quality in the years to come.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): One might have thought that everything that could have been said about the poll tax legislation had already been said, yet here we are discussing yet another bunch of amendments that has been foisted upon us. We cannot possibly discuss all the amendments, but we realise that the Bill remains fundamentally offensive. It is deeply resented in Scotland and it is alien to our sense of fairness.

It was accepted that the rates system needed to be reformed, but even fair-minded Conservatives feel a deep sense of unease and shame about the Bill. Even those who will benefit and who rightly urged the Government to reform the rates never at any time believed that one unfair tax would be replaced by another that was even more regressive and unfair.

I shall deal with Lords amendment No. 343. It is ironic that certain salmon fishings are being exempted from the rates only weeks after the Government went for the salmon net fishermen by increasing the weekly close time. We did not want the poll tax, and we certainly do not want the amendments. How will the changes affect the process in Scotland? If the Government are intent on sticking to their timetable, and to the implementation date of April 1989, the changes are coming far too late. I would suggest that the Government give up that timetable. It is all very well their introducing legislation for England and Wales, but the Scottish authorities have only nine months' preparation time left. Surely the sensible thing to do now would be at least to delay the implementation of the poll tax.

To be introducing the amendments at this late stage and allowing less than two hours debate is disgraceful. Worse still, we are debating them late at night, and at the tail end of the debate—as usual with matters concerning Scotland. That shows once again the Government's disregard for the democratic rights of the Scottish nation and its people.

The Government have behaved like a demented octopus with its tentacles flailing uncontrolled in all directions and hitting out at all in sight. They have gone

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

for the old, the young and the less well-off. They have gone for local government, for the crofters and the Churches. They have ignored the wishes of the people of Scotland and treated them with contempt.

The Government have demeaned not only themselves but the House. The Scottish people will never again believe that justice can emanate from here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Allan Stewart. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am sorry that hon. Members are creating such a din; I have spoken once, on the previous group of amendments, for one minute, and I do not propose to speak for more than two or three minutes on these amendments.

First, I shall respond to the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). In my constituency there is massive support for the community charge legislation and I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not be tempted by the hon. Lady's invitation to delay its implementation. The legislation is on schedule, and Opposition Members' campaigns of non-registration and delay have failed completely. That is why they are making such a din. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute said that there was a lack of control by the Government. I should have thought that the events of this evening showed, from an early stage, that the Opposition were totally out of control of their tactics on the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) spoke with his customary authority and expertise about the amendment relating to salmon fishings, which perhaps is the most important in this group. I wish to ask the Minister one or two questions concerning other amendments in the same group.

11.30 pm

First, will my hon. Friend say a few words about amendment No. 351, which deals with the change in the method of calculating the base month for the retail price index formula? I am not sure that I quite understand it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am sure that Opposition Members do not understand it. In any event, I do not wholly understand what amendment No. 351 will mean in practice.

Secondly, I should like my hon. Friend to comment on amendments Nos. 342 and 344. My understanding is that amendment No. 342 continues the total exemption from rates of religious bodies, such as Churches. I do not want to widen the debate, but I am not sure whether one ought in principle wholly to exclude religious bodies from the rating system. However, my understanding is that that is what amendment No. 342 achieves.

Amendment No. 344 increases the remission of rates payable from charities and similar organisations from one half to 80 per cent. of the rates bill that would otherwise be payable. If that is so, it will benefit considerably a very large number of charities and similar organisations. Can my hon. Friend quantify the financial consequences for charities in Scotland—my understanding is that amendment No. 344 is limited to Scotland—of that concession, which will be widely welcomed? It will be helpful if my hon. Friend can quantify the positive effects of that considerable concession to charities and other bodies.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I suppose that we should all be grateful to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) for proving categorically that an association with fish does not lead to brains.

I make no apology for dwelling on one aspect of these amendments. My position on the poll tax is reasonably well known. I believe that it is insidious and vicious, and there is no category of people against whom it is more insidious and vicious than the people of rural Scotland. Therefore, it becomes doubly insulting and offensive that at the very last moment in the House of Lords, without there being any debate in this House, any public notice, any intimation from the scribblers of the Scottish Information Office, or any attempt to stimulate public discussion on this matter, a clause has been slipped into the legislation giving a £1·5 million handout to the owners of Scottish rod salmon fishings. It has nothing to do with the poll tax. By the backdoor of the English and Welsh poll tax legislation, a small number of salmon rod proprietors in Scotland will be given this handout.

Lord Moran and Lord Kimball have been lobbying in the House of Lords for another concession. The Minister might tell us whether that concession will be slipped in as well. They are demanding yet another pot of gold for their vested interest—the abolition of shooting rates in Scotland. The Minister might care to tell us now whether that will be slipped in so that we do not have to read about it in a few days' time in the House of Lords *Hansard*.

The note on the amendment—this is the untruth that has to be nailed—says that the reason for giving the fishing proprietors of Scotland £1·5 million is that they are

"arguably subject to double taxation."

That is nonsense. They pay a levy to district salmon fisheries boards. Those boards have a curious quasi-public status. However, the dominant force since the Salmon Act 1986 has to be the salmon proprietors themselves. To all intents and purposes, it is their private association. Because of a law—we cannot go into that tonight, but it should be swept away in any democratic society—the salmon fisheries boards are entitled to hire their own private police forces. The levies to the boards pay for those police forces. They are not used to construct roads or provide local authority services. They have nothing to do with local authority rates. There is no double taxation. One might as well say that, because hoteliers pay levies to their local hotel associations, they should be exempt from non-domestic rates. That is the exact parallel.

In the buffoonery of the hon. Member for Dumfries we are told that it is all about tourism. It has nothing to do with tourism. There is a salmon enterprise, about which I know a little, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). It is the syndicate of Grimersta estate and it has 20 members, including several of the jokers who turned up to vote against an ability-to-pay principle being introduced into the poll tax. Perhaps they are not such jokers; perhaps they are the bright lads. The Scottish peers who turned up to vote for that legislation receive a minimum £2,000 a head direct gain under the poll tax and, in addition, they are to get this little bonus thrown in.

That syndicate is not interested in tourism. Not one extra tourist comes to Scotland because of it. Yet if this provision had been in existence in the present financial year the members of the syndicate would have made a saving of £5,500. That would have been a reduction in income to the Western Isles council. I spoke to the assessor

in the Highland region today. He said that rateable values of £230,000 will be wiped out by the amendment. That is roughly £160,000 in the Highland region that will not be paid in rates on salmon fishing but will be paid in rates from somewhere else. The same is true in Strathclyde, because there is plenty of salmon fishing in Argyll.

Who will compensate for the fact that those people will be given £1·5 million? It will be the poor, the disabled and all the categories of people who are being penalised under the poll tax. The Government have the effrontery to introduce an amendment that gives a £1·5 million handout to the salmon rod proprietors of Scotland. It is a disgrace with which people will be able to identify.

The people of urban Scotland, as well as the people of rural Scotland, know that the owners of those salmon fishings do not attract tourists to Scotland, but are the biggest deterrent to tourism in Scotland. They close off vast acreages of Scotland as their own private playgrounds, and for that service to the nation they will be given this additional handout. The people of urban Scotland know that the curse of rural Scotland is landlordism, yet at the same time——

Mr. Harris *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Wilson: At the same time as crofters are losing their 50 per cent. de-rating under the legislation and at the same time as the people living in the remotest corners of my constituency and in that of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) are losing the rating advantage which reflected the remoteness of their homes and the services with which they are provided, the salmon rod proprietors of Scotland are being given another £1·5 million. That transfer of wealth is as comprehensible to those inner cities of Scotland as it is in the rural areas.

As I said in the Scottish Grand Committee—I advise the hon. Member for Dumfries that every word that I said in the Scottish Grand Committee has been proven true —in the great swathe of the highlands and islands, the Tories have been eradicated along with wolves and TB. Part of the reason is this kind of special pleading and offerings to the landowners of Scotland. That is part of the reason why there is no way back for them.

I finish on this note. When it suits them— *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) wishes to intervene, I shall be delighted to give way to him.

Mr. Harris: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) for giving way. He knows that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) cannot intervene, so I shall ask the question that he and every Conservative Member is dying to ask. In his strictures on landlords and those who own the fishing rights and who will get, according to the hon. Gentleman, this great handout, does the hon. Gentleman include his hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson)? If so, has the hon. Member for East Lothian told him whether he will give the money back?

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you can assist me. We have heard the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) say from a sedentary position that he cannot intervene in the debate. Can you keep him in order and restrain him from intervening in the debate, especially from a sedentary position?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get on with the debate. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Member for Crawley does not bother me at all. When I hear him, I recall the old maxim, "All you expect from a pig is a grunt."

I shall conclude my remarks because I have no wish to turn the debate into a comedy show about Tory Members. The amendment is an affront to the people of urban and rural Scotland. In a real sense, it sums up what the poll tax is about. It is about taking away from those who have least and giving to the most privileged groups in society. It is perhaps not inappropriate that we finish these debates on such a symbolic note.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I always listen to the speeches made by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) with a great deal of sympathy—not with understanding and certainly not with agreement—because I understand that when a 16-year-old goes to New St. Andrew's house in Edinburgh for a job, the first test that that youngster is set is, "See if you can write a speech for Allan Stewart." The irony is that if the hon. Gentleman can read the speech, the youngster is regarded as being below the level of intelligence required for the Civil Service, and he does not get a job. Having listened to the hon. Gentleman, yet again it is clear that some other youngster's career has bitten the dust.

11.45 pm

I only wish that the Strangers Gallery had been packed with my constituents to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). I wish that old-age pensioners, the disabled and the blind, and others who will be clobbered by the poll tax, had been present to hear the hon. Gentleman pleading the case for those who have the privilege of owning the salmon rod fisheries. He laid open the real concept of the proposed legislation. When the Bill was introduced, we were told that those who use services will contribute to the cost of providing them. That does not apply to those who own the salmon rod fisheries. They will enjoy refunds. They will get back the money.

The hon. Member for Dumfries has pleaded for those who own shoots as well. That contrasts starkly with a decision that was taken earlier this evening, which the hon. Gentleman supported. It was supported also by the hon. Member for Eastwood. There will be no option for those on income support who are unable to pay poll tax, or who refuse to do so. They will not be asked for their agreement to have poll tax deducted from their benefit. For those on the lowest level of income, poll tax will be deducted from their benefit. They will not even be asked whether that money can be taken from them.

The hon. Member for Eastwood shakes his head. He should understand that there will be a few in his constituency who will suffer that form of deduction. I promise the hon. Gentleman that I shall make damned sure that those of his constituents who are on income support and who have their benefit abated because of poll tax will learn about his activities this evening.

I can understand that complaints have been made about the fact that we have divided the House on this issue. The hon. Member for Eastwood and others wanted to hide

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

behind an absence of Divisions. We ensured that we divided the House because we wanted to expose the hon. Members for Eastwood and for Dumfries, who are frightened to death. We wanted to drive them out of their holes and place their names on the record, and we succeeded. We shall ensure that the record is read the length and breadth of Scotland, especially in the constituencies of the hon. Members for Dumfries and for Eastwood.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) has handed me a note, which I shall read out. I take strong exception to its terms. My hon. Friend was elected to this place at the last general election, and he is young and inexperienced. He is complaining bitterly to me, however, that I am being too hard on the hon. Member for Eastwood. My hon. Friend owes his seat to Michael Ancram, who was such an outstanding communicator on the poll tax. He was such a great communicator that the people of Edinburgh, South threw him out. My hon. Friend is here as a result of that. I will speak privately to my hon. Friend after the debate, but I must tell him in public that he needs a bit more of a cutting edge to him.

Having witnessed the conduct of the hon. Members for Dumfries and for Eastwood, it was right and proper for my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and Opposition Back Benchers to express anger at the way in which the Scottish people are being treated with contempt by the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden was right to express his anger about the way in which the House is being treated and the number of amendments that have been introduced at this late stage. He was wrong to express surprise about that, because the Government have treated the Scottish people with contempt since 1979. The Scottish people and the House of Commons do not mean anything to the Government. Had it not been for the restraint shown by Opposition Members, there would have been much trouble in the House. We have shown considerable restraint, but it has been taxed to its maximum. Tonight it has been taxed to its limit. The people of Scotland are of prime importance to Opposition Members.

Mr. McKelvey: All Opposition Members wish that they had had an opportunity to express their anger and frustration. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) is frustrated almost to the point of breaking, but will he join me and other Labour Members in not paying this tax?

Mr. Ewing: Like my hon. Friends, I am always open and honest. If any of my constituents send me a letter asking whether I will pay the poll tax, I will answer that I will. That must not be misinterpreted as my agreeing with what the Government are doing to the people of Scotland. Yes, I will pay the poll tax. I have always made my position perfectly clear to constituents who have written to me about this issue. It is for every individual to take his own decision whether to pay. I tell my hon. Friends the Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and Livingston (Mr. Cook) that I will not criticise anybody who says that they will not pay the poll tax. There is no possibility of my joining any campaign of condemnation of anyone who refuses to pay the poll tax.

Tonight, the Government have ensured that anyone receiving income support or state benefit will not have the same choice as I or my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West and I can choose whether to pay the poll tax. Nobody on state benefit can choose whether to pay it.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose*——

Mr. Ewing: I am in danger of not speaking to the amendments, but I shall after I have given way to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman said that he will pay the poll tax; I agree with him, and I will also pay it. But does he accept that the arguments in favour of obeying the law become much more difficult to sustain when the Government ride roughshod over parliamentary democracy and limit time to deal with these important matters?

Mr. Ewing: I have always found that those who mouth platitudes about obeying the law are the biggest law-breakers. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State have put strains and stresses on the people of Scotland, and it is understandable that some people will adopt a position different from mine. That is why I will not join a campaign of condemnation.

My main point remains valid, and I shall repeat it because it should be heard. Vast groups of people in Scotland will not have the choice that we have of whether to pay. All on state benefits will pay the poll tax, whether they want to or not.

I come now to the amendments. The hon. Member for Eastwood compared the present 50 per cent. mandatory rebate for charities with a possible 80 per cent. rebate under this legislation. With that innocent air that he acquired during his time in the Scottish Office—which saw him out of its doors before his backside was on the seat—he asked the Minister of State for an assessment. I shall give him one: in almost the whole of Scotland—if not all of it—these charities enjoy the 50 per cent. mandatory relief, plus another 50 per cent. discretionary relief. So they pay no rates at all. Under this legislation and the amendments to it, they will pay the first 20 per cent. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, so the Minister need not answer it.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member will be able to return to his fine textual examination of the amendments in a second.

The proceedings tonight are undemocratic and farcical, and the Scottish National party would have liked to be able to say that in the course of them, especially as the non-payment campaign in Scotland is growing by the minute.

Mr. Ewing: I am not sure that it is. It is certainly not growing in east Angus or Perth and Kinross—and I see no evidence of it growing in Falkirk. The hon. Gentleman has made a good point on behalf of his party. It is entitled to be heard, the same as the rest of us. The hon. Gentleman will have other opportunities to discuss this matter.

Another amendment that the Minister mentioned almost in passing related to using the contractor's

principle in assessing industry in Scotland for rating and valuation. The Minister is harmonising the systems of Scotland and England, which are different now. The Minister thinks that the contractor's principle has never been heard of. He is harmonising a bad system. Scottish industry, especially the chemical industry, wants to be rid of the contractor's principle in rating and valuation. Instead of harmonising it, we should get rid of it. But the Minister has no intention of doing that. He is harmonising a bad practice. Let no one think for a moment that he is doing industry in Scotland any favours. The amendments do nothing at all in favour of Scottish industry. Nobody will benefit from them except, as I said at the beginning of my speech, the owners of the salmon rod fisheries.

Mr. Home Robertson: People like me will benefit.

Mr. Ewing: My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is saying that he is all right. He can speak for himself. If all the owners of the salmon rod fisheries take the same view as my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian, they will vote Labour. I guarantee Conservative Members that whatever benefits——

It being Twelve o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: *Ayes 287, Noes 201.*

Division No. 437] **[12.00**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*

Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Milian, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 341 accordingly agreed to. [Special Entry.]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Lords amendment: No. 389, in page 147, line 28, at end insert—

" .—(1) Section 24 of that Act (duty to provide for rebates from community charges) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (a)—

(i) for the words "local authorities" there shall be substituted the words "levying authorities"; and

(ii) for the words from "community charges" to "this Act)" there shall be substituted the words "personal community charges and (except in relation to residence in premises which are special designated premises for the purposes of section 11(4B) of this Act) collective community charge contributions".

(3) In paragraph (b) for the words "local authority in respect of each year" there shall be substituted the words "levying authority".

(4) That section as so amended shall be subsection (1) and there shall be added the following subsection—

"(2) This section shall have effect only in respect of the financial year 1989-90."."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 8, leave out

'(except in relation to residence in premises which are special designated premises for the purposes of section 11(4B) of this Act)'.

Lords amendment No. 389, as amended, agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendment No. 390 disagreed to.

Lords amendments: Nos. 342 to 344, 347, 351, 355, 360, 361, 364, 366 to 369, 392, 393, 396, 405, 407, 408, 189, 190, 192, 198, 202, 203, 410, 413 and 415 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments: Nos. 345, 346, 348 to 350, 352 to 354, 356 to 359, 362, 363, 365, 370 to 388, 391, 394, 395, 397 to 404, 406, 186 to 188, 191, 193 to 197, 199 to 201, 204, 205, 409, 411, 412, 414 and 206 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 389 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Motion made, and Question put,

That a Committee be appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments *Nos. 22, 171, 300, 302 to 304 and 390* to the Bill:

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 22.

Division No. 438] **[12.17 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim

Young, Sir George *(Acton)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Younger, Rt Hon George	Mr. Robert Boscawen and
	Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Lamond, James
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	McWilliam, John
Beith, A. J.	Madden, Max
Callaghan, Jim	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Canavan, Dennis	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Cohen, Harry	Parry, Robert
Corbyn, Jeremy	Pike, Peter L.
Cryer, Bob	Salmond, Alex
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Skinner, Dennis
Douglas, Dick	
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Mr. James Wallace.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That a Committee be appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments Nos. 22, 171, 300, 302 to 304 and 390.

That Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Michael Howard, Mr. Peter Lloyd, Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. Jeff Rooker be members of the Committee.

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Reasons for disagreeing to certain of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

Local Authority Publicity

12.26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I beg to move,

That the draft Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, which was laid before this House on 30th June 1988, be approved.

Section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986 provides for the Secretary of State to issue codes of recommended practice as regards the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity and such other related matters as he thinks appropriate. Local authorities are required by section 4, as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988, to have regard to the provisions of any such code in coming to any decision on publicity.

The 1986 Act requires that before issuing a code the Secretary of State shall consult local authority associations and any local authority with which consultation appears desirable. It provides also that a draft of the code shall be laid before each House of Parliament for approval.

Full and extensive consultation has taken place over the past two years with the local authority associations and a number of other bodies concerned. Those consultations, which have included meetings between Ministers and members of associations, have considered in detail a succession of drafts of the code. This history of consultation has demonstrated the extent to which we have endeavoured to take local authorities with us on the drafting of the code and our willingness, where appropriate, to make amendments designed to allay their concerns.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): After all the consultations, have any of the local authority associations been persuaded that the code should exist at all?

Mr. Chope: The local authority associations have had relatively few quibbles about the contents of the code in its latest draft, but it is right to say that local authorities wish to carry on spending money on publicity without any restraint. That is a regrettable state of affairs.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister confirm that the associations of local authorities represent all parties? It is the united view of all parties in local government that there should be no code from the Government, and that they should be allowed to keep their own house in order, without the Government, whether Conservative, Labour, Liberal or other party, yet again interfering.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman will have a chance to make a speech during the debate if he wants to do so. Many people in local government consider that, because of the irresponsible actions of a relatively small minority of councils, we must take some action against excesses. The Government are determined to ensure that there is responsible behaviour in local government in the same way as we have for national government with a code of recommended practice for publicity.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Minister brings national government into the debate. What does local government think about the excesses of Mr. Ingham and his cohort of 140 press officers?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman will have a chance to deploy his arguments later. There is no doubt that there has been a lot of abuse of budgets, especially by some Labour-controlled local authorities.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend will recall that when the clause was amended in Committee, I made representations to him about the subsidy that a number of Left-wing authorities were providing for literature. They were subsidising a monopoly which favoured the co-operative movement. The London Labour party receives a substantial subsidy every year from the co-operative movement. There is no mention in the code of conduct of the practices to which I drew my hon. Friend's attention. Unlike the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I believe that the representations have by no means been unanimously against the code. There is considerable concern about these practices, and this code does nothing to prevent them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. That is enough of an intervention.

Mr. Chope: The fact that my hon. Friend thinks that the code does not go far enough, and some Opposition Members believe that it goes too far, is perhaps a sign that we have got it about right.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: I shall give way once more. Having regard to the hour, it is only fair that I should be reasonably brief so that others can participate if they wish, and if they do not we can all go home.

Mr. Michie: Why do the Government always talk about the cost of political publicity, when at any time of the day I can watch television publicity on the privatisation of the steel industry, the sale of council houses and so on, and no one questions it? Why should local authorities not defend their services and tell the people exactly what is happening?

Mr. Chope: The Government lay down conventions on publicity and advertising for themselves. Local authorities should comply with similar conventions on their publicity and advertising. That is all we are asking. We are being perfectly reasonable about it.

The introduction to the code explains its status and scope. I draw particular attention to paragraph 5. This explains that the code is concerned, not with the statutory ban on party political publicity, but rather with all publicity that local authorities are empowered to issue. It remains self-evident that observance of the principles of good practice set out in the code would ensure that a local authority did not contravene that prohibition.

The code is not a series of rules and regulations to which local authorities must adhere in all cases. On the contrary, the code sets out principles of good practice to act as a benchmark against which authorities must judge their publicity proposals. In each case they will need to consider whether the publicity that they propose to issue is in keeping with the principles set out in the code. If it is not, they will need to consider whether special circumstances exist which justify departure from the code.

The introduction to the code also acknowledges the vital role that local authority publicity has to play in the interests of ensuring local accountability. It welcomes good, effective publicity, aimed at improving public awareness of a council's activities. It explains that the purpose of the code is to set out principles of good practice which will ensure that local authority publicity decisions are properly made.

I draw attention to paragraph 8 in the introduction to the code. This paragraph, together with paragraph 43, explains that the code will not affect the ability of local authorities to assist charities and voluntary organisations which need to issue publicity as part of their task. Local authorities are, however, called upon, in giving such assistance, to take into account the principles contained in the code. To the extent appropriate, local authorities should incorporate the relevant principles in any published guidance for applicants for grants, and make observance of that guidance a condition of the grant. Where appropriate, local authorities should monitor the observance of the guidance. The extent to which any such monitoring is necessary must remain a matter for the local authority concerned, but, in the Government's view, prior vetting of all publicity by assisted voluntary organisations would be unnecessary.

The main body of the code is divided into nine sections. They deal with the following: the subject matter of local authority publicity; its cost, content, style and dissemination; particular considerations to be taken into account with general advertising and recruitment advertising; publicity about members of the authority; the timing of publicity and assistance given to others for publicity.

I shall not take up the time of the House by giving a detailed summary of each of those sections. I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members who are interested will have familiarised themselves with them. However, some provisions merit particular mention, because history has proved that some authorities—I stress "some"—have failed to observe the accepted conventions which traditionally have governed publicity issued at public expense.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Give us examples.

Mr. Chope: I am sure that we shall hear some examples——

Mr. Rooker: Give us some examples.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman must wait for examples. He will probably hear plenty during the debate.

No one can deny the onslaught of political propaganda in some areas. I have in mind material such as publicity whose cost is wholly disproportionate to its purpose and which benefits relatively few people. That is dealt with in paragraphs 6 and 10 of the draft code.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I have a particular problem in one of the local authorities in my constituency, Middlesbrough borough council. Every month it brings out a little magazine called "Middlesbrough News". This month, the first two pages of "Middlesbrough News" carry a long article and a glamorous photograph of the Labour leader of the council holding a huge petition against the poll tax which he proposes to take to No. 10 Downing street. The article says that Middlesbrough borough council is opposed to the introduction of the poll tax for 95 reasons. It is the most blatant piece of political propaganda. How will the code——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is this a speech or an intervention?

Mr. Devlin: It is an intervention, and the point of it is to ask how the code of practice will affect such publications.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to paragraphs 11 to 19 of the code, which set out matters relating to style and content. Paragraph 13, in particular, deals with publicity being used to comment on or respond to the policies and proposals of the Government. I hope that a debate will develop in different local authorities, and that if authorities put forward proposals that contravene the code they will be hauled over the coals locally and be given adverse publicity because they have behaved unreasonably. That is exactly what would happen to the Government if they were in breach of their conventions on publicity.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): How will the code stop Sheffield issuing a newspaper called the "City of Sheffield News" at a cost of £100,000 to the ratepayers? In effect, it is a broadsheet issued on behalf of the Labour party and consists of articles knocking the Government. How will the code stop that?

Mr. Chope: The code will not stop all council newspapers. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Some of my hon. Friends are disappointed about that. In parts of the country there are some quite good, informative, factual, objective council newspapers, many of which are produced by Conservative-controlled authorities. I know what my hon. Friend has to put up with in Sheffield, and I hope that Sheffield city council, like other city councils, will comply with the code of practice.

Mr. Bill Michie: Never.

Mr. Chope: The code deals with publicity on political or otherwise sensitive matters, which is highly subjective, often inaccurate and relies on slogans to make its point. A partisan political attack on the views of others is not an adequate means of disseminating information; nor is it a justifiable use of ratepayers' money.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): In view of the comment from a sedentary position of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) that he will never obey this code of practice in Sheffield, will my hon. Friend say whether a council that disregards this guidance will be liable to surcharge?

Mr. Chope: It will be for the district auditor to take into account this code and whether the council decides either to comply with or to be in breach of it. The mere fact that a council does not comply with every part of the code will not automatically result in a surcharge. That will depend on whether it behaves reasonably and approaches the matter in a sensible way.

Mr. Bill Michie: Sheffield city council and other local authorities have always abided by the law.

Mr. Patnick: Rubbish!

Mr. Michie: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) says, "Rubbish!" I am saying that if there is a bad law, one challenges it. If one does not do so, there is dictatorship.

Mr. Chope: Sheffield city council is notorious for over-spending and irresponsibility. Often, it has not been slow to pull the wool over the eyes of its local citizenry by presenting biased comments, particularly in relation to Government legislation. It has tried desperately to get around Government legislation, particularly that relating to compulsory competitive tendering, and so on.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I am answering the point made by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie). I shall give way to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in a moment.

The hon. Member for Heeley may or may not be influential in Sheffield city council. I suggest that he, as a Member of the House, ought to impress on his local council the desirability of complying with the law.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister move away from his obsession with attacking councils that are trying to maintain a decent level of service for the people whom they were elected to represent, and turn his attention to Westminster city council and its gift of several million pounds to property developers in London, and examine the case for bringing surcharges and criminal charges against Westminster officers and councillors for their sale of cemeteries?

Mr. Chope: That matter has precious little to do with the subject of this debate. I speak from recollection, but I believe that Islington's district auditor had much to say about the behaviour of certain Islington councillors. It is right to say that district auditors do not hold party political views, but act on behalf of ratepayers in any district council area, be it under Conservative or Labour control.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister note that the Islington district auditor is pursuing the councillors there because they were against rate capping and were trying to protect services for the people of Islington? There is no suggestion of any Islington councillors selling public property at low prices to property speculators. In Westminster, we are having to deal with a wholly different form of corruption in local government. That is what the Minister should be examining—not pursuing councillors who are attempting to protect services for the poorest people in many of the poorest boroughs of this country.

Mr. Chope: It is typical of the hon. Gentleman that he wants one law for his friends in Islington and a different law for everybody else. Publicity distributed unsolicited to vulnerable sections of the community and containing inaccurate and scaremongering claims and allegations—for example, on the social services reforms—is covered by paragraph 22 of the draft code.

Taken together, the principle of good practice set out in the code provides an essential and comprehensive yardstick against which local authorities should judge their publicity proposals. We intend that as soon as parliamentary approval is forthcoming the code will be brought into effect by issuing it under cover of a circular to local authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I have read carefully through the code of recommended practice, but I cannot find anywhere guidance in respect of town meetings. Last Thursday, I and the hon. Member for Lewisham,

Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) addressed a town meeting in Lewisham on the subject of the community charge. Part of the way through, the Labour mayor, who was chairing the meeting, refused me permission to reply to points put by the hon. Member for Deptford. I was on the platform at the invitation of the Conservative group. The meeting then broke up in disorder. Is it intended that town meetings, if they are to be held, should be held on a balanced basis, with a neutral chairman, and not at the expense of ratepayers' money at Labour party meetings?

Mr. Chope: The code does not deal with the point made by my hon. Friend. As he will know, the wider issue of the conduct of local authorities was looked into by the Widdicombe committee. The Widdicombe report has been issued and the Government will shortly make their response to it. The point made by my hon. Friend is just another example of the irresponsible and biased way in which some Labour councillors behave.

So that some of my hon. Friends will have an opportunity to give the House some examples of the abuses that have been taking place, I shall stop now and commend the code to the House.

12.45 am

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hour may be late but the business is important because the code of recommended practice submitted by the Minister prompts some key points that should be considered. The code will apply to publicity by local authorities which is legal but which is not appropriate or desirable in the view of the Ministers. Therefore, we are again giving additional powers to the Ministers if they feel that local authorities are not acting in accordance with the code.

The Minister said that he is prepared to allow others to submit examples but he has failed to produce a single example of publicity that the code will affect and has dismissed examples given by others.

Mr. Chope: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with what has happened recently. The latest edition of *Labour Party News*, the official Labour party publication mailed to all members of the party, includes an advertisement for Manchester city council which says that the council is countering the effects of mass unemployment and working to develop a common front on issues such as the job training scheme. The cost of that half page advertisement, according to the published rates of *Labour Party News*, would be £500 plus £75 value added tax. That is the sort of subsidy going from the ratepayers to the Labour party which the code will outlaw.

Mr. O'Brien: That is not covered by the code. That advertisement could be put in any newspaper and it would be legal. What is wrong with advertising in a circular that goes around the areas? The Minister is clutching at straws because of the challenge that has been thrown out.

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: I want to draw attention to the fact that the draft code has been rewritten six times because the Conservative party has not had an opportunity to get the matter right. It has taken six attempts to bring the code before the House.

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: The code is jointly opposed by all local authority associations, irrespective of party. The Government have chosen to ignore a voluntary code agreed by local government as a whole, although the Minister has suggested that there is a voluntary code for central Government. Why can there not be a voluntary code for local government? That is one of the questions that the Minister has to address.

In seeking parliamentary approval for the draft code of practice the Government are attempting to complete the ring of restrictions placed on local authorities and their publicity since the Widdicombe report in 1985. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986, which is now strengthened by the Local Government Act 1988, outlaws "political publicity" on what local authority associations believe to be an excessively broad definition of what constitutes political publicity. Section 3 places restrictions on local authorities' use of existing powers to issue publicity. In writing into statute a code of practice on

"the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity,"

the Government rejected Widdicombe's recommendation that such matters should be left to self-regulation by local government for local government.

The Minister should tell us why the Government have rejected Widdicombe's recommendation that local authorities should be self-regulating. The Widdicombe report stated:

"We believe that tone and presentation is important, but it would undoubtedly be best if it were the subject of self-regulation."

which is what the Minister has suggested should apply for central Government. The report also stated:

"it would be best, in our view, if this could be done by self-regulation within local government, or through the agency of the local authority Associations".

All the local authority associations—the Association of Metropolitan Authorities; the Association of County Councils; the Association of District Councils; the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities—have worked together on this issue from the start. They have shown that there is unanimity in local government about the principle of self-regulation and that they can produce and get widespread agreement for a voluntary code of practice.

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: A draft of the voluntary code of practice was produced and received widespread approval and endorsement from many authorities and from the professional bodies involved. Authorities expressing support in principle for the voluntary code included the full spectrum of political views and all types of local authorities, from Liverpool to the Corporation of the City of London. There was a wide area of agreement on the practice of self-regulation.

In passing the Local Government Act 1988, Parliament has now decided that the code should be statutory. There has been a long history of discussions at official and ministerial level about the code of practice, and between the local authority associations, the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office. The Minister has referred to the consultations that have taken place. There have been three meetings on the code of

[Mr. O'Brien]

practice with the Ministers responsible for local government. On each occasion—this is a measure of the importance which the Department of the Environment has attached to those meetings—different Ministers attended. In other words, there was no consistency from the Department of the Environment in the meetings that it held with the local authority association.

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: Following the last meeting on 8 June, only two changes of substance have been made to the draft code that was published in November 1987.

The further restrictions on local authority publicity should be contrasted with the growth in scale and degree of controversy of much central Government advertising.

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: There are those who think—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."]—that that has strayed well beyond the guidelines of the Cabinet Office—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to hear what is being said. There is too much noise from both sides of the House. *[Interruption.]* Order. I said that there is too much noise from both sides of the House. We want to hear what is being said. Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. Batiste: On a point of order, My Deputy Speaker. Is it not a convention of the House that Front Bench spokesmen give way a reasonable number of times? My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary allowed Opposition Members to intervene in his speech. Is it not provocative and an abuse of the procedures of the House that the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) should plough through a written speech without giving way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Member who has the Floor at the time. It is difficult to hear what is being said in this short debate, and I hope that the remainder of the debate will be heard in silence.

Mr. O'Brien: If the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) wishes to contribute to the debate, he has only to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should attend Mr. Deputy Speaker's office for some instruction on the code of practice that applies in the House. He is obviously not aware of it.

In the introduction to the code, the section on why there should be a code was largely redrafted in the course of a series of meetings with local authority associations. It now gives a more positive picture of the importance of good and effective publicity by local authorities. It recognises especially the political nature of local government. The fourth paragraph makes that point——

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr O'Brien: Note should be taken of the following section of the fourth paragraph of the introduction. I make the point for the benefit of Conservative Members who have little interest in local government. The principles

"take account of the fact that some local authority publicity will deal with issues that are controversial because of particular local circumstances, or because of a difference of view between political parties locally or nationally. The principles do not prohibit the publication of information on politically sensitive or controversial issues, nor stifle public debate."

That is the claim. Those two sentences are lifted from the local authority association's initial proposals for a code. But does the code measure up to the claim——

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will my hon. Friend expose the hypocrisy of Conservative Members? The Government have used massive resources in planting television programmes and putting over their policies. This has not been acceptable to the masses. Local authorities have been deprived of their traditional right to inform the public of their benefits and rights. That right is one of the best traditions of local government.

Mr. O'Brien: Conservative Members have asked me to give way, and I gave way to my hon. Friend, who made a valuable contribution to the debate. He has made it clear that local government publicity is for the benefit of the local electorate.

It is claimed in paragraph 5 that the code

"is not concerned with the interpretation of section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986."

That section seeks to prohibit party political publicity. The code will, in the view of the local authority associations——

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: —extend the prohibitions of the Act in practice. It should be remembered that the code

"is concerned with all the other publicity which a local authority may publish."

Mr. Patnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I sit on the Opposition Benches, will the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) allow me to intervene?

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman would not qualify to sit on the Opposition Benches.

It should be remembered that the code is concerned with all other publicity that a local authority may publish, including legal publicity. In practice, it will operate to prohibit such publicity.

Paragraph 4 of the code of recommended practice contains restrictive provisions. The Act provides that local authorities may publish information relating to their function. Paragraph 4(iii) says:

"local authorities should issue publicity only on matters that are directly relevant to their own functions."

Mr. Patnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. O'Brien: If the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) is patient, I will give way.

In discussions with officials, the associations were told that the intention is to control publicity that is legal under the Act but not appropriate in the view of Ministers.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is in order for the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) to read a newspaper in the Chamber? I think that it is not.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) is seeking to intervene. I think that he will do so in a moment.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the restriction on publicity mean that a proposal by British Rail to close a railway station or line, a proposal by the Post Office to close a village post office

or a proposal by a regional health authority to close a hospital will be prohibited under the code? We have been discussing the final stages of the poll tax Bill. Will local authorities be able to publish information about how the poll tax will affect the people they represent? The restriction under the code will prevent people being made aware of how the poll tax will affect the disabled, the chronically sick and the poor.

Mr. Patnick: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for giving way; I thought that my time would never come.

I have here the *City of Sheffield News*, which costs £100,000 to publish. According to my hon. Friend the Minister, this legislation does not prevent it being published. The top of page 3 mentions the community charge. The bottom of the page states:

"The Beginner's Guide to the Poll Tax (illustrated) is available from the communications unit at the Town Hall" in Sheffield. Such articles bring local government into disrepute and are the reason for this code of practice.

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Member makes the point that I was seeking to make. Will publicity giving information to the people of Sheffield be prevented by the code of practice? Sheffield council wishes to advise its ratepayers and council house tenants about what is happening in Sheffield. I assume that the Minister will say that the Government do not intend to stop local authorities issuing information in such circumstances. The inclusion of paragraph 4 (iii) means that local authorities will be inhibited from doing so, especially when there is not unanimity in a local authority.

Paragraph 4 refers only to public authorities of various types. Presumably it would not apply to publicity by British Telecom, British Gas or other services in local authority areas.

The code should not attempt to inhibit local authorities' legitimate role as the voice of the communities they serve. Paragraph 4 provides reasons enough for Parliament not to approve the code. I draw Conservative Members' attention to it.

Although patronising, paragraphs 5 to 10 are now acceptable to local authorities, but they perhaps provide an opportunity to contrast the modest extent and cost of local authority publicity advertising with the massive expansion of central Government advertising, particularly on matters of political controversy, on the most expensive medium—television. Hon. Members must have witnessed the expense to which the Government have gone in the sale of public utilities and the amount they have spent to prevail on their supporters to buy them. The same will happen again with the privatisation of water.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The hon. Gentleman has just said that the Government are trying to prevail on their supporters to buy shares in public utilities. Will he explain why the chief Labour whip on Derbyshire county council bought two lots of British Telecom shares?

Mr. O'Brien: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman asks whoever it was who bought the shares. I cannot explain that. But I say that the real purpose behind the sale of national assets is to line the pockets of Conservative Members' supporters.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley) *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: Like paragraph 15, paragraph 19 has been amended following meetings with the Minister. It now acknowledges that publicity campaigns

"about the authority's policies in relation to that function and the reasons for them"

can be appropriate.

As for dissemination, the Government have not responded to the points made by local authority associations that positive reference should be made in paragraph 21 to the particular needs of ethnic minority communities whose first language is not English, and that material should be provided in other languages as appropriate to the communities served by local authorities——

Mr. Bill Michie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you ask the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) to stop reading the newspaper?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The reading of a newspaper is welcome only if it is relevant to the debate. I am referring to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick). The reading of a newspaper in the Chamber is not welcome unless the hon. Gentleman expects to speak and refer to it.

Mr. O'Brien: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

Mr. Pike: Does my hon. Friend realise that when I and my hon. Friends have written to the Minister and his colleagues about the poll tax legislation they have usually sent us back not one but four or five copies of their booklet about it? I now have 227 spare copies on my desk. And most of the contents are untrue, anyway.

Mr. O'Brien: I hope that the Minister has taken note of that.

The Minister said that it was not desirable to include a positive suggestion for good practice such as the one I mentioned for assisting ethnic minority groups. What then is the purpose of a code of practice—merely to inhibit the presentation of information?

In the context of recruitment advertising, the Widdicombe committee accepted that people might be employed by councils as political assistants to politicians. The most cost-effective way to recruit staff such as that suggested by Widdicombe is through party political publications. A blanket prohibition on the use of party political publications for recruitment and advertising is not desirable.

Paragraphs 39 to 42 of the report suggest a simple provision. It is that local authorities should not issue publicity that simply reports the views of individual members or their activities except when they are acting in an official capacity. That is how I sum up those four paragraphs. The future ability of council press officers to deal professionally with press and other media people who, quite understandably, are constantly seeking statements and quotes from identifiable people—in this case councillors—must be contrasted with the freedom of central Government press officers, especially in No. 10 and in Government Departments, to personalise even the most political, controversial statements by Ministers. There must be some parity between local and central government on this issue. Against that background I ask the House to reject the order.

1.11 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I came to the debate expecting to hear some encouraging news from the Government. I have read the guidance notes with which we have been provided and find them the most wet and inadequate guidelines that I have ever seen. I listened to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) who opposes the guidelines and who spoke at enormous length. I have searched to find out why he opposes them but can find no extra powers or sanctions. It is made clear in the first paragraph of the notes that they are only for guidance. That means that a local authority could happily carry on doing the things that I think all my hon. Friends have complained about.

When we look through the code of practice we see that some types of advertising are intrusive and we are told that advertising should be cost effective. That does not tell us much that we do not already know. Let us have a look at what is happening in Cleveland. Today, Cleveland county council appointed Vincent Hanna to operate its public relations. It already has a large public relations department which is inadequate to the task of whitewashing the county in the light of the Butler-Sloss inquiry. It will not tackle the real issues raised in the learned judge's report, but will seek to do a nice cover-up job and get Mr. Bishop and the other members of the social services department out with a nice clean bill of health. The council has had to go outside the county to get a nice glitzy outfit from London to come to Cleveland to manage our PR because it is not prepared to address the real issues.

Let us look at the other complaints by my hon. Friends about local authority publicity. A book list has been provided for lesbians by Lambeth borough council so that lesbians will have a guide to good reading. What has that to do with the ratepayers of Lambeth or anywhere else? Why should such a list be provided by a local authority? In the code of practice I found one point about not promoting immorality. That is weak and, as I have said, the code of practice is only for guidance.

Mr. Patnick: Can my hon. Friend tell me what sanctions are available to people who feel that somehow a council has gone wrong? To whom do such people appeal and what sanctions and fines, if any, can be imposed?

Mr. Devlin: We have enacted some legislation banning party political propaganda, but it does not cover the range of subjects about which local authorities can promote their political views.

Each month "Middlesbrough News" pumps out Labour party propaganda and its distributors make sure that it goes through every door in the city. That paper also ensures that every piece of Government legislation, which is designed to benefit Middlesbrough, such as the inner urban programme and the urban development corporation, is carefully disguised as an achievement of the Labour council. There is no redress against such action.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Government have already passed legislation to ensure that it is illegal for certain literature to influence support for political parties. The hon. Gentleman cannot complain about such literature when the remedy lies with him or someone else who can make a complaint to the courts. If that complaint were upheld, the hon. Gentleman's arguments would be more credible.

Mr. Devlin: It depends whether the literature is specifically party political, and the hon. Gentleman will be aware from some of the publications that are pushed out in Bermondsey that that is not always the case.

I asked my hon. Friend the Minister a number of questions and I shall conclude by asking one of the Opposition. Would they object if the Government started to take half-page advertisements in "Conservative Newsline"?

1.16 am

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I speak with rather more information and experience than some hon. Members as I was a Lambeth council press officer. I believe that it would help our debate if hon. Members were more honest, because there is no doubt that the intention of the code is to stop and block some of the successful, and legal, publicity campaigns that Labour authorities have run in the past. One such campaign was that run by the Greater London council about what its abolition would mean. The code means to stop such campaigns.

Conservative Members strike a moral attitude about spending public money for party political purposes, but we would take them more seriously if they spoke with similar vehemence about the way in which the Government have spent public money for such purposes. Consider the millions of pounds that were spent promoting the Telecom flotation and other privatisation ventures. The Scottish Office is just about to spend a huge amount on promoting Government activities in Scotland. We could point to the advertising campaign on the poll tax proposals.

Mr. Corbyn: What about Ministry of Defence advertising?

Ms. Abbott: That is another example.

If all those examples do not amount to spending public money for party political purposes, I do not know what does. As my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) has said, all we ask for is parity between national and local practice in this matter. If it is well and good for the Scottish Office to promote its activities by using advertising agencies, why is it wrong for local authorities to follow a parallel practice?

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government have deliberately given an awful lot of business to particular advertising agencies, which seem to have extremely close relationships with the Tory party, and taken work away from the well-qualified and experienced staff employed by the Central Office of Information? Does my hon. Friend agree that that might have happened because the professional standards of the COI were being undermined by the blatantly party-political nature of the Ministry of Defence advertisements, the 1992 Euro-market advertisements and the publicity that has been produced, at great expense, to con people into believing that there is genuine training for our young people when, in reality, such training is merely workfare?

Ms. Abbott: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. The Government nationally have spent millions of pounds of public money for party political purposes. There is nothing in this code to deal with that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett; Does the hon. Lady recognise the difference between the Government putting out information about legislation, about which, therefore, the public need information, and political campaigns designed to influence people's opinions, which is what the GLC sought to do when the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was in office? I draw her attention to page 258 of "If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish It", written by the hon. Gentleman, which states:

"We started working with CND and switched the Government funds we received for war preparations"—

he means civil defence—

"into the campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament."

That is a clear sign of the misuse of public money to sway political opinion. That is not information.

Ms. Abbott: Were not the millions of pounds of public money spent on advertising the Telecom flotation used to influence the country to become a nation of small shareholders for a clear political purpose? That was an unprecedented use of public money for privatisation. Some of the speeches and interventions of Conservative Members are sheer hypocrisy.

Mr. Devlin: Does the hon. Lady accept that in advertising the privatisation of British Telecom the Government had a duty to the taxpayers to get the best possible return for the sale of that asset?

Ms. Abbott: The Government might have served taxpayers better not by spending millions of pounds with advertising agencies, but by promoting the shares in the normal way.

Mr. McWilliam: Does my hon. Friend accept that the advertising of British Telecom was in all senses against all the tenets and codes of the advertising industry and that all the consumers of BT have suffered? Does she agree that the propaganda put out by the Conservative Government in those advertisements had nothing to do with consumers and everything to do with the benefit of those who sought to make a capital gain from that advantage?

Ms. Abbott: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention. I have established that the speeches of Conservative Members are riddled with hypocrisy and that the Government set the record for spending public money for party political purposes.

A Government who have the confidence that their policies can take the cold light of fact should not be frightened of local authority publicity about their policies. If Conservative Members cannot win by fair means, they wish to win by foul. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) complained that people were not willing to listen to him at public meetings and asked the Minister for legislation to stop him being shouted down. The remedy is to make better, more effective and more compelling speeches. If the Government cannot win public debate, they seek to shackle their opponents, and this is an example of that.

Mr. Batiste: I congratulate the hon. Lady on having the courage to give way—something which was conspicuously absent from her Front-Bench colleague.

Does the hon. Lady accept that, in principle, there should be restrictions, either in convention or in statute, on any sort of publicity by local authorities?

Ms. Abbott: Yes, of course. As a local authority press officer, I worked under the terms of section 6 of the Local Government Act 1986, which is against any communication designed to affect public support for a political party. That is fair and that is the law. A great deal said by Conservative Members has been nonsense, because the law is already clear about prohibiting party political publicity. Every press release, every advertisement, and every note to editors that I put out when I worked for local authorities —all local authority press officers work in the same way —was cleared by lawyers to ensure that it did not fall foul of the law. The 1986 Act is clear and all local authorities scrupulously adhere to it.

We have a Government who, if they cannot win by fair and open means in debate, wish to win by foul. This code is partisan in origin, it will be partisan in interpretation, and it is only too clearly targeted not at abuses of press and publicity, but at the effective light that some Labour authorities have shed on the real effects of Tory policies. If Conservative Members were proud of those policies and felt that they could be defended, they would have nothing to fear from local authority publicity within the terms of the 1986 Act.

1.26 am

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): As I was in local government for 11 years before coming to the House, I deeply regret that this code of conduct has become necessary. It is yet another example of central Government being forced to act by the antics of a few. When that happens, the whole of local government suffers because the militant few in some councils are not prepared to abide by the traditional approaches that have served local government so well.

Opposition Members were earlier calling for examples, and I have some splendid news for them—I have quite a few. We must examine why the code has become necessary. The issues of great concern were dealt with in the Local Government Act 1986, which tackled blatant party political propaganda support of one particular party, on the rates. I shall highlight two further concerns. First, there is the misuse of public money—an unacceptable use of money for purposes which should not be allowed in local government—and, secondly, there is a waste of public money—spending too much or spending it badly. Together they undermine local democracy and divert money from essential services.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the code identifies nine different misuses of public money over and above the promotion of a political party, four of which especially worry me. The first is the spending of ratepayers' money to publicise an issue which has nothing to do with that local authority. I shall cite the example of Hackney, which has a 14-page booklet entitled, "Hackney Council and the Police—Fact and Fiction". Hackney is not a police authority, and the Metropolitan police has no links with Hackney borough council. An examination of the booklet shows that it has nothing much to do with the policing of Hackney, but it has everything to do with a campaign to politicise the Metropolitan police.

Ms. Abbott: I must set the record straight. Hackney is a borough in which law and order is a matter of concern for all of its citizens, and the council has a locus in these matters, gives advice and information and has a police committee. To say that policing has nothing to do with Hackney is both a disgrace and arrant nonsense.

Mr. Wilshire: I refer the hon. Lady to the law of the land. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, not the Hackney borough council, is the police authority.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My hon. Friend is talking about how councils waste ratepayers' money by dealing with national issues. Norwich city council is always wasting ratepayers' money, and takes up council time by debating national issues that have nothing to do with local government. That is just another example to back up what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Wilshire: I am grateful for that example.

The second of the examples of misuse of money—

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman has chosen a poor example, because the Home Secretary is constantly pushing police to have closer working relations with local authorities in London. In those circumstances, is it not highly appropriate that the London borough of Hackney, like any other borough, should have a police committee, should express its views on law and order and crime, and should advise its citizens accordingly?

Mr. Wilshire: It is a great pity that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said, because this booklet is basically a campaign to politicise the Metropolitan police.

The second example of the misuse of money about which I am concerned is the use of money for biased recruitment advertisements. Haringey placed advertisements for 11 policy officers who were to report to Labour chairmen of committees. The advertisements said that these policy officers would have to be

"keenly aware of your responsibilities to your chairs' views at meetings."

That is blatantly politically biased.

Mr. Patnick: My hon. Friend may be aware that Mr. Steve King, a former leader of Haringey council, from 1985 to 1987, said:

"The Council's publicity section was strengthened and given a clear political brief. A Publicity Coordinating Committee was set up consisting, uniquely, of Councillors, Labour Party representatives, trade unions and the voluntary sector."

That quote is from the *Labour Briefing* of 26 January 1987.

Mr. Wilshire: I thank my hon. Friend for that example.

My third example of the misuse of council funds for publicity is of local authorities that choose to fund publicity for outside bodies that are not connected with the council. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) hinted at this earlier, and I can give a specific example. I have here a leaflet from the Hounslow co-operative funeral service, which sets out the funeral services that it offers and its prices, and on the back it invites one to fill out one's name and address to get its services. That leaflet is paid for, and the small print says so, by the ratepayers of Hounslow borough council. That is not a proper use of ratepayers' money.

My fourth example concerns moral standards. The code says clearly that publicity must not undermine moral standards. However, Lambeth borough council has produced a booklist of "Stories and Poems by and about Lesbian women", and has done so with ratepayers' money. The introduction says:

"The aim of this list is to introduce the general reader to some of the best Lesbian stories and poetry."

I would contend that that is publicity aimed at undermining moral standards.

Mr. Barry Field: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he was given the pamphlet and that he did not purchase it?

Mr. Wilshire: I confirm that it was given away, at the ratepayers' expense, to those who go to the library. It is a library listing, encouraging people to borrow certain books.

I refer now to the waste of public money by spending too much of other people's money on what is quite legitimate publicity and by undertaking unnecessary publicity to disguise either a grant or a subsidy. There is time only to give a couple of examples at this late hour.

In terms of poor value for money, I accept that publicity is necessary, but I ask hon. Members to consider the situation in Ealing late last year. It was decided to take away a £2,000 contract to have posters put up in the borough. The council chose to spend £16,000 employing somebody who provided a van to do the self-same job. That is legitimate publicity with public money being wasted.

Another example of a disguised subsidy and waste of money occurred in Lewisham last year. The council decided to spend £16,000 advertising jobs in the *News on Sunday*. That newspaper subsequently failed. It was a rotten place to advertise. There were seven replies for 17 posts. It was perfectly clear that the £16,000 was nothing more than a subsidy and a wrong use of publicity money.

The code is regrettably necessary. Publicity is being used for unacceptable purposes, and other people's money is being wasted by local councillors. It is important to understand that the code is not a blanket ban, despite what we have heard from Opposition Members. It allows local government to publicise services and policies. Interestingly, and contrary to what we have heard from Opposition Members, it allows local authorities to publicise controversial matters. But it states that that sort of publicity must be objective, fair and, above all else, balanced.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that his points would carry greater weight if he had found time to mention the most corrupt element among present-day advertising, which is the blurring of the distinction between the state and the Conservative party? I refer to two separate examples. The first is British Steel advertising, which goes out of its way to praise the conduct of the Conservative Government, and the second is the point that in every single 1992 advertisement prominent people appeared as huge direct benefactors of the Conservative party.

Mr. Wilshire: The point that I find absolutely fascinating is that virtually every Opposition intervention has sought to muddy the water by getting away from local government. We have heard no justification of what local government is doing.

Apart from the fact that we are not dealing with a blanket ban, when considering the code of conduct, it is important also to understand that the great majority of local authorities will be unaffected by it, because they have

not done, and are not doing, anything to offend against it. The target of the code is clear. The antics of the lunatic few on the Left—those who use publicity to waste other people's money, those who use publicity to undermine values, those who use money to discredit their opponents—are a disgrace.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: No, I shall not give way. I wish to make one last point.

The militant few are wrecking local government. The publicity antics of the militant few must stop. They are an absolute scandal.

1.38 am

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead): The Government's proposed code of practice, which seeks to govern local authority advertising, is a fine example of double standards. Local authority advertising is to be strictly controlled. We must see this in conjunction with the 1986 Act and the other measures that the Government have taken to try to curb local authorities and their advertising. Local authority advertising is to be controlled at a time when national Government advertising has been allowed without any check or independent control over the propriety of such advertising.

Paragraph 3 of the code makes the point that expenditure on publicity by some local authorities has been significant. Local authority spending on advertising has not increased fourfold in the past four years, as has happened with Government advertising. In answer to a parliamentary question by me it was revealed that, although the Department of Trade and Industry had spent an average of just over £1 million a year in each of the five years between 1979-80 and 1986-87, that figure has shot up to nearly £8 million in 1987-88, and it continues to rise.

The Department of Trade and Industry—the "Department for Enterprise" as the glossy advertisements tell us—is spending £9·4 million on the single European market and £5·6 million on the enterprise initiative campaign. Every time we switch on our television sets we are assailed by the Government's advertisements. At the same time, they are seeking to curb local authority spending.

Mr. Batiste: Does the hon. Lady accept that it is vital for the future of jobs and British industry that people are as aware as possible of the opportunities and challenges of 1992 and that the best way of achieving that is to advertise in the media, where it will have most impact? That is not party political.

Ms. Quin: Not only the Labour party but a wide group believe that Government advertising has become much more party political.

The standards of Government advertising are inadequately controlled. The Minister referred to the Widdicombe conventions. They are nothing more than a voluntary code of practice on which the Government Department doing the advertising has the final word. There is nothing like the control over local authorities that the Government are seeking to introduce via this code.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Lady has been critical of Government advertising. What did she think of the BP advertisements which appeared in newspapers in 1978, when the Labour Government were busy selling their BP shares because they had to raise money to pay for their overspending?

Ms. Quin: The hon. Gentleman seems to have had to go back some time to get that example. Such advertisements would not fill people with the repugnance that they feel at the advertisements on television for the social fund, whereby the Government have tried to con people into believing that the social fund gives people opportunities. We know that it makes people borrow at a time of great need and hardship.

It seems that the Government wish to be lord and master over their advertising and also to be lord and master over that of local authorities. The Government are especially keen to do that in those local authorities which, because of democratic elections, have a majority of Labour councillors. The Government's attitude is just part of the trend towards centralisation and authoritarianism. These measures should be strongly resisted, not just by the Opposition parties, but by all who value freedom and the right of local authorities, democratically elected, to run their affairs within their field of competence. I hope that the opposition to the code and the proposals will be heard loudly inside and outside the House.

1.44 am

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I must admit that when I read the code I had some reservations about some aspects of it. Having heard the Opposition's complaints about it, however, I now have no doubt that we should support it wholeheartedly.

Derbyshire county council provides us with some serious examples of bad practice in this matter. We often hear about what some of the loony Left authorities in London are doing, but we do not hear about what is happening in the rest of the country. Derbyshire county council issued a leaflet entitled "Reforming Schools—the True Facts Behind the Education Bill". It so happens that the leaflet, in the new Labour party colours, was distributed to children in every school throughout the country. I received letters from worried parents about this form of unsolicited propaganda peddling.

Mr. Boyes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: No. A number of hon. Members want to speak.

One parent wrote:

"Why was the letter delivered to me through my seven year old daughter being given the letter and pamphlet at school without the same even being put in an envelope? Was it intended that the letter and pamphlet should be read by my daughter?"

Another parent wrote:

"Frankly, I was disgusted that my son, aged 5, was used to further the socialist ends of the County Council in bringing home this letter"—

—*[Interruption.]* I am rather surprised that the Opposition should find this so funny——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it clear, even to someone as thick-skinned as me, that he does not propose to give way.

Mr. McLoughlin: If the Opposition were really interested in good local government practice, they would find this example offensive, as I do, but Opposition Members only laugh and shout about it.

The parent wrote:

"Frankly, I was disgusted that my son, aged 5, was used to further the socialist ends of the County Council in bringing home this letter and leaflet, both of which give a very biased view of the possible effects of the Government's proposed legislation. The letter and leaflet are nothing short of propaganda, and I feel that it is totally unnecessary to use children in this way."

I could quote other letters, but I shall not because of the lack of time.

Mr. Boyes: Would the hon. Gentleman like to comment on a leaflet issued by Wandsworth council, of which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment was a leader? It was quoted on 10 December 1985 in Standing Committee A:

"'£5,000 Making your Dream Home Competition. Listed in the boxes below are six home improvement projects that council tenants can undertake if they buy their own homes under the "Right to Buy" scheme. Simply list the improvements in order of popularity by putting "1" against the project you consider to be the most popular, and then numbering down to the least important, at 6.'"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 10 December 1985; c. 108.]

Entrants were asked to send their replies to the "House Sales Contest". What would the hon. Gentleman say if a Labour council was offering £5,000 prizes for such projects? He knows full well that it is absolute nonsense.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have not seen the leaflet and I cannot, and do not intend to, comment on it.

I wish to draw to the Minister's attention something that the county council proposes to do in the near future. One of the things that worries me is that, while the code may lay down the lines along which county councils can spend, Derbyshire county council intends to give £50,000 next week to the National Council for Civil Liberties and we do not know what sort of campaign the NCCL will conduct or what sort of leaflets it will issue. We know, however, that 14 fact sheets have been proposed on topics ranging from police questioning to aspects of section 28 of the Local Government Act, the poll tax and equal opportunities.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my hon. Friend include in his list of the misuses of ratepayers' money on publicity the investment of £305,000 made by Derbyshire county council from its pension fund in the failed Left-wing newspaper *News on Sunday*, the slogan of which was

"No tits but lots of balls"?

Is that included in my hon. Friend's list of political spending?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend knows as well as I do —and this has been confirmed by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House—that a full day's debate would not give enough time, let alone one this short, to draw out some of the lunacies that we in Derbyshire county have to suffer. We certainly suffer the highest rates.

I am concerned that the code does not go far enough. It may be all right in the short term but we may have to return to it. There is something very wrong in the way that ratepayers' money has been used in the way that it has on many occasions, and without there being any proper recourse or opportunity for questioning it. I know that reference can be made to the district auditor, but on those occasions when I have done so I have been advised that the auditor is not allowed to decide on the political nature of any campaign. He can only rule on its financial aspects and on whether or not they comply with the law. It is difficult to make a case that a particular campaign is out and out political propaganda.

I have reservations about the code, but the way in which the Opposition are complaining about it must mean that the code contains something that is good. Local government needs to achieve a reputation for good conduct and service to the community—not party politics. We only hear about the party political aspects from many local authorities, and I am grateful that the House will be approving the code this evening.

1.52 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The premise that local authority publicity should be subject to some control is reasonable, and clearly it is right that local authorities should not abuse the opportunities that they have to make party political points. We have argued that in respect of two Bills over three or four years.

The question tonight is whether this code represents the right way forward. Although we are nearly at the end of this debate, several important points have not been made as clearly as they might. First, all local authority associations, having been consulted, are very clear that they can regulate these matters themselves, and they have asked that that be the case. If those associations—across all parties—believe that they do not need the Government to act, it is an arrogant assertion of responsibility to do so when the Government cannot prove that there is any explicit need.

Secondly, the House has not yet debated the Widdicombe report, nor have the Government made any response to it. The Widdicombe committee made it clear that self-regulation was the best way forward. It would have been better to have so ordered our affairs that we debated the basic principles on the basis of a report commissioned by the Government, rather than dealt with this code first.

Thirdly, the Minister has not made clear the status of the code, because it will not be enforceable in law. It is not something that one will be able to pray in aid in the courts and a breach of which will be deemed illegal. There is nothing illegal in the descriptions given in the code. It concerns itself with matters that are not "appropriate or desirable" in the view of Ministers, and is indicative only. Thus, it is clear that the code is neither fish nor fowl.

Fourthly, last week the *Municipal Journal*, which is not a party political document, made it very clear in its editorial that the code's wording is a legal minefield. The most obvious example is breach of moral standards. Who is to define them? They are not defined in the code, and there is no indication as to how they will be defined, even if the code is generally enforceable.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who is not in his place, argued that it was wrong for a local authority—and he cited Hackney—to deal with matters that are not directly the council's responsibility. For example, the code will forbid local authorities along the Thames from having any say in whether or not helicopters or helipads will be allowed there, yet they would considerably affect the environment of people living by the Thames. The code would preclude local authorities with

an active nuclear power station or one about to be built in their area from being able to comment or inform their constituents and ratepayers about it.

Mr. Chope: That is not correct. If the hon. Gentleman looks at paragraph 19 of the code he will see why.

Mr. Hughes: Paragraph 4 says:

"In considering the subject areas in which publicity is to be issued, the following matters will be important . . . (iii) in areas where central government, another tier of local government, or another public authority have the primary service or policy responsibility, local authorities should issue publicity only on matters that are directly relevant to their own functions."

The reality is that nuclear power, heliports, and so on, are not directly relevant to their own functions and would possibly fall outside the code.

My next point—this has been put clearly already—is that it is hypocritical of the Government to say that there will be one law for them but a different law for us. The Government are spending more and more on their own publicity, which is not impartial. The noble Lord Young launched an enterprise initiative. The launch cost £36,000 and the stage was set in blue. That was in support of Government policy. We live in an age where the Government believe that it is sufficient for them to be able to argue their case by spending as much as possible while local councils cannot do anything that the Government think is inappropriate.

Dr. Reid: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that it is not just the extent of the Government's expenditure——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 149, Noes 100.

Division No. 439] **[1.56 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grist, Ian
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul

Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, which was laid before this House on 30th June 1988, be approved.

PETITIONS

Rating Reform

2.6 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am pleased to present the petition. It is fitting that I should do so on the day that consideration of the poll tax Bill has been concluded. Over 1,000 citizens have signed the petition, which has been collected by a group of individuals who are not members of any political party—Conservative, Liberal or Labour. These people are deeply concerned about the adverse effects and anti-democratic consequences of the poll tax.

The petition reads as follows:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of Bradford citizens sheweth that the proposed Poll Tax is unjust, will impose greater hardship on the poor, will damage democracy and will ignore ability to pay and calls upon Parliament to identify and implement a truly fair alternative to the present rating system.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House repeal the Poll Tax legislation and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc.

The petition represents the sensible road towards the repeal of the poll tax.

To lie upon the Table.

Nuclear Waste

2.9 am

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by 17,000 constituents from my constituency and that of my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). The 17,000 are protesting at the possible dumping of nuclear waste by Nirex in the Wash area. They have the full support of my hon. Friend and me. The idea of the petition was that of my hon. Friend, and he will present a copy of it to Nirex.

Any attempt by Nirex to dump nuclear waste in the beautiful area of the Wash would have devastating effects on the environment, on tourism and on small businesses. It would be met by bitter opposition and resistance, supported by myself and my hon. Friend.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the constituents of North West Norfolk and South Lincolnshire, showeth, That we are strongly opposed to the dumping of nuclear waste in Norfolk and the Wash.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for the Environment not to implement any such proposals.

This is the first shot across Nirex's bows. As the petition, which has been signed by 17,000 people, has been presented to the House, Nirex will be in no doubt about the strength of local opposition.

To lie upon the Table.

Ravenscraig Steelworks

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

2.10 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): We debated the future of Ravenscraig yesterday in the Scottish Grand Committee during the debate on industry in Scotland. The Under-Secretary of State has had an opportunity to read what my right hon. and hon. Friends and I said, and I have given him notice of further questions. If I take less than my allotted time, I hope that he will allow hon. Members to ask any further questions that might arise.

The impromptu statement, a fortnight ago, by Sir Robert Scholey that the closure of the hot mill at Ravenscraig in 1989 is "probable rather than possible" caused great concern in Scotland. The position has not been substantially changed by his letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland—which he read to the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday—in which he said:

"With the further strengthening of market conditions since December 1987, there is no reason for the Corporation at present to make plans to close the Ravenscraig strip mill."

Sir Robert Scholey did not spell out the details of production, plant loading and capacities since December 1987; I gave them in my speech in the Scottish Grand Committee. While hot-rolled coil production has been at 100 per cent. of manned capacity, and the Port Talbot hot mill has been working 21 shifts, the hot mills at Llanwern, Lackenby, and Ravenscraig have been working 15 shifts. If Llanwern and Lackenby increased to 21 shifts, on a strict pro rata basis, the production could have been achieved by loading the other mills at 99 per cent. of installed capacity and closing the Ravenscraig hot mill.

This allows nothing for the more difficult rolling programme at Ravenscraig, with electrical steels and small batches, and the loss of maintenance time on non-production shifts. The savings offered by the closure of the Ravenscraig hot mill would be minimal, as extra shifts would be required at Llanwern and Lackenby to replace those laid off at Ravenscraig. In practice, these circumstances justify the retention of the hot mill.

On the most generous interpretation, Sir Robert is saying in his letter that as long as those circumstances prevail there is no reason for British Steel to close the Ravenscraig hot mill. Amen. However, a temporary dip in the market, or the need for further investment in modernisation or major maintenance, would change the picture. British Steel has not changed its long-term view that there is one strip mill too many, or it would be announcing longer-term investment at Ravenscraig.

British Steel strip capacity is certainly still unbalanced. Continuous casting is the bottleneck. There is unused liquid steel capacity upstream, and unused rolling mill capacity downstream. There are minimal savings for British Steel in closing the Ravenscraig hot mill, but by closing it—I hope the Under-Secretary of State will note this—British Steel would ensure that when it had completed the continuous casting at Port Talbot and Llanwern there would not be a finishing mill which could take Ravenscraig's slabs, and the whole of Ravenscraig would be closed whatever the level of demand.

I repeat what I said in the Scottish Grand Committee: British Steel has a clear interest, with the degree of private monopoly power that it is being given as the sole United Kingdom bulk steel producer, in restricting capacity and forcing up prices to the limit of what more distant European competition will allow, which is flatly contrary to the national interest in efficient competitive production.

It is up to the Government to act. I warned the Government yesterday of the consequences if they do not. Ministers will reflect on the effect on potential investors in British Steel of an unresolved industrial dispute going to the heart of the company's strategy. If at any stage British Steel wanted to close the Ravenscraig hot mill in pursuit of its restrictive strategy, while urgently requiring the rest of the works for some years until its capacity can be replaced elsewhere, British Steel would be vulnerable to industrial action only within Ravenscraig. Steel workers would act only if they knew they had the support of public opinion in Scotland and beyond, and if they knew they were acting in defence of the competitive steel industry that the country requires. During such a strike, British Steel would lose profits at a rate of £60 million a year, which would increase permanently to £160 million if it closed Ravenscraig prematurely and lost market share, as it did in 1980.

My guess is that, on reflection, British Steel will go ahead with the installation of continuous casting at Port Talbot and Llanwern and leave Ravenscraig intact, with the thought that it could eventually be closed in one piece. That, however, is not acceptable. British Steel needs further development both in new technology and in market share in Europe if manufacturing industry and the economy generally is to prosper. The current deficit in the balance of payments is ample evidence of that. Ravenscraig has a key role to play in the steel industry of the future that the country needs.

Whether by selling Ravenscraig and its finishing mills as a separate entity, by restrictions from non-competitive behaviour under United Kingdom or European Community oversight, or in some other way, the Government must act if they are to avoid a major miscalculation—of which they have been warned—about the future of British Steel, and about Ravenscraig in particular.

Why does the recent report by Warburg Securities, the broker advising the Government on British Steel, give no information about present capacities and outputs, let alone planned future capacities and investment requirements? Is that not relevant to expected profits? It even manages to leave Ravenscraig out as a supplier of steel to Shotton, although it is the principal supplier. Warburg told me that it was dependent on what British Steel and the Government told it. It does not seem able even to read the publications of the International Iron and Steel Institute. So much for informing the stock market of what the Government are offering.

Why does the claim to £1,870 million tax losses in the British Steel annual report make no reference to the fact that the taxpayer met those losses by payments to British Steel under section 18 of the Iron and Steel Act 1982? Will not the Secretary of State use his powers under the British Steel Bill to prevent those losses being transferred to the successor company? It was one thing while the corporation could be required to pay dividends to the Secretary of State on public dividend capital; it is quite another for British Steel plc, once privatised, to pay dividends to private shareholders, being exempt from payment of

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

corporation tax by virtue of tax losses which the Exchequer has already met by payments under section 18. That is outrageous behaviour by the Government.

Why have neither the Government, British Steel, nor any of their numerous agents said anything about the writ from the West German Iron and Steel Association before the European Court of Justice, lodged a fortnight ago, complaining about £900 million of unauthorised state aid having been given to British Steel? Are these facts not relevant to the privatisation of the steel industry?

Mr. Peter Sutherland, the member of the European Commission for competition policy, has said that the Commission will have to monitor closely the implementation of the various stages of the privatisation process before full clearance can be given. I shall make sure that the emerging British Steel strategy, which is restrictive and a grave threat to Ravenscraig, is drawn fully to his attention, but it would be more sensible for the Government to act first.

2.19 am

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) for tailoring his speech to allow me to make a brief contribution. He speaks with great passion and knowledge on this matter. I shall confine myself to three points.

First, does the Minister appreciate that his handling of the future of the hot-strip mill has caused grave damage to whatever trust was left between the Government and those interested in maintaining the hot-strip mill and the Ravenscraig plant? As I have said before, there appears to have been suppression of information. It is quite incorrect for the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and other Ministers to say that what Sir Robert Scholey said two weeks ago is exactly what they have said all along. That is not the case. Sir Robert is on record as advising us that he told the Government as far back as 3 December of the probable closure of the hot-strip mill. Despite persistent questioning in the House and elsewhere, information was intentionally suppressed and that has done even more damage to trust in the Government's intentions.

My second point is on the letter about which my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South spoke in some detail. That letter was released yesterday by the Secretary of State for Scotland, having recently been received from Sir Robert Scholey. In certain quarters in Scotland there is a belief that that represents a reprieve for Ravenscraig and its hot-strip mill. That feeling is a direct result of the nature of the publicity given to that letter publicity that was directed and to some extent orchestrated by the Government.

We say that nothing has changed as a result of the letter. It opens with the words, "I thought it would be helpful". If it is helpful to anybody, the only one to whom it can be helpful is the Secretary of State for Scotland, because it appears that the letter has no purpose other than to preserve the illusion that no decisions will be taken about Ravenscraig until after it passes out of public control. That illusion has been intentionally created so that Ministers can say, "We regret it very much, but there is nothing that we can do because it is now in the private sector."

That brings me to my third point. Government strategy is not only an abandonment of responsibility by Ministers, but in the long run can lead to worse trouble, not only for Ravenscraig, but for the whole of British Steel. I say that because over the past few years the work force and those who support Ravenscraig have been extremely careful to exert pressure only through politicians, public vehicles of protest or campaigns. They have done that because Ravenscraig is in the public sector.

The work force has maintained a high level of productivity and has eschewed industrial action that could damage either British Steel or the Ravenscraig plant. If the Government continue their present strategy, which appears to be to push all decisions aside until after the plant is out of the public domain so that they can then wash their hands of it, they will leave people with no alternative—since they have pushed the matter back purely into the industrial sphere—but to consider some form of industrial action. I say that, not as a threat or on the basis of any direct line to anyone or with any secrets, but as an appreciation of how people are beginning to perceive this matter.

If industrial action took place, it would be dangerous for Government Ministers and for Ravenscraig and the communities that we represent. It would also be dangerous for the whole of British Steel. Even at this late stage I ask the Government to pay attention to the matter and to the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South. It is not impossible to resolve the difficulties. If we are to do that, we must eschew the tactics of the political fig leaf of vague communications and letters of intent. We must get down to the real problem, which is how to preserve a healthy, profitable and productive steel industry in Scotland, revolving around an integrated Ravenscraig plant.

2.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): I have listened with great interest to the points raised by the hon. Members for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) who, on many occasions in the House and in Committee, have expressed their concern about Ravenscraig. The future of the Ravenscraig steelworks is obviously a matter of great importance. Therefore, I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, has, at this late hour, and although he is not answering the debate, seen fit to be present. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I hope that the House appreciates his presence.

The position on the future of Ravenscraig is, however, wholly clear, and has been clear since December. By now hon. Members will be very familiar with the terms of the statement made by the chairman of British Steel on 3 December 1987 and conveyed to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. That statement seems quite unambiguous to me. My right hon. and learned Friend, when answering questions on his statement in the House, stated:

"As to the future of the strip mill, it is not possible to look beyond 1989 at the moment. Nobody is saying that it will close; we are saying that at the moment British Steel faces a serious problem with excess capacity. As a result, it is under-utilising all its strip mills, which is damaging efficiency and cannot go on indefinitely unless the market improves. Against that background, it is good news that the corporation

has decided that the right commercial course is to keep them all going until at least 1989. It will then have to decide whether the position has improved and what it intends to do."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 1114.]

There is no question of the nature of the position having been concealed. I am tempted to agree with the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, who said that nothing has changed, because nothing has changed since my right hon. and learned Friend made his statement to the House. The chairman of BSC has given no evidence to the Government suggesting otherwise. His review of 23 June 1988 in the corporation's latest annual report and accounts makes specific reference to the 3 December statement.

Furthermore, Sir Robert Scholey has recently written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, as he informed the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday, reaffirming the December 1987 statement, and adding that, with the further strengthening of market conditions since then, there is no reason for the corporation, at present, to make plans to close the Ravenscraig strip mill. In his recent interviews, and subsequently in his letter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, Sir Robert freely acknowledged BSC's dependence on the Ravenscraig steel-making plant, stating that British Steel has valuable assets in the Ravenscraig works for which it has a continuing need.

The position then is absolutely clear. British Steel continues to require Ravenscraig's steel-making capacity. No decision has been made to close any mill. The corporation will, however, need to keep the position under review in the light of market circumstances from time to time. I accept that this may not fully meet the concerns of those in Scotland who remain anxious about the future of Ravenscraig's strip mill, but I fear that in the commercial world in which any company operates the future will always contain uncertainties. British Steel has gone as far as it can go to provide reassurances in the face of that uncertainty, but it is simply a commercial fact of life that it can go no further.

The British Steel Corporation remains fully committed to the successful operation of its Scottish plants for as long as there is a market need for their production. This is shown in the investment directed towards the plants. In 1987-88 alone, for example, British Steel invested about £20 million in the Ravenscraig complex. Of this, fully £2·6 million was spent on improving facilities at the hot-strip mill. This scarcely seems to constitute evidence of a plot to run down or abandon the Ravenscraig works, but rather the reverse. Indeed, even the Arthur Young report found that there was no need for further substantial investment in Ravenscraig in the next few years.

I should like to consider the particular points that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South raised about which, as we expected, he has given us as much notice as possible. The hon. Gentleman made reference to the Warburg Securities research circular on investment at Ravenscraig. That report, entitled "Winning the Battle for Efficiency", appeared earlier this month. I stress that that document was produced independently of British Steel and the Government—the hon. Gentleman also made reference to that—and that its contents, including opinions and projections, are entirely the responsibility of Warburg Securities. Therefore, I do not want to debate the detailed content of that report with the hon. Gentleman.

However, I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern that the circular makes no direct reference to future investment at Ravenscraig. The Warburg document deals with future investment only in general terms, mentioning in passing only the most substantial likely future investment projects. Final decisions on these projects will be for the management of British Steel. As I have already mentioned, the Arthur Young report made it clear that there was no need for substantial investment in Ravenscraig in the next few years, so I do not find it surprising that the Warburg document made no reference to any such investment. There is nothing in any way sinister in that omission.

The hon. Gentleman referred to tax losses. British Steel's latest accounts show that the corporation has at present £1,870 million of accumulated tax losses. He may recall that the subject of tax losses was debated in Committee during the passage of the British Steel Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, explained in that debate that the provisions of clause 11(3) provided the Secretary of State with powers to direct, before privatisation, that the tax losses of British Steel shall be reduced by such an amount as he specifies. My hon. Friend said:

"That power of direction is necessary to allow the Secretary of State to effect some reduction of tax losses inherited by the successor company to take account of the capital restructuring provided for in the Bill. The purpose of the direction is to ensure that the company is not placed in an unduly favourable tax position. To the extent that the Secretary of State directs that the inherited tax losses be reduced, the successor company will pay more tax than the corporation would have done had vesting and the associated arrangements not taken place."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 21 April 1988; c. 718.]

Decisions have not yet been taken on the extent of any reduction in British Steel's tax losses, and I can do no more than note what the hon. Gentleman said.

The hon. Gentleman raised the German Iron and Steel Confederation's allegations that the BSC received more aid between 1980 and 1985 than was necessary for its restructuring programme, and more aid than was authorised by the Commission. We are convinced that there is no substance in those allegations. The European Commission has already firmly rebutted the first allegation, and we are confident that it will equally rebut the second. The facts are that the Commission approved the aid given to the BSC as part of the corporation's major restructuring programme. The BSC has received no Government subsidies since 1985, and all aid paid to the BSC by the Government before that date was approved by the Commission.

Dr. Bray: Do the two not interact, in that the tax losses allowed to the successor company would be construed as state aid if they were in any way over-generous?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman will recall that we discussed this at length in Committee and came to the general conclusion that, while there may have been a difference of opinion on the style and method of what we sought, there was agreement that no state aids were involved. It seems, from the good support given by the Commission, that it does not believe that the Government or the BSC have transgressed. We, the BSC and, it appears, the Commission believe that the German case is

[Mr. Atkins]

unfounded, so we shall rebut that claim. While it is a concern that it should exist, we have no doubt that this will eventually come out right.

I fully appreciate the strength of and the reasons for the concern felt by those most involved with Ravenscraig. But I do not feel that the concern can be met by artificial restrictions on British Steel as it returns to the private sector, or by proceeding to privatisation with a different configuration from that proposed. British Steel has given as full a statement of its expectations about the future of Ravenscraig and its strip mill as the uncertainties of the market place will allow. Subject to market conditions, it expects to require Ravenscraig's steelmaking and continuous casting into the mid-1990s. The hot-strip mill will stay open at least until next year, and British Steel has recently reiterated that it sees no reason to make any plans for its closure at present. There can be no unconditional guarantees in the commercial world. British Steel has given its clear and honest expectation. No more can reasonably be expected.

Dr. Bray: Before the Under-Secretary of State sits down, I wonder whether he could deal with the main issue, to which he has not responded. British Steel, as a private monopoly bulk steel producer in the United Kingdom, has a clear interest in restricting capacity and forcing up prices to the limit of what more distant European competition will allow. To correct that bias in its market power requires some action from the Government, which could take many forms. We propose the competitive structure, with Ravenscraig and its finishing mills being a separate entity, but a reference could be made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, or some action could be taken by the European Community, because of competition. If the Government simply leave the position with British Steel able to exercise a monopoly power, contrary to the interests of the workers and the needs of steel customers in this country, they must accept the consequences that will follow. Is there nothing that the Under-Secretary of State can say about that?

Mr. Atkins: I had sat down, but because of the courtesy with which the hon. Gentleman has approached this matter, I shall try to answer his question. We have always made it clear that we do not believe that there is a monopoly. We have suggested that a substantial amount of steel is being imported into this country, so there is not a monopoly. Therefore, we do not accept the premise on which the hon. Gentleman puts his case.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered on Monday 25 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 28 July.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 25 July.

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 28 July.

HARWICH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order).*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 25 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

1. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to encourage co-operation between local authorities and neighbourhood watch schemes over the siting of neighbourhood watch zone signs on lamp posts and other prominent places; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The display, otherwise than on highway land, of signs for approved neighbourhood watch schemes now have deemed planning consent. Signs on trunk roads, for example on lamp posts, that do not cause a hazard to traffic or pedestrians get immediate approval from the Department of Transport. The display of signs on other roads is a matter for local highway authorities. I hope that they will follow the Department of Transport's lead.

Mr. Riddick: I welcome the Government's attempts to facilitate the siting of neighbourhood watch signs. Will the Minister tell the House whether local authorities are following the Government's positive lead? Is he aware that in West Yorkshire the number of schemes in operation has increased from 160 at the beginning of last year to well over 500 and that that should make a significant contribution to deterring the would-be vandal and the would-be burglar?

Mr. Patten: A few councils, alas, are not being co-operative with the neighbourhood watch movement, and that is very disappointing. The increase in the numbers of neighbourhood watch schemes in West Yorkshire in the past 12 months that my hon. Friend has reported to the House is very pleasing. There are now nearly 56,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in the country, a phenomenal increase of some 60 per cent. over the number a year ago.

Mr. Worthington: On the theme of crime prevention, and given the recent publication of further work by Professor Alice Coleman showing that the design of public housing is an important factor in influencing crime rates, will the Minister contact the Department of the Environment and urge that a great deal of money be spent on public housing, to reduce crime rates? Unless that money is spent, neighbourhood watch schemes will be merely cosmetic.

Mr. Patten: The work of Professor Alice Coleman is extremely interesting and the theme of designing out crime has been accepted by people of all political views and all architectural and planning views in this country. My right hon. Friend and I are in constant contact with the Department of the Environment. Indeed, I met my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning yesterday afternoon at 3 o'clock and that was one of the issues that we discussed. I hope that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) is aware of the very substantial sums of money being spent by the Department of the Environment under the Estate Action scheme—£75 million this year has been devoted to crime prevention.

Mr. Hill: Will my hon. Friend call a meeting between the Southampton city council, the Hampshire chief constable and his Department to try to enable the neighbourhood watch scheme, with or without signs, to make some progress in the city of Southampton, which has a very high incidence of crime?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend raised that important point in his recent Adjournment debate, to which I replied. We are doing what we can to ensure that in Southampton, as in every other major city in the country, the neighbourhood watch movement continues to make the progress that this great citizens' movement is making throughout the country.

Guildford and Woolwich Bombing Cases

2. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to announce the outcome of his review of the Guildford and Woolwich bombing cases.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I expect to announce my decision fairly soon on whether to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Wall: Will the Home Secretary comment on the transfer of the Guildford prisoner Paul Hill to Winchester gaol, the 47th such move for this prisoner, which smacks more of *The Gulag Archipelago* or a Kafka novel than the practice of a democratic state? Will he assure the House that when he reaches a decision on the Guildford and Woolwich cases he will announce his decision in the House so that Members can question him?

Mr. Hurd: There are many operational and other reasons why prisoners are transferred from time to time and I shall not comment on Mr. Hill's transfers. The hon. Gentleman puts me in difficulty about his second point. As I have said, I hope to announce my decision fairly soon, but that does not mean within the next week. Since I told the House in January of last year that I saw no ground for referring this case to the Court of Appeal, a new matter has come forward. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have arranged for it to be investigated by the police. That investigation has now come to an end. I need to look all over again at the whole case, from the beginning. I intend to do that during the recess.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that the challenges to the decisions made by our system of justice are in many cases, especially those involving terrorist offences, beginning to take on the attributes of an industry? It is always possible to question individual items of evidence in the original trial, but it was the jury's function at that time to distinguish between right and wrong. Is it not harmful to our judicial system to go on and on and on questioning individual verdicts?

Mr. Hurd: It is because I agree with the general thrust of my hon. Friend's question that, like my predecessors, I have taken the clear line that reference to the Court of Appeal should be undertaken by the Home Secretary only when there is new and substantial matter that was not before the original jury.

Mr. Corbyn: When the Home Secretary is examining this material will he give an undertaking to the House—*[Interruption.]* I am sure you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that we are discussing an extremely important matter and that many people believe that there has been a very serious miscarriage of justice in the Guildford and Woolwich cases. One of the Guildford four, Paul Hill, is a constituent of mine. Will the Home Secretary undertake to look into the prison conditions of all the prisoners and carefully to examine what possible operational reasons there can have been for Paul Hill to be moved 47 times in 14 years and to have spent four years in virtual solitary confinement? Will the Home Secretary undertake to look sympathetically into the prison conditions and also to look—we hope very intently—at the evidence, which, I believe, demonstrates the innocence of the prisoners concerned?

Mr. Hurd: These people have been convicted by a court. Their cases went to appeal and the verdicts were upheld. Therefore they must expect to be treated as convicted persons—neither better nor worse than other people in that category.

Licensing Act 1988

3. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to bring the Licensing Act 1988 into effect and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): As I said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 14 July, it is intended that the commencement date for sections 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 16, 17 and 18 of the Licensing Act 1988 will be 1 August and that the remaining sections will be in force on or before 1 September, with the exception of sections 12 and 15, which are likely to be implemented on 1 March 1989.

Mrs. Shephard: Does my hon. Friend agree that under-age drinking, with its attendant hooliganism and yobbish behaviour, is a matter of increasing concern to the people of this country? How will the Act contribute to tackling that problem?

Mr. Hogg: The Act tightens up the provisions of section 169 of the principal Act, in that the element "knowingly" is deleted and an offence is now committed when there is a supply to an under-age person of alcoholic drink, unless —I use loose language—the licensee or his agent took reasonable care.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that in Sheffield last week a judge remarked that violence among drinkers leaving night clubs in the early hours had become virtually endemic? What assurance can he offer the people of Sheffield in the light of the impending legislation?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member will be encouraged to know that the Licensing Act 1988 makes provision for revocation orders in more extended circumstances and gives justices a greater power to refuse special certificates.

Mr. Couchman: Is my hon. Friend aware that his answer will come as a disappointment to the licensed trade, which had hoped to benefit from the new hours during the summer season this year? If my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary are confronted by anti-social behaviour from the young, yob tendency during the summer, will they bear in mind that the vast majority of people who enjoy a social drink do so in a moderate, well-behaved and sensible way? Will the Government resist the temptation to blame everything on drink and look for the more complex antecedents of anti-social behaviour?

Mr. Hogg: I am sorry that licensees will be disappointed. I accept the broad thrust of my hon. Friend's case that the majority of people who drink do so sensibly.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister accept that there is great concern throughout the United Kingdom at the ease with which young people and less-responsible older people have access to drink through off-licences? Normal, sensible and reliable people are exposed to continuing nuisance at all times of the day and night because of open, blatant drinking in places such as sunshine bars and in remembrance parks where we pay tribute to those who served in world wars. Will the Minister consider that

problem and endeavour to assist those local authorities that wish to see control exercised over the public nuisance that is created by those consuming alcohol?

Mr. Hogg: I could give the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) a number of answers. I remind him of the provisions of section 169 of the principal Act, which have been tightened up by the 1988 Act, and that there are provisions in the new Act for dealing with the supply of alcohol by under-age persons employed in off-licences. The hon. Gentleman will also know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is prepared in principle to approve a byelaw brought forward by Coventry city council, which addresses the kind of problem to which he referred.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend will know that the measures contained in the Act—particularly more flexible hours—are welcomed by the licensed trade. It also welcomes the more stringent regulations that will permit action to be taken against under-age drinkers, but how are licensees to know when a drinker is under age? At present, a publican serving an under-age drinker risks losing not only his licence but his livelihood and his home. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has recently been issued with an identity card by his local pub to prove that he is over the age of 18, why will the Home Office not support the move to a national identity card scheme?

Mr. Hogg: That is a very much wider question, to which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will, I believe, be making a response later. We are much in favour of the voluntary schemes that are now in place. The new Act, and particularly the amendment of section 169, will make some licensees a little more cautious than they have been hitherto. I make the point that only a minority of licensees have been acting improperly.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: As under-age drinking seems to have reached epidemic proportions in many parts of the country, and as the situation will probably grow worse with the introduction of all-day drinking, when will the Minister take action on the Masham committee report, and when will he announce the Wakeham committee's recommendations on under-age drinking? Do not the events of this summer prove the folly of legislating to relax licensing laws before anything is done about drink-related problems?

Mr. Hogg: As usual, the hon. Lady is mistaken. She either exaggerates or gets her conclusions wrong. The Licensing Act 1988 incorporates many of the recommendations of Lady Masham's report, and the Wakeham committee, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, has announced its conclusions frequently.

Mrs. Taylor: What are the Government doing?

Mr. Hogg: I hear the hon. Lady chattering from the Front Bench. One of the things that we are doing is drawing to the attention of the police and the courts all the procedures and provisions that exist in statute, and they are extremely comprehensive.

Uniformed Police (Sussex)

4. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he anticipates there will be an increase in the number of uniformed police on the beat in Sussex.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will consider the application from Sussex police authority for more police officers, along with similar applications from other police authorities, before making the next allocation of additional police posts under the programme which he announced in May 1986. We cannot at this stage give an exact date for the decision.

Mr. Higgins: My hon. Friend will recall that in March 1987 he issued a press statement saying that 66 additional police were to be provided in Sussex to enhance operational police strength, mainly in terms of increasing patrol cover and community policing. That statement was completely untrue. There has been no increase in the number of police on the beat in Sussex. When will my hon. Friend put the matter right?

Mr. Hogg: I understand my right hon. Friend's concern, and he has always put his case with much vigour, but I have to say that I do not agree with his conclusions. Since May 1979, for example, the police establishment in Sussex has increased by 121, and the number of civilians employed by 154. Even allowing for the fact that 109 of the police officers have been allocated to Gatwick duty, there has none-the-less been a significant increase in the number of police officers available for operational duty.

My right hon. Friend will be aware—and I think that he will welcome it—that at Worthing there has been a change in the operation of the uniformed and crime process units, which I am glad to say has significantly increased the amount of time available for patrol duties by all officers in these units.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Was the most recent request for extra police for Sussex met in full? Perhaps the Minister might extend it to Kent.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Sussex.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If it was not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should confine the question to Sussex.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If it was not met in full for Sussex, why was it also not met in full for Cumbria? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is an absolute abuse of our procedure to try to ask a question on a completely different topic.

Police Cells (Prisoners)

5. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the number of prisoners held in police cells since his statement of 30 March, *Official Report*, column 1083.

Mr. Hurd: The number of prisoners held in police cells has fallen from 1,374 on 30 March to 690 yesterday. I make that a reduction of 684.

Mr. Baldry: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Monday's Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community" will help to reduce our prison population by providing more tough but non-custodial sentences?

Mr. Hurd: I hope so, but that will be up to the magistrates and judges who pass sentence. If these ideas bear fruit, they will have a wider range of disposals, including tough punishing disposals, outside prison.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Home Secretary aware that many of the people held in police cells are youngsters of 18 and under, who are held there because there are not places in many of the prisons? Some of them are held in prisons such as Armley in Leeds. The Minister told me in a written answer last Friday that two youngsters aged 18 and 17 had committed suicide there. I have been informed by the probation service that there have been three suicides during a period of a few weeks. Will the Home Secretary set up an investigation and let us know what is going on in Leeds?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is ranging wide, but it is true that police cells are not the right places for prisoners, whatever their age, and that is why we are working, with increasing success, to reduce numbers. They have already been halved and I expect, without making any rash promises, that we shall make further progress as new prisons open—we have two new prisons opening in the latter part of this year—and as Ashford remand centre is reopened. As we develop the prison building programme and it comes into effect that will also relieve overcrowding in places such as Armley.

Mr. Wheeler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with over 69,000 persons received into prison last year, his Green Paper has been received exceptionally well as one of the most thoughtful and far-reaching contributions for many decades on the complicated problem of keeping non-violent offenders out of prison and finding alternatives for those persons who might otherwise be remanded in custody? Will not ideas such as tracking, curfew orders and even experiments with electronic monitoring do much to contain the prison population and reduce the problem created by the number of people on remand?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, with his experience of these matters, for that commendation. I hope that the Green Paper will be studied by right hon. and hon. Members and, more important, by those whose responsibility it is to judge, case by case, how they should sentence those who have been convicted.

Mr. Cox: Is the Home Secretary aware that the continuation of this policy is an utter disgrace, that people who are held in police cells on remand are denied the rights that people held in prison have, and that magistrates, police consultative committees and the police themselves condemn that policy? When will the Home Secretary stop it?

Mr. Hurd: The policy is to reduce and eventually do away with the use of police cells for prisoners. We have halved the number of people so held since the beginning of March, so we are half way to achieving that. Part of that policy consists of the prison building programme, which Opposition Members have consistently opposed and criticised. That has brought 6,000 prison places into being since June 1983 and aims to produce 22,000 new places in all by the mid-1990s.

Identity Cards

6. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of calls for membership cards for football supporters, he will re-examine the introduction of national identity cards to aid the fight against disorderly and lawless behaviour.

Mr. Hurd: Membership cards for football supporters is a separate question from the issue of compulsory identity cards for everyone. We remain to be persuaded that there is a sufficiently strong case for the introduction of universal compulsory identity cards.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, but I am somewhat disappointed, since we have read in our newspapers that such a study is going on. Surely my right hon. Friend must agree that as we already must have various identity cards the principle has been accepted in many situations. Certainly the police in Dorset would be happy to see national identity cards as an additional aid to fighting crime. Such cards would help those football clubs that are introducing membership cards to do so correctly. They would also help a great deal in registering everybody for the community charge and in all sorts of ways, such as fighting benefit and other kinds of fraud.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend raises a number of points. A national identity card system would not be much use to football clubs. They are being asked to produce a selective scheme, whereas the national identity card would be universal. That means that they will want to keep out of their scheme people who would, under my hon. Friend's idea, have a national identity card. That illustrates the point. My hon. Friend has been reading the newspapers, as I have also, and what is said about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's supposed activities is simple make-believe. It is true that I have asked the police for an up-to-date and considered assessment. Their established view has been that they do not think that a system of compulsory national identity cards, with associated powers for the police, would help them. They have thought that the disadvantages would outweigh the advantages. In view of the renewed interest in the House and elsewhere in the subject, I have asked them for their considered and updated view.

Mr. Benn: Has the Home Secretary considered the moral issues that are raised by the fact that the Government are contemplating a police computer dossier on every citizen in the country, while the Home Secretary is presenting a White Paper on official secrets that would deny to the electors knowledge about what the Government are doing? The proposed legislation will be of the kind that has concealed from public attention crimes committed by people such as Peter Wright, who describes in detail in his book crimes committed by the security service against the liberties of the subject. How does that fit in with the glorious revolution, which is supposed to have safeguarded our political liberties?

Mr. Hurd: Surely that is the right hon. Gentleman's speech for tomorrow. I do not think that it arises from this question.

Sir Peter Hordern: Will my right hon. Friend consider the issue of identity cards, not only in relation to lawless behaviour, but to enable those who have the right to seek supplementary benefit and social security to do so easily and conveniently when the new computer system comes into use? Is it not time that we thought about the issue of identity cards to do away with the degrading conditions that exist in so many social security offices?

Mr. Hurd: It is perfectly reasonable that that idea should be thought about. I foresee a continued growth of cards such as the one that my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) showed the House just now, which he carries as a matter of convenience to identify himself for specific purposes. I think that such cards will increase. There is a very substantial difference, however, between those cards, which I believe will increase and which are useful, and a scheme by which everyone in the country would be compelled to have a national indentity card and in which the police had powers to compel people to produce those cards.

Mr. Hattersley: I welcome the Home Secretary's first answer. Like him, I believe that a system of compulsory national identity cards would not make up in its contribution to a reduction in crime what we would lose in civil liberties.

The Home Secretary's second answer concerned the police feasibility study. I urge him to follow his instinct on the matter, which is to use if for his speech at the Tory party conference and then to forget about it.

Mr. Hurd: I believe that the police view is important, but it is not necessarily decisive. The matter is for Parliament to decide, of course. However, I think that it is important to discover whether the established police view, which is the one I described and with which the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) as a former Home Secretary is familiar, is still maintained.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the greatest protections afforded to the terrorist, the hooligan, the illegal immigrant and even the under-age drinker is anonymity? In an age when credit cards are commonplace, will my right hon. Friend agree to consider the matter in depth? People should be issued with identity cards, although they need not necessarily carry them. They should, however, be available.

Mr. Hurd: I do not really believe that the determined terrorist with whom we have to deal would be especially detected or deterred by a system of national identity cards that did not require him to carry any such document.

Concessionary Television Licences

7. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement concerning his policy towards the provision of concessionary television licences to pensioners.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): No. The matter was fully discussed in the debate in the House on 12 July.

Mr. Livsey: Now that the Government have decided to put up the concessionary television licence from 5p to £5, will the Minister seek to end the discrimination between one group of pensioners living in a small street who pay the full licence fee and others who do not? Surely the time is right for all pensioners to have a concessionary television licence of £5, as has recently been introduced.

Mr. Renton: No, Sir. The purpose of the new regulations that we brought in was to return help under the scheme to those for whom it was originally intended, who were not those living in mainstream housing. If we followed the hon. Gentleman's suggestion it would mean a substantial increase in the licence fee for everyone else —about 50 per cent. if we were to give free licences for all pensioners—and that would greatly damage some people who are not pensioners, and who are much worse off than some pensioners, such as those on income support.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Have we not just heard a classic example of SLD woolly thinking? If free television licences were given to all pensioners, a lot of very affluent people would be getting their television licence at no cost at all, while others on limited incomes and looking after children would have to pay.

Mr. Renton: Before I answer my hon. Friend's question, perhaps he could define the SLD for me. Of course it is woolly thinking, which does not try to concentrate help on those most in need. It is not a thought-out or practical policy in any sense of the word.

Mr. Corbett: We know that the Government and their supporters do not like the concessionary licence scheme in any event, but will the Minister at least reconsider the Peacock committee's suggestion of exempting pensioner households which depend on means-tested benefit as a start and concentrating help in that way? Or is he saying that those of us at work would resent paying the estimated £5 a year extra that it would cost to give such help to the 1½ million pensioners who would qualify?

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Gentleman in the debate last week, the point behind the Peacock recommendation is that if anyone should get a concessionary television licence it should not be pensioners specifically, but those on income support. That is the point to which Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen failed to address themselves, and they have returned instead to the simple election bribe of free television licences for all pensioners.

Mr. Kilfedder: Will the Minister look again at this question? Many pensioners to whom I have talked ask for compassion from the Government. Does the Minister accept that many pensioners live on their own, often far from municipal and shopping centres, and that their movements are restricted virtually to the four walls of their dwelling and their garden? The television opens the world to them. Will the Minister therefore grant concessionary television licences to pensioners?

Mr. Renton: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point about the importance of television to many pensioners. However, I would point out that last spring when representatives of the National Federation of Retirement Pensioners Associations called on my hon. Friend the Minister of State and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who was then at the Home Office, they made it absolutely plain that they opposed free television licences for pensioners because most pensioners do not want to seem to be supported by such charity.

Special Constables

8. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Devon and Cornwall on the use of special constables at weekends to police towns and villages in Cornwall.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Deployment of the special constabulary is an operational matter for individual chief officers. I understand from the chief constable of Devon and Cornwall that in Cornwall special constables are deployed at weekends to assist with such occasions as local carnivals and fetes and to assist with local crime prevention initiatives.

It is common for the special constabulary to police rural towns and villages at weekends in support of regular police officers.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister may like to know that my constituents, particularly in Truro and St. Austell, have reported considerable feelings of intimidation to me. In the light of that, I have on a number of occasions asked for more full-time constables, but the Government will not give the Devon and Cornwall constabulary the numbers that it would like. Will the Minister therefore look into the question to see whether the excellent work done by the special constabulary, whose numbers have risen recently, cannot be used to mitigate some of my constituents' worries, particularly on Friday and Saturday evenings?

Mr. Hogg: I am very much in favour of the special constabulary, which can, indeed, do a valuable job. In terms of the manpower available to the force, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that since May 1979 the number of police in his county force has risen by 133 and the number of civilians by 160. He will also be pleased to know that the force has a clean-up rate well above the national average and that the number of offences per 100,000 of the population is well below the national average.

Mr. Harris: I welcome the figures just mentioned by my hon. Friend, but is he aware that the 800 or so special constables in the counties of Devon and Cornwall between them now account for 80,000 hours of policing? Does he agree that this is a public-spirited duty, and will he do all he can to encourage people to join this excellent force?

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said. I must declare an interest: I was once a member of the special constabulary. *[Laughter.]* When they are properly trained and doing their stuff, they are extremely useful.

Fire Services (Accident Response Time)

9. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance to the fire services to provide a minimum response time by fire tenders for accidents on major trunk roads.

Mr. John Patten: No, Sir. Fire authorities have a discretionary power to use their fire brigade for non-firefighting purposes such as attendances at road accidents. We are not persuaded that it would be appropriate or necessary to prescribe a minimum response time for such work.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that serious risk to life is involved if there is unnecessary delay in responding to the serious accidents that often occur on dangerous roads, such as the A1 in my constituency? Will he therefore reconsider his guidance to the fire authorities on the discretionary use of fire appliances in those circumstances?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know of his concern about the number of road accidents and the service given to those involved in them on the A1 in his constituency. This issue was last examined by the relevant joint committee in 1985, as my hon. Friend knows. At that stage, no recommendation such as my hon. Friend would like was made. However, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is considering setting up a new joint committee to look at the use of fire appliances to see whether such instruction about the hitherto discretionary use should be changed in some way.

Mr. McCartney: Response times to fires on trunk roads are constantly reviewed by fire authorities. The major problem is not mistakes made by fire authorities or unprofessional conduct on their part, but the millions of pounds that have been cut from fire authority budgets, last year and this year. The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) would be well advised to support Opposition Members, who have consistently tried to improve fire authorities' resources so as to improve the times taken to get to accidents and fires and to improve the overall performance of fire authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Patten: That is nonsense. Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire Services constantly monitors the service given by fire services and by all fire authorities in the kingdom.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend will agree that, in spite of the Government's excellent road building programme, because of the increasing congestion on our major roads it is not possible, even with the best will in the world, for our emergency services to get through to the scenes of accidents. Is it not time for a major review to examine the role of helicopters in the emergency services, such as those that are available in West Germany, where helicopters are called in as a matter of course to serious accidents on major roads?

Mr. Patten: That is kept under review as we review the workings of the excellent emergency services in this country. My hon. Friend has put his finger on a fast developing problem.

Risley Remand Centre

10. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the report on Risley remand centre following his answer to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 30 June, *Official Report*, column *301*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: One hon. Member has asked a question about implementation of suicide prevention measures and questions have been asked in another place about action on the report. I have had two letters from hon. Members, and three from the general public. The required suicide prevention procedures have been carried out since the

inspection and measures are being taken, as the hon. Gentleman knows, to ensure an immediate and continuing improvement in conditions at Risley.

Mr. Wigley: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there was a general welcome for the rigorous nature of Judge Tumim's investigation, however disturbing its consequences? Is he further aware that there was a welcome for his positive attitude to it? As the future of Risley, as he sees it, is as a local prison, will he give an undertaking that there will be alternative remand facilities in north Wales, to avoid having to send people from that area to Risley?

Mr. Hurd: I shall look into that point and write to the hon. Gentleman. I am grateful for his general remarks. To use his terms, the report certainly was rigorous and disturbing, and I hope he feels that, as he said, our response to it was timely and vigorous.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend believe that grisly Risley is a good advertisement for public sector prisons?

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend waits until next week he will see how I propose that we should experiment with the private management of remand prisons.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Home Secretary take this opportunity to say a word on behalf of the prison officers at Risley, many of whom live in Culcheth where I live and are bitter and resentful about the way in which they have been treated by this report? Will he confirm that the crumbling, overcrowded conditions at Risley have nothing to do with the prison officers, but everything to do with the incompetence of the Home Office?

Mr. Hurd: The problems at Risley are the result of the same phenomenon that afflicts many of our prisons and most of our remand centres, namely overcrowding, which until recently has been unrelieved by a decent prison building programme. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the staff at Risley have been undergoing a serious and testing time. I do not think that they complain about the nature of the report. I know that they have been disturbed by some of the headline publicity surrounding it, but I believe that they support the action that we have taken.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Jack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the National Union of Teachers is wrong yet again when it blames Government policies for violence in schools? Does she agree also that, as discipline starts at home, that may be difficult for some parents to achieve because they were victims of the NUT's approach to teaching in the permissive 1960s?

The Prime Minister: I agree that young children's conduct is usually laid down by the standards that are set at home long before they go to school. It is wrong to attribute violence in schools and elsewhere to any one set of causes. It is a very complex phenomenon, and we wish to see as much kindly discipline in the home as possible and to support those teachers who are trying to give discipline and good teaching in the classroom.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to explain to families in Britain how a large rise in their mortgage payments combats inflation?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman saw the figures published yesterday, he will know that there was a necessity to tighten the money supply. I shall repeat what the Chancellor said in his Budget speech:

"Short-term interest rates remain the essential instrument of monetary policy. Within a continuous and comprehensive assessment of monetary conditions, I will continue to set interest rates at the level necessary to ensure downward pressure on inflation."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 192, c. 997.]

That is what he has done and I support it.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell the people of this country, in the plain language that they deserve to hear, how it is that the average mortgage payer, paying an extra £22 a month for the mortgage on his home, is helping to combat inflation?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman understood anything about monetary policy, he would not need even to ask that question. Of course an increase in interest rates, when it comes to a certain limit, puts up mortgage interest rates. Of course that takes other pressure of demand out of the economy. Of course that helps the money supply.

Mr. Kinnock: I recall that in the Budget four months ago, the Government got their inflation forecast, their balance of payments forecast and their money supply forecast hideously wrong. Will the Prime Minister, who once said that steep rises in mortgage rates were the result of Government economic mismanagement, explain how big rises in mortgage payments combat inflation?

The Prime Minister: We do not take lectures on inflation from the Labour party—*[Interruption.]* For one month the Labour party got inflation down to 7·4 per cent., which was the lowest. Prices rose about as much in a single year during the last Labour Government as they have in the whole of my right hon. Friend's five years as Chancellor.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Without anticipating the contents of the Queen's Speech may I ask my right hon. Friend, whether she agrees that it is vital to introduce legislation in the next Session to ban experiments on the human embryo, a measure for which there would be overwhelming support in the House?

The Prime Minister: I cannot anticipate everything that will be in the Queen's Speech. I know that very strong views are held on that matter on both sides of the opinion divide and that those views are not necessarily across party lines. We shall need a very great deal of debate before we decide precisely what to put into legislation.

Q2. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cox: The Prime Minister and I are both London Members and we are both aware of the enormous increase in house prices in London. Can she tell first-time buyers in London, who are estimated now to have to find another £40 per month on mortgage repayments, how they are better off under her policies? Is that not yet another example of the callous indifference that she shows towards people trying, with all the difficulties of housing in London, to obtain a home while she puts yet further problems in their path?

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier, it is absolutely vital to keep downward pressure on inflation, because the worst thing for everyone would occur if we had the kind of inflation that was customary under the Labour Government. May I point out to the hon. Gentleman, also as a London Member, that the number of people who own their own houses has greatly increased under this Government and will continue to do so. We shall continue the policy of tax relief on mortgages.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the phrase "cruel and unusual punishment" which appears in the Bill of Rights that we celebrated yesterday. Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the Home Office might find itself accused of just that should a prisoner unfortunately be locked up in a cell with a member of the Opposition who has wilfully refused to pay his taxes?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made his point more effectively than I could. He is well aware that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has recently published a White Paper on suitable punishments.

Q3. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to explain to the House why, last night, she cast her vote to force handicapped people to pay the full rate of poll tax?

The Prime Minister: For the very good reasons that were given at the time and also because of the enormous increase in benefits that the Government have given to the disabled over the years. We have increased spending on benefits for the long term sick and disabled by more than 80 per cent. over and above inflation, to almost £6·75 billion. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the mentally handicapped are not liable to the community charge. The physically disabled can receive up to 80 per cent. rebates at higher levels of income than other people, and if they are on income support they will receive help with the other 20 per cent.

Q4. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the practice whereby an elected councillor—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we can conduct Prime Minister's Question Time in good order today.

Mrs. Peacock: —whereby elected councillors in one borough obtain cushy jobs in a nearby borough at the expense of ratepayers, as Miss Linda Bellos has done, should be outlawed? Will my right hon. Friend take steps to ensure that the recommendations of the Widdicombe report are put into operation as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has taken a specific example of the things of which the Widdicombe report complained and about which it made proposals to deal. A White Paper is due out on the Widdicombe proposals later today. I have reason to think that it will contain something about the point that my hon. Friend raises.

Mr. Beith: Whose view does the Prime Minister support on exchange rate management and joining the EMS—that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or that of her adviser over the water, Professor Walters? Is she satisfied to preside over a divided Government? If not, which one will she back, and which one will she sack?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to preside over a Government who have such an excellent economic policy, which has produced prosperity at a level undreamed of before in this country. I congratulate the Chancellor on his excellent policies.

Q5. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Ministerif she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Nicholson: In her busy day, has my hon. Friend had time to congratulate the Secretary of State for the Environment on the successful passage of the Local Government Finance Bill—an infinitely fairer, more just and superior system than any combination of local income tax and fresh property tax?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the new community charge is far fairer than the existing rating system. It is far fairer than any system based on domestic rating revaluation, which would have been extremeley unfair. It is infinitely fairer than any of the Opposition's proposals for an income tax and capital values, which would hit old people very much and mean that everyone would have to reveal his income to their local authority.

Mr. Terry Davis: Does the Prime Minister appreciate that people's views of the effects of the Local Government Finance Bill will be influenced by their experience of recent legislation, such as the changes in social security? What has the Prime Minister to say to my constituents, such as an unemployed man who this week was told by the social fund officers at Erdington in Birmingham that he must live in an unfurnished flat and that he could not have a crisis loan to buy a cooker or a bed because they considered that it was not a crisis or a risk to health to be without a bed or a cooker?

The Prime Minister: I am not going to comment on things that the hon. Gentleman suddenly puts to me. He is aware that the amount that has been allocated to the social fund is very similar to that which has been spent in past years—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must hear the answers that are given.

The Prime Minister: The amount that this Government spend on social security benefits of one kind or another is £50 billion—greatly in excess of that spent before.

Q7. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Shephard: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Royal College of Nursing has set a very good example to the rest of the trade union movement in its attitude to industrial relations, especially in its refusal to go on strike? Does she consider that its attitude may have something to do with the fact that, according to today, *The Guardian*, it has been refused a place to set up its stall at this year's Labour party conference in Blackpool? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules apply to both sides of the House.

The Prime Minister *rose [Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is intolerable for questions to be asked but for the answers not to be heard.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Royal College of Nursing is a most excellent professional body that sets extremely high standards. It does not believe in going on strike. It puts its commitment to its patients first. I should have thought that that would be applauded by both sides of the House.

Mr. Turner: The Prime Minister will remember a visit that she paid to my beloved Bilston, where she purchased two large hat pins. In view of her alleged disagreements with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, were they purchased for deflationary purposes?

The Prime Minister: I warmly endorse and applaud the policies of both my right hon. Friends to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. Sometimes I want hat pins to stir some Opposition Members.

Q8. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the introduction of a national identity card would not only help to control crime but would help with football hooliganism and under-age drinking, and should be feared only by those who have something to hide?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary answered a question on that matter earlier. A number of cards are used for different purposes. They may be used to purchase drink, to ensure that one is over age, and they may be needed in football grounds. I doubt whether the case has yet been made for a compulsory system of national identity cards, with all that that means. Nevertheless, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has asked the police to update their views on the matter. We would need to make a strong case, and to prove it before a compulsory system of national identity cards is ever introduced.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for the next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 25 JULY—Remaining stages of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]*

TUESDAY 26 JULY—Opposition Day (19th Allotted Day). Until about Seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Inadequacy of the Government's Transitional Scheme on Housing Benefit". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "The Safety of and Service to the Travelling Public". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motions relating to social security regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 27 JULY—Motion relating to the statement of changes in the Immigration Rules.

Motion on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) Order.

Motion relating to the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) Order.

Motion relating to the Building Societies (Transfer of Business) Regulations.

Motion to take note of EC document on social legislation relating to road transport. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 28 JULY—Motion for the Summer Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

FRIDAY 29 JULY—Debates on the motion for the Adjournment.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords Amendments and Messages which may be received.

[Relevant documents:

Monday 25 July 1988: 6048/88: Social regulations for road transport.

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee: HC 43-xxix (1987-88) para 2.

Tuesday 26 July: Child Benefit (General) Amendment Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1227)

Income Support (General) Amendment No. 3 Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1228)

Income Support (Transitional) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1229)

Social Security (Credits) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1230)]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. It is an improvement on last week's statement in that, at least so far, no guillotines are proposed for the forthcoming week.

To save the Government legislative time, will the Leader of the House tell us whether the Government propose to accept the Lords amendments to the Health and Medicines Bill and abandon proposals to charge for dental and eye examinations?

Will the House have an opportunity before the end of the Session to debate the proposals for phase 2 of the new parliamentary building in Bridge street? Will that be a substantive motion so that work can go ahead?

In view of the Leader's wider duties to protect the interests of this elected House as a whole and Back Benchers in particular, is it not shameful that he has failed to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? If Scottish Tories are too idle to serve on their own Select Committee, surely the legendary discipline of Tory Whips could be used to get some English volunteers. Will he either set up the Committee or arrange for a debate so that he can explain to the people of Scotland why they are being treated with such contempt?

Does the Leader of the House recall promising on Thursday 7 July that a Defence Minister would write to my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who unfortunately cannot be here this afternoon, and explain how it was that, in May 1984, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley), then a Defence Minister, told the House:

"No such strip searches have been carried out at RAF Greenham common."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1984; Vol. 60, c. *552*.]

when the Government agreed to pay compensation to a woman because she was strip-searched at Greenham common at that time?

Having received a copy of the letter which seeks to explain away all this, may I ask the Leader of the House to arrange for the Member concerned to come to the House to face the music because the letter contains contradictory claims about what happened which would not come well from a petty criminal in a magistrates' court? Surely the Leader of the House cannot expect my hon. Friend to accept the explanation that the Minister did not understand that for the police to force a woman to take off her clothes—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We are discussing the business for next week. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will confine his questions to that.

Mr. Dobson: This issue should have been on the business for this week. All that I am asking is that the Leader of the House makes sure that the right hon. Gentleman who gave that misleading answer comes to the House to explain how it came about.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has asked me four questions that are nearly about next week's business. First, he asked me about the Health and Medicines Bill. As he knows, the Bill is still before another place and it would not be appropriate for me to discuss in any detail matters which are being dealt with by another place. However, the discussions in another place did not produce any new arguments in relation to the introduction of optical and dental examination charges. We remain of the view that it is right to introduce such charges. Our proposals rightly exempt those whose circumstance are such that they cannot afford to pay. We do not accept that those who are not exempt will be deterred from seeking treatment because of the charges. The charges are part of a package which will make a significant contribution to the improvement of primary health care.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about the new building Sub-Committtee report, I confirm that it is my intention to arrange a debate on the report in the spillover. The terms of the motion are, perhaps, best left for discussion through the usual channels.

I am sorry that, in spite of having said this to the hon. Gentleman a great many times, he still does not understand the position with regard to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I have made proposals to the Opposition which were unacceptable to them, and that is why the Select Committee has not been set up. I have stated my willingness to hold a debate on this matter. The timing of the debate is best left for discussion through the usual channels.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks about my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) were absolutely disgraceful. I shall see to it that the letter of explanation that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces sent to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) is published so that people can see the explanation that he gave. My right hon. Friend stands by the answer that he gave on 21 May 1984, which was based on a Ministry of Defence police investigation which found no evidence to support the allegations of strip searches at Greenham common. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has totally misunderstood the proceedings that took place in the Newbury court.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will it be possible some time in the future to have a debate on the issue of sanctions against South Africa so that we can examine carefully the precedents set by the previous Governments who, when apartheid was even more oppressive than it is now, far from opposing sanctions spent vast sums of taxpayers' money to encourage trade with South Africa, and so that we can probe carefully the humbug of the Opposition?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate on that next week. However, I should point out to him, in case he has not already spotted it, that with a little ingenuity on his part there are a number of occasions when he could raise the issue.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House accept that the proposal that was put to the Opposition parties with regard to the setting up of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs would have entailed a change in the Standing Orders of this House which would not have meant "business as usual" which is what his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said would happen after the last election and that therefore it is not surprising that the Opposition parties found the proposal unacceptable?

Secondly, is the fact that we have not yet had the debate on the defence estimates—although the defence White Paper was published a considerable time ago, and we have received the report of the Select Committee on Defence—a reflection of the fact that the Government are finding it increasingly difficult to meet our defence commitments with the resources available? Can we expect a debate early in the spillover?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the debate on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs will be interesting because, obviously, different points of view will be put, but I stand by what I said a moment ago to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

The Select Committee on Defence has now reported on the defence White Paper and I hope that it will be possible for me to say something about a debate on that in my next business statement.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Welcome back.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I assure my right hon. Friend that there is no one in Scotland who knows what a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is, does, or what it has ever done and they do not want to?

When can we have a debate on foreign affairs so that we can advise the Foreign Office that there is no doubt as to what happened at Katyn, and who executed 10,000 members of the Polish officer corps? There is a memorial in London that bears the word "Katyn 1940". If the Foreign Office imagines that that massacre occurred at the hands of the Germans, perhaps it can explain how that could be since there were no German soldiers at Katyn for another year.

Mr. Wakeham: I must say that I am delighted to see my hon. and learned Friend in his place and he makes his points with his usual clarity. We had a debate on foreign affairs recently, but I recognise that there is pressure for another one. Unfortunately, I cannot promise my hon. and learned Friend such a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Rather than leave it to deepest August, could there be an announcement next week about the future commissioners from our country to Brussels? Has the Leader of the House noticed Peterborough in *The Daily Telegraph*, which suggests that the paramount consideration is the need to clear the Prime Minister's conscience:

"Of the 'need to do something for Leon'"

What could possibly be on her conscience that needs clearing, and should we not have a statement about it next week?

Mr. Wakeham: The present commissioners will hold their posts until the end of the year. No decisions have been taken about possible successors and the early press speculation has embraced more than one name.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Since a ceasefire has been announced in the Iran-Iraq war, may we have a statement next week from Her Majesty's Government about the future of the Armilla patrol?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government welcome Resolution 598, as well as the Secretary-General's announcement about the Iran-Iraq war. Whether that requires a statement from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is a matter that I must refer to him for guidance.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Returning to the vexed issue of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, does the Leader of the House accept that his statement today seems to be a strange reversal of his earlier commitment that there should be a debate about this matter before the House rises? Will he not accept that the Government's failure to address this matter next week shows a continuing contempt for Scotland, and that that contempt will be seen against the background of the Government's failure to offer a real debate on the future of Ravenscraig, given that the Prime Minister seems to be unable to interpret exactly

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

the words of Sir Robert Scholey and given the prevarication of the Secretary of State for Scotland about this matter this week in the Scottish Grand Committee? Does he not accept that there should be a full-scale debate on Scottish affairs, and particularly Ravenscraig, before the House rises?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the case for a debate on Scottish affairs and I recognise that there would be plenty of hon. Members who would want to take part, but I do not accept for one moment what the hon. Lady has said. The fact that I seek to get agreement through the usual channels as to when is the most convenient time to have such a debate is not evidence of contempt for the House; it shows that I take some trouble and care about such matters.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): With a view to action next week in a statement, will my right hon. Friend please reread the *Hansard* for Monday's Question Time, which I believe he attended, where my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) made a statement about the disgraceful situation regarding the salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland? That must receive the Government's immediate attention and should be sorted out next week.

Mr. Wakeham: It is better that the matter be sorted out properly, rather than in a hurry. The Government will, of course, consider carefully the report of the Public Accounts Commission and will give their response in the normal way.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Leader of the House familiar with the exchange I had with the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs on 13 July, reported in column 352 of *Hansard*, when the hon. Gentleman implied that the ombudsman's letter to me, widely reported in the press, about the Barlow Clowes scandal and the case of my constituent Mr. Mullard was confidential? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is not true that the letter bore any such inscription and that it reached the public domain after it was sent to my constituent? Will the right hon. Gentleman now confirm that it was entirely proper for the ombudsman's letter to be made public and will there be a statement from the Under-Secretary of State by next week, in reply to my letter to him, to put the record straight in this House?

Mr. Wakeham: I am happy to put the record straight here and now. I understand that my hon. Friend is writing today to the right hon. Gentleman. My understanding of the position is that, when the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration writes to a Member, he treats the letter as being in confidence, but what is done with it thereafter is entirely a matter for the recipient. I am sure that my hon. Friend was in no way intending to suggest in his comments that the right hon. Gentleman had behaved improperly.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Will my right hon. Friend find time to debate the protection of our national monuments from unsympathetic nearby development? Is he aware that St. Paul's cathedral, surely one of the best-known and loved buildings in the world, is currently at risk from yet another series of utilitarian and soulless structures being built around it? Does he agree that the matter is too important to be decided by local planners and developers, that the application should be called in and the matter decided by the House and the nation?

Mr. Wakeham: I have heard from time to time criticisms of some of our modern architecture and of some proposals for buildings in the area of St. Paul's. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I shall see to it that my hon. Friend's concern is drawn to his attention.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we please have a debate on the intolerable growth of crimes of violence and of vandalism, especially in the county of Leicestershire and especially because the Home Secretary has seen fit to ignore the Adjournment debate, initiated by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), in which Members of Parliament for Leicestershire of all parties demanded that the request of the chief constable of Leicestershire for more police constables on the beat should be honoured? In view of the fact that not one further constable has been allowed, in spite of a doubling in crimes of violence, may we now have a full debate on the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern of the hon. and learned Gentleman and of my hon. Friend, but it would be wrong to say that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary ignored their representations. He took them seriously and considered them. The Government's record in improving the pay, conditions and numbers of the police is a good record and I hope that it will continue to improve.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend take time next week to dig out the explanation for the building works that are taking place in Norman Shaw North? They include the installation of the most horrendous iron bars at second-floor level, at least 40 ft above the ground, which not only prevent the windows opening and anyone caught in a fire jumping out that way, but are apparently designed to stop a passing burglar with a 40-foot ladder erecting it there, in full sight of a policeman sitting in his box for 24 hours a day and three or four men on the back door. The works appear to have started and, unless something is done, will go right through the building, whereupon we shall all suffer from a lack of ventilation.

Mr. Wakeham: Decisions of that sort are taken by the appropriate Sub-Committee of the Services Committee after receiving expert advice. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's advice is given to that Committee to see whether it has got it right.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his decision not to hold a debate on the letter received by my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House about strip-searching at Greenham common? Does he appreciate that many Opposition Members are horrified at what happened there? That intimidating procedure is used increasingly as a method of control. It is a violation of people's rights. Will the Leader of the House reconsider and hold a debate on that serious error—I use that word selectively?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to what I have already said on the subject. The hon. Lady knows that if she wishes, she has the opportunity to raise the matter.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my right hon. Friend recall that last week I asked him for a debate on the increasing practice of hon. Members visiting the constituencies of other hon. Members without first telling them? In particular, does he recall that 40 Labour Members of Parliament were due to attend the Mandela march in my constituency? Is he aware that only 13 of those hon. Members actually turned up, and in consequence the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) has sent the absentees a letter asking them for a donation of £5 to help offset the deficit on the cost of the coach? Therefore, can we have an urgent debate on the funding of the Opposition and the management of their affairs? If Labour Members had not poured down the drain my gift of South African wine, they could have sold it to help offset the cost.

Mr. Wakeham: If, as my hon. Friend suggests, there are certain financial difficulties in some parts of the Opposition, I am quite sure that they will not want to use the Short money to sort it out.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does not the Leader of the House think that it is about time we had another debate about the breaches of safety that are being committed by P and O Ferries and its owner Jeffrey Sterling? Is he aware that on Saturday a fire broke out on the European Clearway? John Ball, who was working at the time and has since rejoined the strike, listed a horrifying catalogue of breaches of safety which had been unrecognised by the so-called Government inspector, including an oil leak that had been reported five weeks previously. P and O Ferries had hung a bucket underneath it and had done nothing else. It is about time that P and O Ferries instead of the National Union of Seamen was dragged before the courts.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept anything that the hon. Gentleman says. I am bound to tell him that I would prefer to rely on Government reports by qualified inspectors rather than the hon. Gentleman's testimony. If he had been listening to the business that I announced rather than trying to work out his question, he would have noticed that he might well be able to make his point in the debate next Tuesday.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East:) A few moments ago my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister called for more debate before legislation could be introduced on the Warnock report issues. Will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind as I am sure that such a debate would be welcome?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly bear that in mind, but I do not promise an early debate on the subject.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Leader of the House was in his place and heard the exchange between the Prime Minister and the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) about the recommendations in the Widdicombe report in relation to councillors. With regard to the publication of that report next week, before the Government start their usual anti-councillor campaign, will there also be a White Paper and recommendations dealing with the position of former Ministers, who in their roles as Ministers were responsible for the privatisation of an industry, and then, when they left office, became directors in that industry? To compound that felony, they are now party to a decision to give £50,000 a year to Tory party funds. Who does the Leader of the House consider is most corrupt?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not alleging, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is alleging, that anybody is corrupt. If he is, it is not his normal courtesy and style to do it by way of a business question. There are better ways of alleging corruption than that sort of allegation, which I do not accept for one minute. The Government are to publish a White Paper dealing with some very important questions arising from the Widdicombe report. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman and I should read it before we comment.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my right hon. Friend find time for the House to debate the report of the Public Accounts Committee on Her Majesty's Land Registry? Does he acknowledge that this matter was raised in an Adjournment debate on 30 November last? Will he confirm that house purchasers, particularly first time buyers, are frustrated, that they have been put to inconvenience and expense by the Land Registry delays and that there should perhaps be a restructuring of the whole system?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important report, but the Public Accounts Committee's reports are debated regularly in the House. The subjects for debate are chosen after discussion with the appropriate Committee and through the usual channels. I think that this case should be dealt with in the same way as the others.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I am sure that the Leader of the House is aware of the breadth of support on all sides of the House for national sports centres in England, Scotland and Wales. I know that he would be anxious that we in Northern Ireland should also have a national sports centre, a centre of excellence. Will he look carefully at early-day motion 1402?

[That this House applauds the efforts of Billy Bingham, the Northern Ireland soccer team manager, to raise private funding to purchase Stranmillis Playing Fields, Belfast, to develop a Northern Ireland National Sports Centre such as already exists in England, Scotland and Wales; deplores the decision to designate part of this attractive parkland/playing field site for development in order to attract greater interest and higher offers from developers; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to protect the interests of the whole community by freezing the sale of Stranmillis Playing Fields with development approval and to provide reasonable time to enable Billy Bingham to complete his fund raising in order to purchase the complete site and develop a National Sports Centre for Northern Ireland at Stranmillis, Belfast.]

Will he consider providing an opportunity at an early date for the House thoroughly to discuss the action that has been taken in Northern Ireland to thwart Billy Bingham's efforts to acquire this beautiful parkland playing field site for a sports centre for all the people, including young people, of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern. The playing fields were declared surplus to requirements and they are being disposed of under the normal rules for the disposal of surplus land. They were first put on the market in September 1987 and they were readvertised, under revised terms, in May 1988. There is a

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statutory requirement to sell them at the best price. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is negotiating with a prospective purchaser, but other parties may bid for the land until such time as a contract is signed.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that my early-day motion 1172 "Emergency Aid in Schools" has now attracted over 200 signatures from Members on both sides of the House? The scheme is promoted by St. John Ambulance and supported by the Red Cross.

[That this House recognises the value of teaching first or emergency aid in schools and applauds the initiative of the St. John Ambulance in issuing their publication Emergency Aid in Schools, which, accompanied by a video, shows how children can be taught a basic course between the ages of six and 12 years so that they are competent in: assessing emergency situations, restarting breathing and circulation, dealing with bleeding, shock, unconsciousness—especially resulting from drug or solvent abuse and burns and scalds, and so qualifying for the St. John Ambulance Three Cross Emergency Aid Award.]

Will my right hon. Friend write to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and ask him either to have a debate on the matter or to write to all local education authorities and urge them to undertake this course? It seems to be an excellent scheme. It is particularly pertinent to the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) who is concerned about hooliganism and thuggery. If more young people learnt about first aid at school, I am sure that they would be dissuaded from participating in violent activities in their teens.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government commend the work undertaken by St. John Ambulance to promote the teaching of emergency aid in schools, in particular the materials provided for the three cross emergency aid award scheme. Consideration will be given in due course to the place of first and emergency aid within and alongside the national curriculum.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr Harold Walker): Order. I shall try to to call all those Members who are now on their feet, but it would be helpful to have short speeches—*[Laughter.]* I mean short questions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate on catering in the House of Commons so that if work needs to be done during the summer recess it can be carried out, particularly in view of the lavish amounts of money that were spent yesterday on the junket in Westminster Hall? Bearing in mind that the thousands of people who come here every year are provided with paltry facilities, does the Leader of the House not think that we ought to improve our catering for the general mass of the public? [HON. MEMBERS: "Privatise it."] In so doing we could compare the two standards under which Tory Members of Parliament book the private dining rooms secretly—because the bookings are not published—for the lobbying organisations that pay them. Is it not a disgrace that ordinary people cannot get a cup of tea but that Tory Members of Parliament can book the private dining rooms for lavish meals at any time that they choose?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know what sort of world it is in which the hon. Gentleman lives, but I would have thought that the Westminster Hall ceremony gave great pleasure and satisfaction to hon. Members from both sides of the House and to the nation as a whole. It was a very important and successful occasion, and I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's remarks add anything to it.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am sure that my right hon. Friend noticed the publication this week of the excellent Green Paper on community service orders, and will have noted also the reply that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave during Home Office questions today, when he said that a Green Paper on the future of private sector involvement in remand centres may be imminent. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that those excellent Green Papers will be thoroughly debated when we return at the end of the recess, because their provisions will make a major step towards the fight against crime in this country?

Mr. Wakeham: They are very important Green Papers and they deserve to be debated. No doubt an opportunity will arise, but I cannot make a specific promise at the moment.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate on the important subject of the shortage of speech therapists and physiotherapists and its effect on the service given to young children at school? Will he study early-day motion 1383 standing in my name on the Order Paper?

[That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Government to set up an urgent inquiry into the provision of speech therapy; deplores the uneven provision of speech therapy in London education authorities which blights the progress of children at school in the much welcomed language units; regrets the evident distress of parents of children at school with speech defects who know that academic progress and personal development are gravely hindered because of the injurious consequences of qualified staff shortages; urges the Right honourable Gentleman the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales to improve the salaries and status of speech therapists so as to improve recruitment to a profession that suffers recruitment difficulties; acknowledges the dedicated and professional work of speech therapists and their ancillaries; regrets the shortage of speech therapists in the County of Clwyd; acknowledges the important need for speech therapy by stroke victims of all ages; and expects Her Majesty's Government to make available sufficient money to enable health authorities and London education authorities to make adequate provision of speech therapists.]

Does he understand the deep distress and worry of many parents in England and Wales, knowing that if they have youngsters at school with speech defects they are not receiving sufficient attention? What will the right hon. Gentleman do about that situation?

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter of priorities within local education authorities and other bodies. However, there will be occasions next week when the hon. Gentleman could raise the matter, and that is his best way forward.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As my right hon. Friend knows, Jacques Delors is quite right—we are going to get dragged kicking and screaming into the United States of Europe. The reason for this, as my right

hon. Friend knows, is that the institutions of the European Court of Justice, the Commission and the European Parliament are heavily biased in that direction. Fortunately, we have an institution in this House—the European Select Committee, though unfortunately it is crammed full with unreconstructed Eurofanatics who are tribunes of the Commission and a praetorian guard for a United States of Europe——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that the hon. Gentleman wished to ask a question about next week's business.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend make a statement next week so that the House can be reassured that that Select Committee will actually represent the constituency of this House?

Mr. Wakeham: I must say to my hon. Friend, for the second time in two weeks, that he underestimates himself. If he imagines that a Select Committee that is chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and on which my hon. Friend also sits is crammed full of Eurofanatics, he has a very crazy idea of what is a Eurofanatic.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): May I assure the right hon. Gentleman, in view of his continuing interest, that I am in the most robust and ruddy good health, and that I shall continue to oppose the introduction of the televising of the proceedings of this House? In connection with that, what progress has he made with his plans to demonstrate to all the Members of the House, and not just to the members of the Select Committee, the appalling inconvenience and discomfort that the introduction of cameras, sound equipment and lighting equipment will do to the proceedings of this House?

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman is in good health but he is being a little unfair. We invited everybody from the House to witness the lighting demonstration that we organised, and the hon. Gentleman who—I nearly said, I regret to say—is not a member of the Select Committee——

Mr. Faulds: I should be.

Mr. Wakeham: —was there and took a prominent if not terribly constructive part in the proceedings. The Select Committee is getting on extremely well. All points of view —including tinges of the hon. Gentleman's own point of view—seem to emerge from time to time in our discussions.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Has my right hon. Friend had time to note that my early-day motion 1119 on Japanese reparations to prisoners of war has nearly 200 signatories?

[That this House, in welcoming the growing friendship between Japan and the United Kingdom, believes that this friendship will not fully blossom until the wrongs done during the Second World War to Allied prisoners are fully accepted by the Japanese Government and due reparation made.]

It seems rather strange that hon. Members who have written directly to the Government asking for their help in this matter have been told that little can be done because, effectively, the rights of the people concerned were signed away by the Government at the end of the war. Could we have a debate to decide who should be paying those people reparations?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend knows, this matter was dealt with in the 1951 treaty of peace with Japan, as was made clear by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in a written answer on 18 May. I cannot promise an early debate but my hon. Friend will know of the ways in which he can raise the matter if he thinks that that is the right thing to do.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Has the right hon. Gentleman seen early-day motion 1397 entitled "Absence of helicopter assistance after Piper Alpha disaster"?

[That this House, whilst deeply appreciative of the heroic efforts of the emergency services to save the lives of the men involved in the Piper Alpha oil-rig disaster, is greatly concerned that an offer of the assistance of the helicopter aboad the emergency support vessel "Iolair' was ignored; believes that there is reason to assume that at least some of the lives might have been saved had this helicopter been used; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Energy to furnish any evidence he may have on this subject to the official inquiry into the disaster.]

That EDM, which acknowledges with deep appreciation the magnificent efforts of the emergency rescue services to save the lives of the poor men involved in that accident, goes on to express deep concern that those in charge of the emergency services failed to use the helicopter——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not appropriate in business questions to make a speech that the hon. Gentleman might make if the Leader of the House sets down the matter for debate.

Dr. Godman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it will be helpful if the Secretary of State for Transport makes an early statement dealing with the serious allegations made by men on board the Iolair, that there was a failure to use a helicopter that was just 15 minutes' flying time from the Piper Alpha?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern. The search and rescue operation for survivors from the Piper Alpha disaster was initiated and co-ordinated by HM coastguard Aberdeen. The first helicopter was on the scene within 10 minutes, but, because of the intense heat, helicopters were unable at any time to operate close enough to Piper Alpha to assist with the recovery of survivors from the sea or from the platform. Many offers of helicopter assistance made after the initiation of SAR operations had to be declined because of airspace congestion. So far as is known, no specific offer of the Iolair helicopter was made to Aberdeen coastguard. It would be inappropriate for the conduct of the search and rescue operations to be debated or discussed in advance of the judicial inquiry into the disaster.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend find time during the course of the next week for a debate on the role of the trade unions in a modern society and on whether they should seek to dominate British political parties? Does my right hon. Friend agree that such a debate would give some of us a chance to advise the

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

Transport and General Workers' Union whether to back the dream ticket in the forthcoming Labour leadership elections?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that that would make a good and interesting debate, but I cannot promise one next week.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Leader of the House in an earlier response agreed to publish a letter concerning strip searches at Greenham common. I wish to tell him that that will not satisfy women Members. The Minister's case seems to rest on the phrase

"A requirement to remove all clothing other than underclothing would not have been taken to constitute a 'strip-search'."

I can tell the House that if I——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Ruddock: I am going to ask the question. A woman who is searched in her underclothes believes that she has been strip-searched. In the light of that very serious matter, I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider and to bring to the House the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley).

Mr. Wakeham: No, I will not. My right hon. Friend stands by his answer. His answer was given after a Ministry of Defence police investigation, which found no evidence to support the allegations to which the hon. Lady refers.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): In the light of the concern about the takeover bid for Rank Hovis McDougall, and given that at this moment the European Parliament is putting together a directive on monopolies and takeovers policy that will have far-reaching effects upon competition policy throughout the Community, will my right hon. Friend grant time for a debate on that subject?

Mr. Wakeham: The full bid for Rank Hovis McDougall by Goodman Fielder Wattie is being considered in the normal way by the Director General of Fair Trading, who, under the Fair Trading Act 1973, is responsible for advising my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the question of reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. In those circumstances, it would not be correct for us to debate the issue or for me to make any further comments.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Will the Leader of the House consider urgently holding a debate next week on the impact of the purchase of Rover Group by British Aerospace, and in particular its impact on the town of Llanelli, where 900 workers are likely to lose their jobs? The first that they heard of it was through the media, and I regard that as an act of deceit.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman may find the opportunity to raise the matter on the motion for the Adjournment, if that is what he thinks he ought to do.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend, in relation to next week's debate on transport safety, consider the problems faced by seamen and the residents of Dover onshore, rather than when the ships are sailing? Over 100 attacks have been made on working seamen by members of the National Union of Seamen, many of whom have now been found guilty. Moreover, people living around the port every morning at 7 o'clock have whistles, klaxons and other noise-making equipment bellowing into their homes. It seems impossible in the circumstances for the police to get to grips with the demonstrators, because the union does not seem to be helping out at all.

Mr. Wakeham: That is a matter not for me but for the Chair. I should have thought, however, that some of the points that my hon. Friend wishes to make would be very suitable for next week's debate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that many dental patients are now waiting for up to 10 weeks, in pain, for clearance by the DHSS, and that many dentists are waiting for payment as a result of new regulations introduced in April? Will he ensure that next week we have a chance to debate the matter? Is he aware that we are receiving many letters from patients and dentists and that the problem is highlighted in papers such as the *Sunday Post* in Scotland? Is it not a disgrace?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman will know that he will have an opportunity to raise those matters on more than one occasion next week, if that is what he wants to do.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Leader of the House find some parliamentary time next week—or perhaps better still during the long summer recess—to give some additional coaching and instruction to those Tory Members who this week have displayed a new-found interest in humour, attempting to make jokes about Zimbabwe and aviation matters and disrupting Welsh Question Time? I believe that those Tory Members are now called the League of Glasgow Empire Loyalists.

Despite the excellent attempts at coaching by the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), as assistant Government Chief Whip in charge of alleged jokes, will the Leader of the House find out whether it will be possible on our return from the recess for canned laughter machines to be brought in so that hon. Members know exactly when and when not to laugh? Will he be able to tell us all how he is to manage our parliamentary time so that we find time to encourage this new-found tendency among Tristan and his soldiers?

Mr. Wakeham: My impression is that the hon. Gentleman's question arises more from his embarrassment about his performance and that of his hon. Friends than from an attempt to get a constructive reply out of me.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not take more than a few seconds. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who has unfortunately left the Chamber, perpetrated—unwittingly and accidentally, I am sure—a major inaccuracy in referring to the composition of the Select Committee on European Legislation. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will know, the Committee consists of six members who are broadly in favour of Community membership, six who are broadly sceptical and two who are neutral.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The political views of hon. Members have nowt to do with the Chair.

Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill

4.13 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill on Thursday 28 July 1988.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to Mr. Speaker's Office not later than 9 am on Wednesday 27 July. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later that day. Normally the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but Mr. Speaker proposes to exercise his discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer—up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of hon. Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

I also remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 29 July, up to eight hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach Mr. Speaker's Office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Fast Reactor Programme

4.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's future funding of the research programme being carried out by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority into the fast reactor.

The programme involves the major facilities at Dounreay in Caithness—the prototype fast reactor, known as the PFR, which started operation in 1974, and the associated plant for reprocessing fast reactor fuel. The rest of the programme takes place at a number of other authority sites including Harwell, Risley and Windscale. This is chiefly concerned with materials and fuel development, plant performance and safety.

In the current financial year, net expenditure on the programme is planned at £105 million, of which the CEGB is contributing £28 million. Of that total, some £50 million represents the net cost of the Dounreay operations.

The Government have carried out a review of the programme in the light of the expectation that commercial deployment of fast reactors in the United Kingdom will not now be required for 30 to 40 years. Our overall aim in the review has been to retain a position in the technology for the United Kingdom at economic cost. In considering the programme, we have also had firmly in mind the importance of Dounreay to the Caithness economy, and the contribution of the people of Caithness to the development of the fast reactor.

We recognise that there is continuing benefit to be secured from operation of the prototype fast reactor. We have therefore decided to fund the reactor until the end of the financial year 1993-94. This will enable operating experience to accumulate for a further five years. We have also decided to fund the reprocessing plant at Dounreay until 1996-97, to process spent fuel from the reactor. Our decisions will ensure continuing and substantial employment at Dounreay into the late 1990s.

In addition to the work at Dounreay, we have decided to maintain a core programme of fast reactor research and development of £10 million a year. The present research programme will be phased down to that level over the next 18 months. This will enable us to make a continuing contribution to the development of the technology. We shall also continue our support for the existing collaboration between European countries on fast reactor research. Moving to the core programme could mean the loss of over 1,500 jobs over the next two to three years at sites other than Dounreay.

The programme that I have set out recognises that the commercial requirement for the fast reactor in the United Kingdom is likely to be some decades away. At the same time it will retain a position in the technology for the United Kingdom at economic cost; it recognises the special contribution of Dounreay to the Caithness economy; and it provides a basis for continued collaboration with our European partners.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The Minister's statement offers some welcome, if short-term relief for the Dounreay site in Scotland, but it yet again increases the redundancies in essentially high technology areas in Harwell, Risley and Windscale. Since the Minister

[Mr. John Prescott]

has made it clear that he does not see a use for a commercial fast breeder reactor for 30 or 40 years, is he offering Dounreay a role for only five to eight years? There is clearly a long time gap, which suggests a phased closure programme. Therefore, does the Secretary of State anticipate a role for Dounreay after 1993?

Does the Secretary of State agree with and confirm Lord Marshall's statement that ending the contribution to the research programme is justified, since a privatised industry would not fund such research for benefits that are 30 years away? What will be the future funding for a privatised electricity industry in that area?

The Secretary of State states that the research programme will be reduced to £10 million. What is the cut in funding and what effect will that have on the spin-off advantages of non-nuclear technology, which we have seen particularly in oil rig structures and computer controls? What skills and jobs are affected by the statement and will the Secretary of State identify them by the authority's sites in Harwell, Risley and Windscale? What future will they have for re-employment?

Finally, does the Secretary of State accept that the reality of today's statement arises directly out of the Government's programme for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry where the short-term commercial criteria are in direct conflict with the long-term national interests?

Mr. Parkinson: First, I must make it clear that this does not arise from the privatisation proposals. Had the industry stayed in the public sector, the same examination would have had to take place and we would have come to the same conclusion that there is no likely commercial application for 30 to 40 years. The privatisation issue is a red herring.

Mr. Prescott: What about Lord Marshall?

Mr. Parkinson: Lord Marshall would have had to persuade the Government to put up the substantial funds that would be necessary if we were to continue, and I have no reason to think that he would have been in any way successful.

Dounreay will be a major employer in the region until the late 1990s. It will be available as a site for other nuclear purposes should they arise during that period. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making intensive efforts during the nine years that this programme offers to find work to replace that at Dounreay.

I told the House that £105 million was being spent on the programme; that £50 million was being spent at Dounreay; and that the other £55 million represents the cost of the rest of the programme. I said that that would be scaled down over the next 18 months to a core programme of £10 million a year.

Hon. Members: What does that mean?

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, contrary to the assertions of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), there is no necessary connection between fast breeder reactor technology and ownership in the private sector? Such investment as takes place in Germany comes from the private sector.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the National Nuclear Corporation's design team which is working in this area has 20 years' expertise behind it and there will at some stage be a future for fast breeder technology, so that it is important to keep this technology going? However, it is perfectly understandable that, in view of long-range forecasts for fuel prices in the future, it should be put on the back burner at this stage.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I recognise the important work done by the NNC in this area. The best news for the NNC is that the Government have committed themselves to a major new programme of pressurised water reactors which will ensure that that important national facility and skill continue to be used.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Why has the Secretary of State taken such grave and damaging decisions before the reorganisation of the electricity supply industry and before it could give him a coherent statement of its view of consumers' needs? Why has he done this before the responsibility for carrying out research and development into all our long-term fuel needs has been reallocated, as it will have to be following privatisation?

The Government's intention to reduce participation in the European collaborative programme to a mere £10 million may well be seen by our European competitors as a cop out, and it may even scupper the collaboration. Has he taken soundings of those Governments before announcing this, or is he prepared to let our lead in this area pass to France?

Why has the right hon. Gentleman not stated more precisely the loss of jobs associated with the decision at Dounreay and in the north of Scotland? What steps have been agreed by him and his Cabinet colleagues to offset the undoubted economic damage that will be done to the north of Scotland? He has been vague on that, and that will not be acceptable.

I recognise that forecasts of energy supply needs are notoriously difficult to make, but why has the Secretary of State suddenly changed the Government's forecast from approximately 20 years to approximately 40 years? Has he simply plucked that figure out of the air?

Finally, will the Secretary of State recognise that the dismay which was felt by my constituents and many people throughout the country about this programme stems not only from anxiety about its impact on the economy of the north and those other establishments where the work is more immediately being cut, but because they have a sense that two generations of work on producing a superb British technological achievement which leads the world is being handed to our commercial competitors?

Mr. Parkinson: If the Opposition listened to the statement instead of thinking about their supplementary questions, they might hear the answers to the questions that they subsequently ask. The statement made it clear that 1,500 jobs will be lost in the next 18 months at the sites other than Dounreay. That was in the statement. There is no question—

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): How many redundancies at each site?

Mr. Parkinson: That has not yet been settled, because the distribution of the work has to be determined in the light of the new programme.

Lord Marshall has made it clear on privatisation that he would not propose to support the programme beyond 1990 and it is clear that there will be no commercial need for a reactor for some considerable time.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) talks about European collaboration, but let me remind him that at this moment the French Superphenix is out of action and the Germans, who were supposed to build the next reactor, cannot even obtain a licence for the operation of their demonstration fast reactor, so that programme is in abeyance. We are offering a continuing programme of work on fast reactors and reprocessing, coupled with a core programme of research. That will enable us to play a substantial part in the European collaboration.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that we have another important statement and a number of important debates to follow. Therefore, may we have brief questions, please?

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend say a few words about Winfrith, the Atomic Energy Authority facility in my constituency, which I believe is doing some work on this programme? Will he also say a few words about the nuclear energy research programme? We all saw at the last general election that the Conservative party was the only one committed to continuing nuclear energy. I am amazed at the comments coming from the Opposition. Will he say something about our continuing research on pressurised water reactors and other areas?

Mr. Parkinson: My announcement today represents about a quarter of the work of the Atomic Energy Authority. That is the £105 million programme, of which, as I have explained to the House, about £60 million is due to be retained well into the next decade. Therefore, the authority has asubstantial programme of other work. The authority will lave to make some major adjustments as a result of this announcement, and that is recognised. The authority commands the almost exclusive use of some skills that are n short supply and we expect there to be quite a demand for the personnel that the authority releases.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that, athough his statement was cast in bland language, he is plainly saying that the fast reactor is not commercial and cannot be seen to be commercial for the foreseeable future?

The right hon. Gentleman will know better than anyone that Lord Marshall was one of the most passionate advocates of the fast reactor and that in 1974, during my period in the Secretary of State's office, he was demanding the immediatebuilding of a full-scale fast breeder reactor?

The right hon. Gentleman's statement will be welcomed because it is the first statement by a Minister in this Government hat a complete line of nuclear reactor systems is to b phased out. The many skills of those in the industry need to be safeguarded, but I hope that the Secretary of State will come clean and tell us that the decision has been dictated in part by the fact that there is a big pressurised water reactor programme from America.

Furthermoe, while I strongly disapprove of privatisation, I know hat when one privatises one does not back non-commercial projects such as the fast breeder reactor programme. One of the reasons why the whole nuclear programme in the United States has been at a halt for 10 years is that no private utility in America is prepared to build any reactor system, and that includes the pressurised water reactor to which the Secretary of State now seeks to commit us by a statutory requirement that a given amount of electricity must be generated by nuclear means.

Mr. Parkinson: I have announced clearly that there will be no commercial demand for this technology for some decades. That was not always the case. Presumably the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who supported the programme when he was Secretary of State, did not always hold the view that he now holds, or he would have made a decision, like the decision that I have announced today, to reduce this technology and its costs to a more bearable size. He did not do that.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about privatisation, and privatisation has forced us to face up to questions that should probably have been asked some years ago.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): It is extraordinary how the nuclear cookie crumbles. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made a statement with grave and far-reaching implications, which I have no doubt the Select Committee on Energy will wish to investigate in some detail. In advance of that, however, perhaps my right hon. Friend will elucidate four points.

First, what are the crucial assumptions that he has made in reaching his decision that a commercial fast breeder reactor will not be required for 30 to 40 years?

Secondly, what financial contributions does he expect to be made by the Central Electricity Generating Board and its successors after 1993-94?

Thirdly, why does he believe that the core programme of fast reactor research can be sustained on the minuscule sum of £10 million when the existing programme has cost well over £100 million and has not been successful?

Fourthly, what will be the financial level of the British contribution to the European fast breeder reactor programme? Finally, have we abandoned all intention of taking part in the possible construction of a commercial fast breeder reactor in Europe?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend asked me about the crucial assumptions. The commercial electric utilities see no possibility of ordering a commercial fast breeder reactor for the foreseeable future—for many decades—and that is very important. If there is no customer, to continue with a huge programme, which assumes that there will be a customer, is to fool oneself. Secondly, the £10 million core programme, coupled with the additional work which will be continued at Dounreay, will enable us to continue to maintain and increase our knowledge of fast breeder reactors and their working for the foreseeable future.

I have already mentioned that the European collaboration is in some disarray. My hon. Friend may have noted that, in addition to the fact that the German programme has been stalled, the Italians have held a referendum and have virtually been ordered to pull out of the European collaboration. I have had discussions with my German and French counterparts, and I shall be having further discussions, to establish how we can maintain a sensible programme that will not cost as much as the previous programme.

[Mr. Parkinson]

My hon. Friend asked whether we will contribute to the cost of a European fast reactor. I should have thought that it was clear that we do not think that there would be any purpose in making the huge £800 million investment that would be needed, and we shall therefore not be taking part in the European fast breeder reactor construction programme.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Secretary of State referred to Dounreay being available for other nuclear purposes should they arise. Are they codewords for nuclear dumping in Caithness? Is not the clear implication of the statement, which puts a fine time scale on the operations at Dounreay, part of a softening-up process to make the area acceptable for EDRP, the European demonstration reprocessing plant, or nuclear dumping—the dirty end of the nuclear industry? Does not the future of the Caithness economy lie in diversifying out of the nuclear industry and into alternative and renewable energy resources, whose total research budget from the Department of Energy is only one sixth of the budget of the fast breeder programme?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman would be quite wrong to say that I was suggesting that we should keep Dounreay open so that it could accept the Nirex proposals. That is not the case. During the next eight or nine years, there may be other nuclear work which may be suitable for the area. I do not say whether there is, but if the facility is available the work could be done. There are possibilities of other work but they are so general that I cannot give further details of them at the moment. The facility will be there if it is needed and it will be there for the next eight or nine years.

It is clear that the hon. Gentleman does not represent the constituency that contains Dounreay. If I had announced that we were closing the reactor forthwith, that 2,000 jobs would be lost and that we hoped for a programme of diversification, he would have been the first person to stand up and start shouting. In fact, we are announcing a continuing programme and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has announced that he will work to try to ensure that other jobs become available as Dounreay runs down.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the main reason for the non-viability in the immediate future of the fast breeder reactor and other energy technologies such as liquefaction and gasification is the long-term forecast of lower electricity fuel costs? Will he also confirm that we shall be maintaining a British-based technology?

Mr. Parkinson: We are trying to maintain a position in a technology which we still believe has a future—albeit much delayed as compared with original expectations. It will be some considerable time before the fast breeder reactor is needed—if ever. We believe that the technology has been proved at Dounreay; we have shown that we can construct and operate a fast breeder reactor, which is at the moment pumping electricity into the grid. By the time we close it down, Dounreay will have served its purpose in showing that the fast breeder reactor is a technical possibility.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The answer that the right hon. Gentleman has just given is the first clear statement of what is going to happen after 1993. We welcome the fact that there are to be no immediate redundancies at Dounreay, but the Secretary of State has now said, has he not, that in 1993-94 Dounreay will close down; is that the reality? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Parkinson: I am afraid that that is wishful thinking on the part of the hon. Gentleman, who is violently opposed to nuclear power in any form——

Mr. Millan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Parkinson: Not the right hon. Gentleman, but the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who has been busy doing a bit of electioneering on this important issue.

The facility will not close down in 1993. What will close down in 1993 is the reactor, and the reactor employs a small proportion of the people on the site. We estimate that by 1995 there will still be 1,600 people working on that site—on reprocessing, decommissioning and security. At the end of the operation, there will still be 500 continuing jobs on the site in security and maintenance.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Following from the Secretary of State's decision, what does he propose to do with the 45 tonnes of plutonium that would have been used in the fast reactor system, which we now understand is to be deferred for 30 to 40 years? Will he bear in mind that the international collaboration has been seriously set back on three fronts—CERN, space and nuclear energy?

Mr. Parkinson: I have already said that there is no purpose in continuing with the programme, which was originally based on the assumption that commercial fast reactors would be needed early in the next century. It is now clear that they will not be needed. The Government have faced up to that and have come forward with a set of proposals that recognise the contribution of Dounreay and the need to run down the Dounreay site in a careful way over a long period. They also recognise that we should retain a position in the technology, and that is what we are doing.

I am not here today to discuss the other projects that my hon. Friend mentioned. We are recognising the realities of the fast reactor programme and making arrangements to maintain the technology in an economic way.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When the Secretary of State was pressed by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on what he had said to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about other nuclear purposes, should they arise, his reply was "After all, they are so general that I cannot go into them." But some of us have gone into them with the directorate of Dounreay. As the Secretary of State well knows, one possible purpose is reprocessing and another is the problem of what to do with those 10 Ministry of Defence submarine reactors, which must be reprocessed, monitored and stored somewhere by the early 1990s. Will the right hon. Gentleman be a little more forthcoming about those alternatives?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned some of the possibilities, but no one is prepared to make

any commitment that the Dounreay site will be used for any of those purposes, although they are the sort of purpose for which it might be used. The Ministry of Defence and other bodies that have been consulted do not want to be committed to using the site. That is why I said that if the site is available and needs arise it will be possible to use it. But there is no commitment of any sort that it will be used for any purpose other than its present one.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the logic of the SNP policy—as far as such a description is appropriate—is that Dounreay should be closed immediately? Is not this announcement a positive outcome for Dounreay and Caithness, because it guarantees substantial employment until the late 1990s?

Will my right hon. Friend say anything further about the work that our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will undertake? Can he give an assurance that it will involve the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the local authorities? Might it not be helpful if there were a meeting with the Scottish Office in the near future to consider the long-term economic opportunities for Caithness?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, my right hon. and learned Friend will be discussing this matter with the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

I confirm what my hon. Friend said about the Scottish National party. The only suggestion that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) made was that we should extend the renewables programme. I suppose he means that we should cover Caithness and Sutherland with windmills. That is not a particularly sensible policy, and it would ensure that 2,000 people were put out of work now, with only the possibility of work in the future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall call all hon. Members who are rising.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that this statement marks the final nail in the coffin of an economic programme for the Highlands and Islands which has been fostered by successive Governments of both political colours and which involved the Corpach pulp mill—now closed—the Invergordon aluminium smelter—now closed—and the Dounreay fast reactor programme which, in the words of the Secretary of State, is to close in the 1990s?

I refer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). Will the Secretary of State say anything more about the intensive efforts over the next nine years that the Secretary of State for Scotland will make to try to undo the structural harm done to the economy of the Highlands? I can tell him, on behalf of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), that if they are as successful as the efforts of the past nine years made by the Scottish Office, unemployment will continue to rise and the economy will continue to collapse.

Mr. Parkinson: I have already told the House that there will be substantial employment at Dounreay. I mentioned the figure of 1,600 in the mid-1990s. That figure will slowly decline. At the end of the decade, about 500 people will still be working at Dounreay on maintenance and security. That will be a continuing commitment. Right through to the end of the 1990s, at least 500 will be employed, and there will be considerably more than that for most of the 1990s. During that time, my right hon. and learned Friend will be working hard with the Highlands and Islands Development Board to see what other jobs can be attracted to the area. At least he will have a lot of time in which to work to make this transition as painless as possible.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us who take an interest in the technology of nuclear generation are somewhat apprehensive about today's statement? Is it not possible that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was right to say that this is the beginning of the end for the fast breeder programme? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is difficult to mark time in technology? Either we go forward with others or we stay behind on our own. Will his Department do all that it can to ensure that we keep abreast of the know-how in this technology so that we can re-enter at some later time, as we will almost certainly want to do?

Mr. Parkinson: We are not leaving this technology. As I have said, we shall operate various parts of the plant for at least nine years. We shall still have a substantial research programme after that. It would not have been justified to continue with expenditure on this scale and then to invest another £800 million in a European fast reactor, knowing that there was not likely to be a commercial customer for the technology for decades. We have faced up to the realities of the fast reactor programme and we are retaining a position in it.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): This is a sad and difficult, but correct, decision. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on facing up to the issue rather than postponing the decision. With the continuing low price of uranium and the comparative success of other reactor types, it must be right to reduce expenditure on the fast reactor, whose prospects are comparatively poor.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his commitment to the rest of the nuclear programme, and in particular to the PWR programme, is undiminished? Will he see whether research staff can be transferred from the fast reactor to the PWR programme?

Mr. Parkinson: I am happy to confirm to my hon. Friend that the Government remain committed, as they were in their election manifesto, to maintaining a substantial nuclear programme. I was at Sizewell on Monday and I have bad news for the Opposition. Sizewell is running ahead of schedule and all the signs are that it will be built to time and to cost and that it will be an efficient station pumping electricity into the grid in 1994. I have set up an inquiry into Hinkley Point. I have had no other applications from the CEGB. I understand that there will be two more. The Government remain committed to maintaining a substantial nuclear programme.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Given that fast breeder reactors are unlikely to be commercially viable, at least for decades, is not the only responsible decision that any responsible Government could take that which my right hon. Friend has announced this afternoon? Is it not clear that the logical conclusion of the energy policies of all the Opposition parties would have been the decimation of

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

Dounreay—and of the whole of the rest of the British nuclear industry—a long time ago? So their indignation this afternoon is quite synthetic.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend has identified the Opposition's problem. That is why they sit muttering and shouting from sedentary positions. They are wholly opposed to the entire nuclear programme. Had they been in power, they would have closed Dounreay years ago, and thousands of other people in the industry would have been put out of work.

Short Brothers plc

4.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a statement about Short Brothers plc.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland informed the House on 29 June that we are seriously interested in possibilities for privatisation. We are, therefore, actively seeking the return of Short Brothers plc to the private sector from state ownership. I wish to make it clear that the Government are ready to consider suitable proposals that might lead to the acquisition of Short Brothers by private sector interests. I invite organisations which can secure the necessary financial backing to come forward as soon as possible.

The Government would prefer to transfer the company as a whole to the private sector. We would not, however, rule out the sale of the different parts of the business to separate interests.

In considering any proposals, the Government will give full weight to the contribution that a continuing viable business could make to the Northern Ireland economy.

My statement today follows the Government's consistent approach throughout the United Kingdom of seeking to replace state ownership with the benefits and opportunities that flow from effective private sector leadership. Those benefits have been clearly demonstrated in the companies that have already been privatised.

Shorts has many achievements to its name, especially in exports, and it is an important contractor for the Ministry of Defence. The Government believe that the future of a strong viable business at Shorts is best served not by continued dependence on public ownership, but by the disciplines and opportunities of the private sector. Returning the company to private ownership, therefore, offers the best prospects of its future development and levels of employment in the longer term.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I hope that the Under-Secretary will not misunderstand if I welcome him to the Dispatch Box. We have read a great deal about the Government's intentions towards Government-owned companies in the North of Ireland, but the presence of Ministers in the Chamber to make those intentions clear has been rare. Even the Under-Secretary will have to agree that the Opposition, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), have had to go to great extremes to encourage the Under-Secretary to make a statement before Parliament rises at the end of next week.

Although the statement has been made today, the Under-Secretary must agree that it is very short on what will happen to Shorts and long on the Government's intentions. We believe that it is regrettable that the future of Harland and Wolff will still be subject to conjecture and uncertainty. The future of Shorts should be determined as quickly as possible. I am sure that the Minister agrees that we are witnessing the continued victory of Thatcherite economic dogmatism over the real economic needs of Northern Ireland. The Minister must also accept that the Government are seeking to escape their responsibility for the industrial and economic well-being of the Province.

When will the Minister begin to understand that Shorts and Harland and Wolff are regarded in the Province as symbols of the Government's continued commitment to the economic and industrial infrastructure in the North of Ireland? The announcement today and the Under-Secretary's previous announcements on Harland and Wolff and Northern Ireland Electricity give the impression to many people, especially those in Northern Ireland, that the Government are trying to shed their responsibility for continued industrial and economic development in the North of Ireland.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the Opposition's view is that Shorts should remain a publicly owned company. If it is to be privatised, I urge the Minister to accept that the company should be privatised as a whole and not broken down into its three main constituent parts. Further, I urge the Minister to accept that guarantees about job losses must be obtained. The Minister must surely accept that, if the company is privatised and there are large-scale job losses, that will seriously undermine not only the economic development of Greater Belfast, but that of Northern Ireland as a whole.

May I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your permission, ask a number of specific questions? First, will the Minister state whether the Government intend to introduce any capital restructuring of the company prior to privatisation? If so, will it require the approval or the agreement of the Commission in Brussels, as occurred with the privatisation of the Rover Group?

Secondly, what will happen to the proposed $60 million order from the Pentagon if the company is privatised?

Thirdly, what prospect is there of Government funds for the company, especially for the new 90 to 100-seater Jetfan aircraft experiment?

Fourthly, can the Minister confirm that both Boeing and McDonnell Douglas have been approached to take over Shorts, but have declined?

Fifthly, what consultations have taken place specifically with the management, but, more generally, with the work force?

Sixthly, can the Minister confirm that the losses for this financial year are likely to be about £130 million?

Seventhly, if divisions are sold separately, will the Minister give a cast-iron guarantee that the important missiles division will not be sold to foreign competitors?

Short Brothers is a company of which all of us can be proud. I am sure that the Minister agrees that it is operating on the very frontiers of new and high technology —in many aspects exciting technology—and that it would be a disaster for the company to be run down and the highly trained and skilled work force to be lost, not just to Belfast but to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Viggers: I shall deal first with the hon. Gentleman's last point. We fully recognise the importance of Shorts and its skilled work force in Northern Ireland, and we pay due regard to their interests.

The hon. Gentleman said that the statement was short on what will happen. That is true, because what we have announced today is our intention to move the company to the private sector. The future of the enterprise will very much depend upon the intentions of those who approach us and negotiate with a view to undertaking parts, or the whole, of that operation.

The hon. Gentleman's question gives me the opportunity to say that the Government recognise the direct interest of Shorts' suppliers, customers and work force. We wish to make it clear that the Government will continue to provide support for Shorts while we move towards its privatisation. I especially wish to confirm the Government's continuing commitment to the statement, first made in a parliamentary answer on 23 December 1981, that the Government will stand behind the company.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Government's commitment to Northern Ireland and their intention to improve employment there. I am very proud of the fact that unemployment in Northern Ireland has reduced substantially in the past two years and is now some 19,000 fewer than in September 1986. That is all credit to the industry—substantially the private sector industry—of Northern Ireland, which has been successful in taking advantage of United Kingdom policies.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of specific questions. The first was whether capital restructuring will require EEC permission or authority. That will, of course, depend on the approaches that we receive from the private sector, which I have invited today. At this stage it is a hypothetical question.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the future of the prospective $60 million Pentagon order for the American National Guard. If the enterprise in Belfast—be it within the public sector, as Shorts is now, or within the private sector—can supply the American Government with orders, that prospect is extremely good. However, I cannot give a cast-iron guarantee that the order will be successful. At the moment, Shorts has been negotiating for some time with the American Government and those discussions are at an advanced stage. Whether the order can be fulfilled depends on the work force rather than the ownership of the company.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the FJX. That will also depend on the manner of approach to Shorts and the enterprise of those who wish to undertake it. The Government have not approached Boeing or McDonnell Douglas about taking over Shorts. We would welcome approaches from all quarters. In reply to the hon. Gentleman's specific question, we have not made approaches to the two companies to which he referred.

The hon. Gentleman asked about discussions with management. Those have taken place, but our first priority was to give the House a statement of our intention that the company should be moved to the private sector. He also asked for a statement of the current loss this year. The overall loss of Shorts in 1985-86 was £37 million. The overall loss in 1986-87 was £20 million. The figures for the current year have not yet been audited and it is not possible for me to make a statement on them.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the missiles division would be undertaken by foreign control and management. That will depend entirely on the approaches that we receive for the company. The number of jobs and the prospects of the enterprise in Belfast depend on its ability to produce and sell products that customers want to buy. We wish it well.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that we are now eating into the time of some very important debates. I hope that questions will be brief.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): It is appalling that Shorts, which has an international reputation for excellence and is on the frontier of high technology, is to be split up by the Government and sold off in parts. It amounts to the fact that commercial vultures will come along. When they have picked the bones clean, they will go elsewhere. Privatisation may be all right for England where the economy is strong, but that cannot be said of Northern Ireland where this action and decision will upset a very fragile economy.

Is the Minister aware that the excellent work force of dedicated and skilled men will deeply and bitterly resent the Government's decision? That applies not only to the work force, but to the people of Northern Ireland. Will the Government think again about this matter in view of the high unemployment in Northern Ireland—and I adopt and echo the comments of the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall)—and ensure that they will not sell the company in part? Will they reconsider? If they have to sell it, they must sell it in one piece and ensure that it is maintained as a viable unit.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard my statement in which I said:

"The Government would prefer to transfer the company as a whole to the private sector. We would not, however, rule out the sale of the different parts of the business to separate interests."

We have certainly not ruled out the transfer of the company as a whole.

With regard to the future of Shorts in private sector ownership, 17 major businesses have been privatised in the United Kingdom including the British Airports Authority, Rolls-Royce, Royal Ordnance, British Airways, British Telecom, British Gas, British Aerospace, Jaguar, and Cable and Wireless and 655,000 jobs have been moved to the private sector. Those who work within the new private sector areas are very pleased that that is the case. For instance, the profits of the National Freight Corporation have risen from £4·3 million in 1981 to £370 million in 1986. The hon. Gentleman is unnecessarily gloomy. There is no reason why the enterprise should not have a profitable and successful future in private enterprise.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): This statement can only add to the distress of those who are unsure and uncertain whether they will have a job should the proposal proceed. There are very special circumstances in Northern Ireland where there are more people unemployed than currently work in the manufacturing sector. Is the Minister aware that the proposals to privatise Shorts, Harland and Wolff and Northern Ireland Electricity collectively are perceived as phased British economic withdrawal from Northern Ireland? That perception is there and is causing concern. Overseas investors will be watching what happens very carefully and this proposal may cause them to consider further whether to invest in Northern Ireland if the Government are seen to pull out from our major employers.

I am not reassured by the statement that the Government would prefer to see the company purchased and retained as one single entity. There is a let-out there. As we are not all fools and we are aware that the attractive sectors of Shorts—the profit-making sectors—will probably be snapped up by investors, will the Minister undertake, in the event of the company being broken up, to continue to fund those sectors that are not yet profitable to retain employment and give encouragement? What can the Minister say today to reassure those who question whether there is now British economic withdrawal from Northern Ireland?

Mr. Viggers: I say again to the House that the Government's preference, as stated in my statement, is to transfer the company as a whole to the private sector. That, I reassure the hon. Gentleman, is what I said and it is what I mean. However, we would not rule out the sale of different parts of the business to separate interests, but our preference is that the business should be transferred to the private sector as a whole.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's substantial point, any talk of economic withdrawal from Northern Ireland is nonsense. The Government and our predecessors have provided substantial economic support to the Province. This year public expenditure in Northern Ireland will total £5 billion, of which some £1·6 billion is the amount of the United Kingdom subvention to Northern Ireland. That enables the Northern Ireland Office and my Department in particular—the Department of Economic Development—to fund a very wide range of programmes through the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit which are highly successful and have led to a wide range of investment and employment opportunities. That is why we are so proud that unemployment has fallen in Northern Ireland.

It is necessary for us to take account of the manner in which money is spent to ensure that we obtain good value for money. In that way we can have some confidence that the level of unemployment will continue to fall leading to more confidence and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will the sale of the company be conditional upon the purchaser maintaining Shorts at Queens Island for a five-year period as a minimum? If the company was sold to a foreign aircraft company which decided to rationalise its product line, it is conceivable that it might want to move its production facilities to its own factories which might be outside Northern Ireland. That undoubtedly would be a serious blow to the employment prospects in the Province. On that same point, are the Ministry of Defence contracts, particularly those for the Short Tucano, absolutely secure, no matter who buys the company?

Mr. Viggers: On the first point, I assure my hon. Friend that employment in Northern Ireland is the main basis upon which financial support is given to industry. It would certainly be the Government's continued intention to support enterprise, industry and employment in Northern Ireland. In my statement I said that the Government would give full weight to the contribution that a continuing viable business could have to the Northern Ireland economy—and that of course is in Northern Ireland.

I am pleased that the Tucano project is now making good progress with further deliveries to the Royal Air Force. That contract is held by Shorlac and I see no reason why it should be disturbed by any proposals that we have to switch the operation to the private sector. In common

with the general point that I made, I think that the private sector would have enhanced opportunities to seek further export orders for the Tucano aircraft.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Now that the decision has been made to sacrifice jobs on the altar of Tory ideology, will the Minister give a commitment to the House that if Shorts is to be sold off in separate sections to separate interests, some parts will be based in rural Northern Ireland so that the imbalance in employment can be rectified and so that all the people of the North of Ireland can benefit by this decision, however dubious?

Mr. Viggers: I am not sure how many times I must repeat that the Government would prefer to transfer the company as a whole to the private sector. As to spreading its operations around Northern Ireland, the hon. Gentleman will well know that there are almost 100 jobs at Shorts in west Belfast. It is not for Government, if the company is in the public sector—certainly not if it is in the private sector—to be dirigiste about where the operation should be. I do not think that it would be appropriate for the Government to make conditions about the transfer to the private sector. To that extent, I completely contradict the Government's—*[Interruption.]*—the hon. Gentleman's assertion that we have sacrificed jobs.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is not the reality, as opposed to the theoretical structure, that the Northern Ireland Vote is paying for the high cost of the Ministry of Defence's change in specification of the Tucano, which ought properly to fall on the Ministry of Defence's Vote rather than on the Northern Ireland Vote? As long as both are part of Her Majesty's Government, that problem does not present itself in a form that has to be resolved. If the company is privatised, it will. As my hon. Friend is speaking for Her Majesty's Government, not only the Northern Ireland Office, can he tell us whether the cost of the changes in specification will, after privatisation, be paid for by the Ministry of Defence or his Department and, if by neither, by whom they will be paid?

Mr. Viggers: The terms on which the Tucano contract was entered into by Shorts and the Ministry of Defence were effectively a fixed-price contract, which meant that Shorts would pay the cost of modifications and alterations to meet the contract. Who will meet such obligations will be a matter for consultation between the successor to the Tucano operation and the Government.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the Minister agree that Shorts is important to employment in Northern Ireland? Its dependence on defence contracts and high technology and its recent poor financial performance, which must have a bearing on its position, show that the company should not be privatised. What assurance will the Minister give that employment will be maintained at its present level at Shorts? Will he confirm that the company is likely to make a loss this year? He has already said that it made a loss of £20 million in 1986-87.

Mr. Viggers: The company made losses in the past two years ended 31 March 1987. The figures for this year have not been audited, so I cannot make a statement on the amount of overall loss or profit. As to the primary point made by the hon. Gentleman, I deny that public or private ownership has anything to do with the level of employment. Success in winning customers, providing products that people want to buy and at prices that they want to pay win profits and jobs for companies. I have every hope and expectation that in private ownership Shorts will be able to do that.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): The Opposition cannot criticise the Government for lack of commitment to Northern Ireland; it is clear to see everywhere that one looks, and I have just been to look. Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that Shorts is a company of great capability, which may not yet have achieved its full potential? Will not privatisation add the vital element of market forces, which is the spur to higher productivity? Surely that is the best way of preserving jobs. Will my hon. Friend confirm that British bids for the company will be given preference, and will he say when it is likely to be Harland and Wolff's turn?

Mr. Viggers: We have announced that it is our wish that Harland and Wolff should move to the private sector; we are having discussions about that, as my hon. Friend will well know. I could not phrase my hon. Friend's expectation of the opportunities offered by private enterprise better than he did. The number of jobs in any company depends on its ability to produce and sell products that customers want to buy. We have every expectation that the Shorts enterprise will want to do that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall call those hon. Members who have been standing.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): How many millions of pounds of taxpayers' money have been put into Shorts? Given that the Government are proposing to sell Shorts at a knock-down price, will not this announcement join the long list of crimes committed in Northern Ireland? It is daylight robbery of the taxpayers. As the Government are so keen on ballots for trade unionists, will the Minister organise a ballot among Shorts workers to see whether they want privatisation of the concern to which they have given their lives over many years, or does democracy stop short for workers? Is it not scandalous that the Government are making this proposition in an area that, as the Minister knows—the Secretary of State is sitting next to him—is so sensitive that the plan will bring concern, shock and amazement to people who are already much bemused by the circumstances that prevail in the Province?

Mr. Viggers: It is indeed true that much public money has been put into Shorts. Shorts has been able to borrow money, which is guaranteed by the Government. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and I recognise that Shorts' workers will be apprehensive and concerned about a move from the public to the private sector. I say to them that there is no future for a company that is supported by Government. The future lies in the private sector, where there is enterprise and the opportunity of growth. That is where the company's longer-term employment prospects lie. I am sure that, on reflection, most people will take that view.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware —quite apart from the general arguments about privatisation, which confers political power over the economy on shareholders who have no interest whatever in the social conditions of the Province—that tens of

[Mr. Tony Benn]

millions of pounds have been put into Shorts and Harland and Wolff? As a Minister, I had direct responsibility for the funding of Shorts' aircraft and the Musgrave dock. The money that was put in sustained and created jobs that otherwise would not have been there.

When the Minister talks about subsidy, he might mention the £13 million a week—£722 million a year—that the Government spend on the emergency in Northern Ireland. Is it not a fact that that money would be better put into economic development than into the continuation of the war? Given the role that Harland and Wolff and Shorts have played in sustaining employment in Northern Ireland, it must be obvious to anyone who listened to the statement that it, like many others made by the hon. Gentleman's Office, is a barely concealed announcement that the Government are planning an economic withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: I have said already that, in considering any proposals, the Government will give full weight to the contribution that a continuing viable business would make to the Northern Ireland economy. Indeed, we shall give that full regard.

The right hon. Gentleman asked whether it would not be more helpful to transfer the money spent on security in Northern Ireland to the economy. I can scarcely disagree with him. However, any moderately intelligent 10-year-old would know that that option is not available to the Government, nor was it to the previous Government. We have three problems—security, political problems and the economy. Our job, especially that of my Department, is to ensure that the economy plays its part in improving prosperity and employment prospects in Northern Ireland, thereby making a happier Province that will contribute to solving the other two problems.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Minister accept that today's announcement will reduce the Government's influence on politically sensitive contracts? Does he accept that, even in the present position, whereby all Shorts directors are appointed by the Government, the company refuses to make any public comment on incontrovertible evidence that, by falsifying end-user certificates, Shorts' Blowpipes are getting into the hands of terrorists? Will he say what the Government are doing to discover information about that problem and make a statement about it? Does he accept that such instances will be much more likely if the company is privately controlled, especially if there is to be foreign investment in and control over Shorts?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman is tempting me to go wide of the subject of the statement. He made allegations about the company, which I refute, but I do not think that what he says is an argument against what I have announced.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not this selling off by the Tory Government almost getting into the political gutter? It is almost as though, when she meets the Cabinet, the Prime Minister goes around the table and asks, "What have you got to sell off today?" She turns to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and asks, "Is it not time that you sold something off, despite all the social consequences?" Will the Minister guarantee that Mr. Ravi Tikkoo, with Mafia-like tendencies, is not to be given a chance to buy into Shorts? He is the man who ordered gunmen on to his ship to drive off members of the National Union of Seamen. The Government are just about getting to the level that no one could have imagined nine years ago—selling off Northern Ireland, with all the problems that it has. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Viggers: Some 655,000 workers, who worked in the public sector in 1979, now work within the private sector. They recognise the benefits of private enterprise, as I trust that the people of Northern Ireland will. If we seek to insulate Northern Ireland from the economic forces that apply in the rest of the United Kingdom, which have brought massive benefits to the remainder of people in the United Kingdom, we shall do the people of Northern Ireland not a service but a disservice.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I press the Minister on defence sales? On four occasions this afternoon he has said—doubtless sincerely—that the preferred option was to sell Shorts as a whole. Could there not easily, without raising Aunt Sallys, be a situation in which some big international firms want to pick off those parts of Shorts that are extremely advanced, and leave the rest? There will be plundering of what is technically advanced. That is not fanciful. What will the Government do? Will they say, "We really prefer that it should be kept as an entity"?

In the context of the Saudi arms deal, people may have reservations about what exactly happened with arms in the middle east, but that is not the point. We are discussing a major contract. Shorts is a major company. How is it to react to a Saudi arms deal, for example? What is the fallback position?

Mr. Viggers: We shall consider all approaches on their merits and take account of all interests, including, of course, the national interest.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not think that the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) intended to mislead the House, but if he chooses to look at next week's oral questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, he will find a question in my name about the privatisation of Shorts. Frankly, his suggestion that he has dragged the statement out of a reluctant Government is bunk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get on.

BILL PRESENTED

Democratic Oaths

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Jimmy Wray and Mr. Chris Mullin, presented a Bill to provide a new Oath to be taken by the Crown on the occasion of the Coronation, and by Privy Councillors, Members of Parliament, holders of all judicial offices, all civil and military officers, Lord Mayors, Mayors, Lords Lieutenant and others holding positions of authority within the United Kingdom: And the same was read the First Time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 204.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 4171/88 on pharmaceutical directives be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Estimates Day

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY] *considered*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1988-89

Class XIV, Vote 1

HOSPITAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

NHS Pay Awards

[Relevant document: Third Report from the Social Services Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 547 of Session 1987-88) on Resourcing the National Health Service: Prospects for 1988-89.]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £538,303,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Department of Health and Social Security on hospital, community health and related services, including a grant in aid.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

5.23 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I thank the Liaison Committee for today's debate and for drawing attention to the estimates and supplementary estimates that we are specifically voting today. I welcome the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), to the debate. No doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she will wish to catch your eye and respond to the debate. She has a somewhat schizophrenic attitude to public expenditure. Some days she is in favour of cutting it, and some days she is in favour of increasing it.

At the beginning of the debate, it is important to establish just how large the estimate is. In cash terms, class XIV, vote 1 is the largest ever single vote in the history of voted expenditure. The vote covers what most of us would call in shorthand the health authorities' budgets. We are debating the supplementary estimate, which involves an amount of about £538 million, the vast majority of which is to cover the additional pay costs to health authorities of pay awards to doctors, dentists and professions allied to medicine. At the beginning of the debate, we are discussing the supplementary estimate and the review body's recommendations.

I ask the House to bear with me if, on occasion, I must quote from official documents. The debate is technical and it is important that certain matters are clearly put on the record.

The pay review body stated:

"our recommendations will result in a substantial increase in the pay bill. This flows largely from the exceptional circumstances associated with the introduction of the new clinical grading structure, which will affect the vast majority of the nurses, midwives and health visitors covered in our review . . . It is in our judgement right that the new pay structure should be sufficiently flexible to provide a fully satisfying career within the clinical field. But the cost of introducing it is unavoidably high."

I stress that the pay structure should be "sufficiently flexible" to achieve the objective.

It seemed that the review body had two objectives in mind. The first was to make a major change in the relative position of nurses in the pay league. I asked staff in the House of Commons Library whether they would update

[Mr. Frank Field]

the 1974 Halsbury report on staff nurses and compare it with the pay review body's proposals. Although the results are not exactly the same, they are certainly comparable. We must take note of that objective. Those hon. Members who have fairly long memories will remember how important the Halsbury report was in its attempt more adequately to pay nurses.

The second objective of the pay review body has been summed up by many hon. Members, but perhaps best by the Prime Minister. It was not summed up most eloquently by the Prime Minister, but, as she runs the show, what she says normally goes. Therefore, it is worth paying attention to how she puts a message on the record. She said that she was anxious that those directly involved in patient care should have a pay structure that reflects their skill, qualifications and responsibilities. The review body's first objective was to lift the relative pay of nurses, and its second objective was to provide a pay structure that would keep nurses in wards rather than in administration.

The Select Committee welcomed the statement that the Government intend fully to fund the pay award. It was one of our constant pleas to the Government. I do not wish to make party political points by drawing attention to the number of times the Government rejected our plea. It is important to note what the Secretary of State said when he announced the Government's decision on the pay review report. Again, I apologise to the House for quoting, but it is important to be clear about what everybody said in the debate. In a press release, the Secretary of State said:

"In reaching this decision"—

to accept the review body's recommendations—

"the Government has again demonstrated its commitment to the nurses and the other NHS professions concerned . . . The Government will be implementing all these awards in full from 1 April, and will meet the full additional costs . . . from the Reserve. In consequence, these awards will be fully funded."

That is where the debate began. From that point, certain doubts have been raised about what is meant by "fully funded". Once again, as recently as 14 July, the Prime Minister introduced some doubt when she addressed the House. In response to an oral question she said:

"The amount that has been made available was the amount that was estimated by the nurses' pay review body. That full amount has been put forward. *[Interruption.]* The formula used for estimating the total sum required was agreed between representatives of National Health Service chairmen and the review body. That amount is intended to be the amount which they said regrading of the structure would cost."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 546.]

Again I emphasise the Prime Minister's point about what it was said that the pay review body award would cost. When one reads the pay review body's words, one realises that we are not debating an estimate but that we are looking at an estimate based on an estimate based on an estimate. That is the very point that the Select Committee drew to the attention of the House in its third report, which is the basis of this debate.

The House will be pleased that this is the last quotation that I wish to put on the record—

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Shame.

Mr. Field: Well, I may give hon. Members more quotations a little later.

The crucial quote from the review body is as follows:

"Our estimates are necessarily approximate because they themselves are based on estimates. First, the Health Department have provided earnings and paybill estimates for 1988-89 at current rates of pay and allowances, together with recent manpower figures . . . Secondly, since assimilation of staff to the new clinical scales depends upon local decisions based on a process of examining individual posts, it is impossible to predict with any certainty the numbers who will be receiving each level of pay. Our calculation of the cost of the recommendations for these staff is based on an estimate by the Health Departments of the numbers which in their view will be placed in each of the new grades. For these reasons, the actual cost of our recommendations may well differ from our estimates".

I shall repeat the last sentence because it is crucial to this supplementary estimates debate. After listing the basis of the estimates based on the estimates of the estimates and coming up with that figure, the pay review body stated:

"For these reasons, the actual cost of our recommendations may well differ from our estimates".

That has led us to the current position.

Late last night I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State listing some of the questions which I hope will be answered in this debate. In order not to disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), I may well quote from them a little later.

It is clear from the press reports and the information that we are getting back from the local areas and our contacts with those in the nursing profession that the regrading is not going as smoothly or as positively as those of us who welcomed the Government's original statement had hoped. Indeed, there is some difficulty in answering quite simple questions about the allocation of funds from this supplementary estimate.

One question to which I hope we shall get a clear answer in the debate is: how have the Government divided the total sum? Has it been divided down on a per capita basis for the regions or according to the number and seniority of the nurses employed in those regions? Secondly, is it true, as some of us have heard, that the regions are holding back some of the money partly because they do not know how the review will take place at a local level but also perhaps because they hope to get some spare cash out of it? That applies to the regions that have done relatively well in the distribution.

Thirdly, what is actually happening at district level? Are the reports correct which Opposition Members and, I am sure, Conservative Members have received—that the districts are cash-limiting the review exercise and that because there is a cash limit local hospitals are changing or limiting the structure on to which the nurses can be fixed? If that is so, it is not only a serious matter for our consideration, but it goes back on the second objective which the Prime Minister laid down when she welcomed the pay review body's findings and the Government's full implementation of the recommendations, and said that we should have a flexible pay scale or, in other words, one large enough so that people with various skills, abilities and training can, at the end of the week, receive pay which to some extent matches the skill that they bring to their daily jobs. Those are the three important questions which we hope will be answered before the end of the debate.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, most of the debate will be used to discuss the pay awards and the funding of this year's increase in pay, but although many of us are concerned only with the nurses, the estimate does not relate only to nurses. It also covers doctors and their

pay award. Can the Minister enlighten the House about reports that the money available for the doctors' award may be insufficient to fund their increased subscriptions for medical defence insurance, two thirds of which will be met for the first time by the health authorities? What will happen to the Whitley council pay awards? I know that the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) hopes to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, in a moment, and will no doubt raise that point.

The current position is compounded with irony. The reason why the Select Committee, many hon. Members who are not members of the Select Committee and many outside organisations which are concerned with the National Health Service pleaded with the Government to fund this year's pay award fully was to take out of the Health Service debate the element of uncertainty that arose in previous years when the pay award was not fully funded. We have a clear statement from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State down that the Government will fully fund the award, yet there is massive uncertainty again in the National Health Service about the position on pay and how the pay bills will be met in October this year.

So that I do not disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, I refer the House to paragraph 26 of the third report of the Select Committee on Social Services. Some time ago, we drew attention to the nightmare that we thought might exist if the Government appeared somewhat mean in implementing their pledge of fully funding the pay awards. We stated in the report:

"The most immediate effect of the Nurses' Pay Review Body Report will be to increase uncertainty about the budgetary situation in the autumn when most of the award will become payable on a back-dated basis. There is no certainty at present about whether the sum allocated in the Supplementary Estimates will be sufficient to meet the full additional cost to health authorities of the pay review body awards."

Since the publication of the report the number of questions to which we need answers has increased. I listed three of them earlier and I hope that the Minister will take them on board. In the letter that I wrote to her last night, which I expect she did not receive until this morning, I listed other questions which I should like to draw to the attention of the House. I for one am uncertain about the level of the basic pay increase for those nurses who will not get an increase in pay because their position has been regraded. I have asked questions about the basis of allocating the total sum and whether it was on a per capita basis, the RAWP basis, or on the pay bill basis.

Can the Minister tell us something about the instructions that the Government have issued to the regions and districts about implementing the pay award? Do those instructions—I am sure that they exist—tell local health authorities that they should get on with the regrading exercise in the spirit of the review and that they should not be concerned with the total cost, or are the Government anxious to limit the cost of the findings of the pay review body? If that was their original intention, and given the extent of disquiet, will the Government think again and issue new instructions? What steps will the Government take to ensure that all the additional funds, for which I hope we shall vote today—without a Division—will be spent on pay and will not be earmarked for other projects within the Health Service?

It is not my intention to argue a case other than that we are considering an original estimate, which represents the largest single estimate, in cash terms, for health authorities. I do not dispute that, in their initial response, the Government were anything but proper and generous to the nurses and the other groups when they said that the pay award would be met in full. Sadly, however, we are a little older and a little wiser since the Government made that first statement and we know that life in the real world is rather complicated.

Since the original Government statement regional and district health authorities have had to try to implement the Government's intentions and there have been two reactions. First, nurses are beginning to say, privately and publicly, that they do not believe that they will get the pay increase that they thought they would get as a result of the regrading arrangements. I am not talking about those who will not be regraded and who, therefore, will receive a modest pay increase—that was the intention all along—but the remaining 85 per cent. who were led to believe that they would receive a substantial increase in their pay. The nurses' disquiet about their pay is spreading a degree of despondency within the Health Service the like of which has not been seen since before the Government announced their intention to implement the pay review body recommendations in full.

Secondly, if additional funds over and above those that we are debating today are not made available in the autumn it is clear that, as well as increasing staff demoralisation, looming on the horizon will be the prospect of further cuts and ward closures. When the Minister replies I hope that she will say that the Government have listened carefully and that they will meet the issues that we have raised.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman has referred to cuts and closures, but I am sure that he would be the first to agree that it is not just a question of finance. What does he think about the small minority of consultants who are causing tremendous problems in the regions and districts? Last week in my district health authority, west Essex, a theatre had to be closed to be cleaned. That meant that the anaethetist lost his session and that he did not have much to do. He was asked to go five miles up the road to St. Margaret's hospital in Epping to work with the surgeon. That would have helped a lot of people with serious problems who needed operations. However, the anaesthetist refused to do so and that meant patients had to be turned away and operations cancelled. The senior consultant anaesthetist of the district, rather than telling the man that his behaviour was ridiculous, warned surgeons at St. Margaret's hospital that anaesthetists would not——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that he is making an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Hayes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that such a state of affairs is unacceptable and that, perhaps, the answer is for consultants to have contracts with the district and not the regional health authorities?

Mr. Field: The answer to those questions is yes. I wish that the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) was as gentle with me when asking for my views in Committee.

[Mr. Field]

We are not debating a motion that criticises the Government for not giving resources to the Health Service. I have bent over backwards to draw attention to the Government's generosity, but I hope that the Government will keep faith with the nurses and, if need be, come up with extra funds.

I know that one cannot always appeal to the best instincts of the Government to achieve the right results; therefore, I appeal to their political instincts. It would be absurd for the Government to make this record allocation and then, in October, to end up with a disgruntled work force because the pay review body recommendations had not been fully implemented and because further cuts were imminent. My grandmother used to say that it is not worth ruining the ship for a hap'orth of tar. We may need more than a hap'orth of tar to ensure that the review body recommendations are implemented in full. I appeal to the Government's instincts to do right by the Health Service and also to their political instincts. The Government have funded a large increase in the Health Service budget, but this winter they must not end up in the same position as last winter.

I thank those people who helped us to draw up our report, namely our three advisers, Nicholas Bosanquet of York university, Dr. Steve Engleman of the university of Edinburgh and Dr. Ken Grant of the City and Hackney health authority. May I also thank the staff of the Select Committee, which is headed by Helen Irwin. Those of us who work on that Committee know what an extraordinarily talented group of people we have around us. The only caution I have in drawing the House's atttention to that fact is that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State are listening. If the Secretary of State was truly interested in value for money he would poach our staff to work in his Department.

There has been an on-going debate about the implementation of the pay review body recommendations and the Minister for Health has gone on record as saying:

"I have every intention of ensuring that it"—

the pay review body recommendations——

"is carried out in good faith."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 178.]

No one is seeking to doubt the Government's good faith so far, but we have enough evidence to suggest that the Government must make a firm statement about what they will do if it turns out that the supplementary estimate that we are debating and for which we are seeking approval is not enough to meet their commitment to implement the pay review body recommendations—a commitment welcomed by the House. Such implementation would raise the pay of nurses and other workers within the NHS to a better—although not necessarily a fairer—level than it has been for a long time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is an appropriate time to remind the House that we had a debate on this subject on 5 July. There is a great deal of interest in today's short debate and, unless hon. Members cut their speeches short, many will be disappointed at the end of the day.

5.47 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) whose fair-minded approach not only to life, but to life in this House, is a model for many. His concluding remarks remind me of the slightly suspicious child who does not truly believe in the sweetshop's existence, but who suddenly finds himself inside it. He then prefers to spend his time searching around the heavily laden shelves for something that might not be there rather than enjoying the goodies all around him. Therefore, I do not intend to follow the hon. Gentleman in his study of the potential difficulties arising from what he admitted to be the most generous cash vote ever passed by way of a supplementary vote. I wish to consider some of the positive aspects.

I shall relate my remarks to the general structure and financing of health authorities and I shall consider my district health authority in detail. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in this debate, as my father has worked in the Health Service all his life as a general practitioner. He practises in Bury and is also chairman of the family practitioner committee.

Although I shall not say a great deal about primary health care, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all those involved in primary health care and to all those who work in family practitioner committees for their excellent work. I pay particular tribute to the FPC of Bury for what it has done recently in computerising its cervical cancer screening system and acting as a model for the north-west. My brother also works in the National Health Service. He is an anaesthetist who works in a London hospital, so I have something of a medical background, although my own life took me in a slightly different direction.

Recent debates on the NHS in this place have been characterised by three trends—first, the lack of enthusiasm and general support from Labour Members for a subject in which they are supposed to have such a deep concern; secondly, an over-concentration on selective history; thirdly, a lack of ideas about how to deal with the future. In the most recent Opposition day debate on the subject, those three characteristics came together. Those Opposition Members who bothered to take part waxed lyrical about the origins of the Health Service. They paid full and due credit to Bevan and lingered long over the injustices intended to be put right by the shining step into tomorrow when the NHS originally came into being.

However, Opposition Members' tragedy is that that love of history, which is so much part of the Labour party's tradition, can become a quicksand and entrapment, denying them the flexibility to consider the present problems and thus develop new ideas for the future. It was lost on no one in this House that the most effective contribution from Opposition Members came from the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) who made the speech that should have been made by Members on the Labour Front Bench.

Although Labour Members remember that rich heritage in a lyrical way, Conservative Members are entitled to remember another heritage, particularly bearing in mind the size of the estimates that we are discussing today. If I had spoken 10 years ago, I would have been concerned about the desperately low morale of Health Service workers in my constituency, owing to strikes in the service. I would have been asking about the low pay of nurses and why inflation had destroyed their

rises. I would have been angry that the economic collapse had cost my constituents their new general hospital in the capital expenditure wash of those days, which had left the district as the only district in the north-west not to have a new general hospital in the past century. However, I appreciate we are not here to deal with history. In these estimates, we are concerned with the present and the future.

I want to consider the grassroots example of my own health authority of Bury. Those hon. Members who know the area in which I was born and brought up will know that Bury, Ramsbottom and Tottington are not part of a great rolling shire. It is not an unduly privileged area. It is as average a constituency as one could wish to find—apart, of course, from being the most important, as each hon. Member would say of his constituency. The story of that health authority over the past few years and the way in which it has coped with the finance given to it and has planned to cope with the finance given to it and has planned to cope with the finance symbolised by the estimates before us is the story of how one health authority has adapted and responded to change in a demanding world.

It is an appropriate opportunity to pay tribute to all those who work in those local services in the Bury health authority—the nurses, doctors, all the professionals in primary care in hospitals and in the community and all those who support them in the various ancillary services. It is also an opportunity to be grateful to those who administer the enormous funds that we are debating today, including Mr. Philip Bacon, the district administrator, all those who work with him and those who have been chairmen of the health authority. Great chairmen include the late Aubrey Clayton from the Labour party and the present chairman, Mr. Ted Schofield, from a Conservative background.

When talking about this size of budget, it is easy to get lost in great national statistics. They tend to smother what is really important to people at the grass roots, in the surgery, in the community, in hospital or in any other form of care. We sometimes forget that when we are talking about those vast sums. What matters is what is being delivered to the person in the surgery. When I think about that and about some of the examples of what my health authority has done in the past few years and what it can do with those sums that we are discussing today, I can see that we are in a different world from that we hear portrayed by Labour Members.

Let me quote some examples from an ordinary health authority in the north-west of England. In 1979, the number of staff employed in direct patient care was 1,020. On 31 March 1988, that number had risen to 1,307. Over the past five years, nine additional consultants have been appointed. Over the next 12 months, we hope to make five more appointments. That will mean that, since 1982, there has been an increase of 40 per cent. in the level of consultant staffing in the health authority. The number of in-patients treated in 1978 was 19,412. By 1987-88, that had arisen to 25,571. In terms of capital development, since 1979, there have been over 40 separate developments, costing a total of £17 million.

When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister comes to the Dispatch Box to talk about the Health Service and deliver some statistics, Labour Members often express concern, but statistics are about real people. One cannot walk around a statistic, but one can walk around my new hospital, the first phase of which was completed on the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Health Service.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): My hon. Friend referred to the new Fairfield hospital. Does he acknowledge that we had been waiting for that for 18 years, that it took a Conservative Government to put it there and that the people of Bury are now benefiting from it?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is right. If we had been talking about this size of estimate 10 years ago, our constituents would have had the hospital 10 years earlier.

One cannot shake hands with a statistic, but one can shake hands with one of the nine new consultants whom we have appointed over the past few years. One cannot comfort a statistic, but one can comfort one of the thousands of patients who have been treated in the past year as a result of the increased efficiency in the local health services.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to come a little further north, to Newcastle, where 322 hip operations were put in the waiting list initiative for this year. That was much to be welcomed. Hip operations in an area like Newcastle are very important, as there is a large number of elderly and dependent people. I would have been the first to say so if those operations had been carried out, but, unfortunately, as the regional health authority has banned all new consultant posts for this year because of the lack of certainty about funding, those operations were taken out of the waiting list initiative. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to come north and explain to the 322 people concerned.

Mr. Burt: The point at issue is whether the resources are effectively administered. First, 15 or 20 years ago, there would not have been a waiting list for hip operations because such operations could not be done. The number of such operations has grown tremendously. Secondly, the way in which the waiting lists are constructed locally and the way in which the regions deal with their resources is a matter for those regions. The statistics that I have given are for my health authority and show how it looks after our people.

The way in which the resources are applied has to do with the way in which they are administered. Over the past couple of years, as the Health Service has come under increased scrutiny, it has become clear that what is at the root of the problem, is not money but the way in which different authorities and regions look after that money. Recent surveys, including the *Sunday Times* awards for district health authorities, show that the greatest problems lie in the way that some districts look after the money that they are given. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should ask why his authority has not done something else with that money.

Mr. Cousins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burt: I cannot give way because so many other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

The problems that underlie the estimates cannot be hidden. There is no doubt that the Health Service has problems on the horizon that must be faced—the problems

[Mr. Burt]

of an elderly and aging population and the problems of regrading to which the hon. Member for Birkenhead referred.

We must not miss the opportunity to emphasise the positive aspects and the care with which the Government are looking at the problems of the Health Service for the first time. The difference between the two sides of the House is that Opposition Members are trapped and hidebound by history and are producing no ideas on how to deal with the problems; for them it is merely a matter of increasing the amount of money going into the Health Service. All the ideas about reform and about dealing with the problems come from Conservative Members.

I wish strongly to stress to the Minister first that there is a great deal of good inside the National Health Service. The way in which my health authority is coping with its cash and the way in which it will cope with the extra money that will come through the estimates shows that there are good district health authorities that are well managed and well run. Within those health authorities are people who have lessons for other health authorities. It may be necessary to draw good people from the National Health Service who are working in districts that are proving to be efficient so that they can go to regions such as that represented by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) and help put right the problems of administration.

We must not lose sight of the fact that there are good people in the National Health Service who must not be lost in a general view that we must have only outside advisers in the Health Service review. We must make sure that the good people who work in the Health Service and who know the system are given the opportunity to put forward their ideas about reforming the system.

Secondly, we must ensure that the scope for private health treatment and for liaison between public and private care continues. That might be a way of dealing with the problem of waiting list operations. The district health authority in my region adopted such a solution to problems of National Health Service waiting lists, liaised with private hospitals and started to reduce those lists.

Thirdly, we must remember that the patients, our constituents, the people with whom we deal are not interested in the slightly arcane problems of how a service is delivered. What matters to them is that that service is delivered. One cannot ask someone who is desperately ill whether they mind going into a private hospital. They need a job to be done, and if that job has to be done through a mixture of public and private care, it still has to be done. What matters is that the service is delivered, not the ideology behind the way in which it is delivered.

Lastly, the review should take account of the importance of building a new consensus on National Health Service spending. We realise that the National Health Service is a precious asset. Over the past few months, we have been talking about change. Today we are talking about the use of resources in the new estimates and the hon. Member for Birkenhead was kind enough to be generous in his remarks about Government spending. There is a great deal of consensus. This place emphasises differences, but if we are truly to serve the people we represent we must make the most effective use of the estimates that we are voting today. If we are to produce the best ideas of how to run the Health Service in future, those ideas must coalesce. The money we are debating today will give the Health Service a great start. With that start, with the vision of the future and the ideas from this side of the House and with decent people to administer them, we shall have a Health Service in future of which we can truly be proud.

6.3 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I begin by extending thanks to the Select Committee on Social Services for the extremely important work that it has been doing and to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) for the way in which he opened the debate. The report produced by the Select Committee is extremely timely and is about an issue of concern to people throughout the country.

It is absolutely clear what the Government must do. They must give the Health Service enough money to pay the nurses the increases that they have been promised. If the Government do not do that, the consequences will be disastrous. Either thousands of hospital beds will have to be closed to pay the nurses their increase, or the nurses will not get their pay increase, they will feel cheated and demoralised, they will leave the Health Service, and beds will have to be closed because there will not be enough nurses. For the sake of all the patients waiting for treatment on growing waiting lists, the Government must promise tonight to pay the nurses their pay increase.

Nurses have considerable training, they do a responsible job and they work anti-social hours. Yet the problem of nurses' pay slipping behind has been a perennial one. It is absolutely clear that nurses' pay is a classic case of sex discrimination. If most nurses were men rather than women, we would not be facing that problem year in, year out.

In the past, the fact that nursing did not provide attractive long-term career prospects was masked by the continuous supply of 18-year-old girls ready to take up nursing. Not enough attention—indeed, hardly any attention—was paid to keeping experienced older nurses within the Health Service. It was assumed that every nurse who did not return to nursing after having children would be replaced by an 18-year-old girl. That was very wasteful of the skill and experience of older nurses, but it was overlooked until demographic changes meant that there now are not enough 18-year-old girls to take the place of the 30,000 nurses who leave the Health Service every year.

The Government have tried to imply that the nursing shortage is a problem only of particular nursing specialties, or only in London and the south-east, but that is not the case. At the beginning of this year, I conducted a survey of all district health authorities and 120 replied. It revealed that 83 per cent. reported difficulties in filling nursing vacancies. I should like to go into some detail about the findings of the survey, as it is still the most up-to-date survey on nursing shortages throughout the country.

It is not the case that there are nursing shortages only in paediatrics and intensive care. My survey showed that 60 per cent. of districts have shortages in mental illness nurses, 48 per cent. in theatre nurses, 40 per cent. in nurses in geriatric care, 36 per cent. in intensive care nurses, 31 per cent. in nurses nursing the mentally handicapped and 29 per cent. in paediatric nurses. We are talking about a

national problem which hits geriatric wards and paediatric wards, intensive care and care in the community. It is the Government's responsibility to sort it out.

As children in Birmingham had their heart operations cancelled, it was exasperating to hear Ministers saying, "It is nothing to do with us. It is not our fault. It has nothing to do with resources; it is the nursing shortage." The nursing shortage is very much bound up with the question of pay.

Nurses join the Health Service because they want to help others, because the work interests them and because they believe in the National Health Service. The Price Waterhouse survey carried out on behalf of regional chairmen confirmed that that is the case. Nurses leave the Health Service because of pregnancy. They do not return to nursing after having their babies because of low pay and lack of job satisfaction.

Against the background of a nationwide shortage of nurses that was putting services at risk, the pay review body recommended an average 15 per cent. increase for nurses, and we welcome that. In April, the Government led everyone to expect that the pay award would be fully funded and that the Government had made that commitment.

That was reflected in the headlines at the time. *The Guardian* said:

"Nurses pay rise stems tide of health debate";

The Independent:

"Tory nerves calmed by 15·3 per cent. award for nurses";

The Sun:

"Loadsa loadsa money for our super nurses";

The Star:

"A welcome tonic for the NHS";

The *Daily Mail:*

"Record rise for nurses";

and the *Daily Express:*

"15 per cent. pay joy for nurses".

The Government basked in the glory of that good publicity. On 21 April, the Prime Minister said:

"the Government have decided that the cost in excess of the allocation already made for this year should be met from the Reserve."—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 528.]

On the same day, the Secretary of State announced that the Government would provide £749 million. He said:

"In consequence, these awards will be fully funded."

The problem is that the £749 million he mentioned was an estimate. The pay review body warned that its estimates of the cost of the pay award

"are necessarily approximate because they are themselves based on estimates."

The agreed plan was to introduce new clinical grades according to what each nurse was actually doing. The average pay award of 15 per cent., with some nurses receiving up to a 60 per cent. increase, would then be paid at the end of the year.

Managers, in consultation with the unions, are carrying out that review, but there is no sign of the relief that swept over nurses and managers in April. That has gone. Reports are beginning to emerge that at local level in all regions managers are downgrading nurses. The *Nursing Standard* of 16 July accuses health authorities of being cowardly. Its editorial states:

"Cowardly because they are not willing to return a higher percentage than that allocated for fear of another round of cost cutting to pay for the extra cash."

An internal memorandum from the North-West regional health authority, leaked to *The Guardian*, revealed that the allocation that the Government had made for the pay award was

"at least £3·3 million short."

The authority said that the options available to it included spending cuts, slowing down the regrading exercise—that is, cheating the nurses—or manipulating the regrading to reduce the cost—that is, cheating the nurses.

The Prime Minister and her health team have lately become rather shy and convoluted when talking about the pay awards. Although, when pressed, they repeat the magic phrase "fully funded", they are careful at the same time always to mention that they mean fully funding the specific sum of £749 million extra. That puts local managers in an invidious position. Should they respect the integrity of the clinical grading review and risk a large pay bill, for which they will not be reimbursed and which will trigger a massive round of service cuts? The size of the review body pay award and the number of nurses in the National Health Service mean that underfunding would have disastrous effects on services.

The North-West regional health authority reckons that the cost of the award will be not the anticipated 14·5 per cent. but between 17 per cent. and 21 per cent. The additional cost, if that were to be reflected nationally, would be an extra £140 million, or even as much as £360 million. If health authorities were forced to find, taking the lower estimate, £140 million from service reductions, 7,000 beds would have to be closed for a year. Regional health authorities will not be certain of the extent of any underfunding until at least halfway through the financial year. To meet a shortfall of £140 million, they would have to cut 14,000 beds for half a year.

We have to face up to these figures if we are to understand the scale of the consequences, should there be underfunding. If it were to amount to £150 million, that would represent the loss of 10,000 heart transplant operations, or 45,000 coronary by-pass operations. The Minister is laughing, but that is exactly why managers and nurses are nervous. If she were to listen to what they are saying, she would be less complacent. It is because they are facing up to the figures while she is not that they are concerned.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I think I heard the hon. Lady say that we should have to give up 10,000 heart operations. Will she please tell the House how many heart operations we used to do and how many we do now? It is not 10,000, or anything like it, thank God.

Ms. Harman: That is absolutely beside the point. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it is beside the point. I am trying to explain to the House, but the Minister fails to understand, that there is great uncertainty and fear at local level. People believe that there is to be a trade-off between the pay awards and nurses. It is about time that the Minister understood—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) says from a sedentary position that the uncertainty and fear are spread by me and my friends. That is not so. We are responding to genuine concern at local level.

I intend to read letters from nurses who express the fear that is felt at local level. No wonder that managers and nurses are nervous. It is no good trying to improve nurses' morale by improving their pay if at the same time their pay

[Ms. Harman]

increase is funded by cuts in services. Nurses' complaints have never been just about pay. They are also about cuts in services.

Cuts in services due to the underfunding of pay awards have been bad enough in the past four years. I remind the House that there was a £32 million shortfall in 1984-85, a £36 million shortfall in 1985-86, a £12 million shortfall in 1986-87 and a £24 million shortfall in 1987-88. No wonder managers fear underfunding for this round. If the underfunding this year is as large as £140 million, the cuts will be catastrophic. It is fear of underfunding that is interfering with and gnawing away at the base of clinical regrading.

The pay review body warned that it is difficult for local managers to insulate their judgments about grading from their preoccupation with budgetary constraints. Indeed it is. Nurses suspect that managers are downgrading or undergrading nurses to fit the amount of money that they think they will get, rather than risk the service-cutting consequences of sticking to the regrading. They are aided and abetted in this by DHSS guidance, which the unions fear undermines clinical regrading.

I shall give just one example. I said at the beginning of my speech that the idea was that nurses would be graded according to what they do and that it would not involve restructuring, yet the DHSS has told managers that they are to be allowed only one grade G post per ward. If two sisters on a ward have equal responsibilities that ought to qualify them for grade G, they will have to compete for one post. Instead of the two sisters receiving the pay increase that they are expecting, only one will get it. The other will be downgraded. The clinical grading review was supposed to improve morale, not to set nurse against nurse and leave the profession feeling cheated.

I shall read letters from nurses at local level to scotch the complacent view of the hon. Member for Gillingham, who thinks that this is my invention. A nurse in West Yorkshire wrote:

"Our AUGM"—

that is, the assistant unit general manager—

"has said that the Authority must work to a 15 per cent. budget and that unfortunately most of us will be disappointed."

A nurse in Dorset wrote:

"If the grading process is not implemented fairly it will only cause more nurses to leave the National Health Service and lead to further industrial action which may on this occasion prove fatal."

It is signed

"from one very discouraged nurse."

A nurse in Cheshire wrote:

"It is also becoming increasingly apparent that managers are taking every opportunity to downgrade job descriptions."

I shall not read out all the letters of protest, because there are so many of them, but they show that this does not seem to be an exercise that is successfully raising nurses' morale.

If regrading is used to cheat nurses out of the pay increases that they are expecting, they will become even more demoralised. Nurses' hopes will have been raised only to be dashed. I had hoped that we should not be accused of being alarmist, but if we are accused of being alarmist and of stoking up fear it would be very easy for the Government to reassure people by simply saying that they will fund the pay awards in full. I notice that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), said in a Scottish Office news release:

"I deplore the campaign of rumour and innuendo which COHSE in Scotland are mounting".

However, he then said that the additional funding of £92 million for Scotland is expected to meet, without shortfall, the cost of the review body pay award to nurses in Scotland. But the question that is begged is, what if it does not do so? Everybody is keeping quiet about that.

It is not as though we cannot afford to give nurses decent pay rises. The National Health Service is not too expensive. We spend less, as a percentage of our national wealth, on health than America, France, Germany, Italy or Holland. The Treasury has enough money available to enable the Minister to say from the Dispatch Box that managers can carry out the grading review with integrity, because it will be funded.

The Treasury has deliberately underestimated revenue by up to £3 billion. It is receiving more tax than it admits, and it is selling more assets than it expected to sell. It is doing so to pull the wool across the eyes of the hon. Lady, who is in a spending Department. It is trying to distract her from calling for extra spending. But the NHS need not be kept short of cash. The Secretary of State for Health could pay the nurses and keep beds open.

Earlier this year, the Government were faced with widespread protests about cuts in services and the declining morale of nurses. It was that massive protest, supported overwhelmingly by the public as well as by those providing health care, that forced the Government to promise full funding of the pay award. If the Government betray the nurses, they will cause a storm of protest far greater than that which we saw earlier this year.

The Government need not allow uncertainty to continue and morale to ebb. All that needs happen is for the Minister clearly to announce tonight that she will fully fund the pay award. We shall listen carefully to her words, as will managers and nurses all over the country. It is no use the Minister saying that she will fully fund the estimated costs. Estimates, by definition, can be wrong. The Minister must say that she will fully fund the pay award. If she does not, it will be clear that managers must choose between cutting services or cheating nurses. The Minister should end the fear and uncertainty that has cast such a shadow across the Health Service.

When the pay award was announced and the Government declared that it would be fully funded, the Secretary of State said:

"It is good news for the staff, good news for the patients and good news for the country."

That promise must not be broken.

It is not just nurses who are concerned about their level of pay this autumn, because there is a legacy of anger among other workers. There is a resentment among porters, cleaners and catering staff, who have been offered only 5 per cent. They already make up a large proportion of the working pool of people who, although they work long hours, have to rely on benefits to supplement their income. There is also concern about laboratory staff pay levels. Medical laboratory scientific officers are paid about 50 per cent. less in the Health Service than they would be in the private sector. As a result, it is difficult to recruit and to keep those staff. Laboratories are short-staffed, with those remaining coming under more pressure. One district health authority has been compelled to suspend its cervical

cancer screening because of a backlog of smears for analysis. There is no chance of the Government, in paying the nurses, robbing Peter to pay Paul. They cannot take from other parts of the pay bill to finance the nurses' award.

I ask the Minister to take this opportunity to make a statement about the Government's plans to introduce eyesight test and dental check-up charges. When the Health and Medicines Bill was debated on Report, not a single Conservative Back Bencher supported the Government's proposals to charge for eye examinations. The Government will face a major row if once again they bring their proposals to make those charges before the House. The people most likely to lose are the elderly. It is they who most need eye tests, and who are most likely to be deterred by charges. We should not have to wait until October for a statement on this important matter. The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security is present and it is for her to say whether those charges are to be reintroduced, or whether the Government will drop that wretched and unpopular proposal.

6.22 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): First, I must apologise to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister for not being present for the beginning of this debate. I apologise also to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) who leads the Social Services Select Committee with great distinction in this Parliament. I fear that I may go over some of the ground that he has already outlined, but that is because there is on the Select Committee—on which it is a great honour to serve—an immense consensus among Members representing most parties on how the problems of the Health Service directly relating to the estimate we are debating should be tackled.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) will forgive me if I do not immediately follow her on the path down which she led the House, albeit that I have sympathy with the sentiments she expressed, if not the language that she used, in respect of eye test and dental examination charges. As a member of the Social Services Select Committee, I hope that the Government will take a mature attitude to what happened in another place earlier this week and will give serious consideration to the view expressed there—which was endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the Select Committee's members—that it is undesirable to charge for eye tests and dental examinations, and that, to some extent, that goes wholly against the preventive medicine campaign that my hon. Friend and other Ministers over the years have organised and undertaken in the length and breadth of the country. I say to my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench that I shall not be able to support the Government if they seek to overturn the decision that was taken in another place on that matter.

I understand that the problems of nurses and nurses' pay has so far dominated this debate. I have immense sympathy with the Government, who I believe made an announcement in good faith that they would fully fund the recommendations of the independent nurses' pay review body. However, we know that on this occasion that body did not recommend a straightforward pay increase but a complex, total regrading of nursing staff at every level. It is for nursing and other managers throughout the Health Service to undertake that very difficult duty carefully.

However, I say to my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench and to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in particular, who I understand will be intervening later, that if in the light of a considered and responsible clinical regrading of nurses it is seen that the Government underestimated the amount that needed to be allocated for pay, I hope that they will have the courage and the determination—and perhaps I ought to address this remark to my hon. Friend the Minister and not to the Government as a whole, because DHSS Ministers must fight their own corner—to go to the Treasury and ask for further resources to meet the cost of the clinical regrading which is a critical part of the Health Service structure. It will be irresponsible and bordering on the immoral if the Government, having stated to the people of this country and to their own supporters in the House that they would fully fund the pay award, do not in the event carry through that promise and assurance.

Other statistics have been quoted relating to regional and district health authorities throughout the country. The hon. Member for Birkenhead may have mentioned our discussions in the Mersey region with the chairman of that authority, Sir Donald Wilson. He is currently chairman of all the regional health authority chairmen, so he holds a responsible and important position. His senior managers indicated to the Select Committee when it visited the Mersey region—particularly the Wirral and Macclesfield health authorities—that in their estimate it was likely to be £1·5 million underfunded, and that is after it had undertaken a well-considered and responsible nurses' regrading.

If the Mersey region, which is currently a RAWP loser, is expected to provide the necessary funds, and if there is inadequate money within the cost improvement programme to pay for the nurses needed and the regradings that are necessary, patient services will inevitably be cut.

As the hon. Member for Peckham knows—and as the Minister for Health knows—my district health authority has had to reduce theatre sessions to stay within budget. That is increasing critical waiting lists in important categories, not least orthopaedics. I have been a member of the Select Committee for more years than I care to remember—for longer than any other hon. Member has sat on any other Select Committee. That has, I hope, given me an understanding of the Health Service that not all hon. Members have the privilege to possess. It has been of immense interest to me for nearly 14 years, and I have made contact with almost every branch of medicine. It is critical that the Government reconsider. If additional supplementary resources are required, they should be provided this year.

The nurses' pay review body dealt not only with a single year's increase, but with the critical aspect of regrading. We must ensure that we retain the nurses whom we have, and encourage other young men and women to come into such a magnificent career. As the hon. Member for Peckham pointed out, we can no longer rely on the many 18-year-old young ladies who were happy to come into nursing, perhaps seeing it as a vocation, but a vocation lacking the salary to reward their skill and care. Many were fortunate to come from families that could provide them with assistance, but that is no longer so. The competition in the market place for able young women —and men, for that matter—is very great. Unless we are

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to lose more nurses, the Government must look again at the total cost this year following the nurses' clinical regrading.

I understand the Government's position. It would, perhaps, have been irresponsible to say, "Whatever the total cost, we will meet it." Those responsible for undertaking the regrading might have regraded more generously than was merited. There is no doubt that some nurses merit regrading and others do not. I believe that the Royal College of Nursing has in general taken an amazingly responsible attitude throughout this difficult period, and continues to do so.

Time and again the Government tell us that they are trying to achieve better value for the massive sums that they spend in the Health Service. The hon. Member for Birkenhead began by admitting that the Government had given generously. That is to the credit of the hon. Gentleman, who represents not only Birkenhead but the Labour party in this place. We do not often hear such a constructive approach to the opening of a debate on a vital issue.

The Government also say that they want better management. If that is the case, they must provide the wherewithal first to allow the Health Service to operate more efficiently and secondly to give the management the tools to enable them to make the right decisions, with proper knowledge of all the facts. They are certainly not able to do that at present. I recently visited the King's Fund college where I had the pleasure of addressing people on a course in management within the National Health Service. A number of them said to me, "We are concerned that the Health Service is not committed to management, and that the Government are not either, despite the Griffiths report and all the talk that followed its publication. If they were committed, they would be more determined to provide us with the equipment to enable us to do our job." Adequate resources for computer systems and information technology will play a vital part in enabling health authorities to provide value for money, and to enable consultants and others to make informed decisions.

The hon. Member for Peckham mentioned laboratory assistants, medical physicists and pathology staff. All those groups are vital to the Health Service, but there is a problem over pay. They are not remunerated in accordance with their skills, and, with the growing competition in the market place, the Health Service will undoubtedly be starved of people who are vital to the provision of an efficient service and value for money. Accordingly, I make a special plea on behalf of all who are employed in the professions allied to medicine.

Let me also make a plea, as I have done elsewhere, for medical secretaries. Time and again—not just during the Select Committee's current inquiry into the resourcing and structure of the Health Service, but during other inquiries—consultants have said, "We are here because of our operating skill, but we are unable to work to the extent that we should like because we have not the back-up staff." Only recently when we visited Guy's hospital, just across the river, a leading consultant said that he was losing his medical secretary because she was going elsewhere for a better salary. The hospital was unable to pay the salary that was essential to maintain that vital member of staff. I have referred outside the House to the case of Mr. Lennox Holt, a rheumatologist in Manchester, who told me that his work was being gravely impeded because he could not employ the right quality of medical secretary to enable him not only to do his job but to refer the case notes back to other doctors who would follow up the care and treatment of his patients.

Let me make two more brief points. We have severe problems with capital spending, and perhaps I could link that to my continuing concern about care in the community, to which the hon. Member for Peckham referred. It worries me dreadfully that managers throughout the country are deciding to close psychiatric hospitals—and other hospitals, for that matter. I am particularly concerned about the position of the mentally ill, but inevitably my concern extends to the mentally handicapped.

Those managers are trying to run down the psychiatric hospitals and discharge patients into the community, where there are inadequate facilities for them. There are not enough trained and qualified staff to maintain an acceptable level of care and treatment. The managers are then disposing of the hospital sites for large capital sums, many of them for development. Once those sites are lost, there will be too little long-stay hospital care for the more severely mentally ill, particularly those suffering from schizophrenia. There is growing anxiety about decisions that some health authorities are being forced to take because of the resource problems that they are facing which will result in chaos and suffering for groups within our society about whom we should be concerned.

Some time ago the Select Committee undertook an inquiry into care in the community. Some of the recommendations that we made, which have not been accepted by the Government, are as relevant as, if not more relevant than, they were when we produced our report. The Government should take a greater interest in what district health authorities are doing in closing psychiatric hospitals and hospitals for the mentally handicapped. We could produce a situation such as exists in Italy today. It closed those hospitals and people are now on the streets, sleeping on park benches, under bridges and in the call-in day centres and night shelters. Those people no longer have the care and medical attention that they require to contain their condition and enable them to maintain an acceptable standard of life.

Debates such as this give those of us who study the Health Service carefully an opportunity to express some of our deep anxieties. Such hon. Members come from both sides of the House. If the hon. Member for Peckham had tackled this subject in the caring and responsible way that the hon. Member for Birkenhead did, rather than concentrating so much on the entirely political issue of the nurses' pay review body, its recommendation and the full resourcing of the award, we might be able to find the common ground which would enable the House to produce policies and proposals, perhaps as we did when the Health Service was founded 40 years ago, without any bickering.

So often the nurses are used as a political weapon by one party with which to beat the other. *[Interruption.]* That is the case. I represented the Conservative party when I spoke alongside the leader of the Labour party and the leader of the Liberal party at a nurses' rally in Central hall, Westminster, and I was pleased to do so. I said that I would fight to make my Government implement in full the

pay review body's recommendation. The Government announced that they would do that and I expect them to live up to that assurance in full. Not only should they implement it in full, as they have agreed in principle to do, but if there is a shortfall because of the regrading due to an error in underestimating that, they should if necessary come forward with a supplementary estimate to ensure that the pay review body's recommendation can be implemented in full.

This is a vital subject. Despite the bickering and anger that occasionally flares across the Floor of the House, I feel instinctively that there is a growing consensus on how to tackle the problems of the NHS. I cannot speak for my hon. Friends. They fight their fight in their own way. I shall fight my fight in the House in the way that I have done ever since I came here 17 years ago.

I hope that the hon. Member for Peckham, perhaps in private moments with me, will accept that the private sector, of which she made no mention, is not generally in competition with the NHS, behind which I stand 100 per cent., but is more complementary to it. It works in co-operation with the NHS and it can make a growing contribution in filling some of the gaps that for a time will inevitably exist within the NHS.

I hope that the Government will continue to look sympathetically on the needs of a service that is close to the hearts of the overwhelming majority of the British people, and, perhaps, of all the political parties here. It is also probably close to the heart of 99 per cent., if not 100 per cent., of Conservative voters.

6.44 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) made an independent speech and I hope that the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) listened carefully to what he said and the manner in which he said it.

The vote deals with expenditure in excess of £15 billion and I want some of that unimaginable sum for a highly important, much under-rated sector—the provision of fully trained speech therapists in our state schools for the benefit of youngsters suffering from speech defects. If those defects are not tackled, boys and girls at school will never realise their full potential. To say that in 1988 is to point to something that is desperately wrong.

Perhaps hon. Members will agree that youngsters are only young once and that the happiness of their families will be blighted if parents know that their children are not getting the expert attention or sufficient time to mitigate and/or eliminate their speech defects.

I want to quote from several letters that I have received from constituents on the matter. The first, from a Mrs. Davies, says:

"The school is a marvellous place and our son has achieved a great deal since going there over four years ago. The nursing sister whom we had absolute total confidence in is unfortunately retiring at the end of July 1988 and we have learnt to our horror she is to be replaced with a nurse who will only be on duty for 24 out of the 37½ hours at present, which means our child will be at school for several hours a week without a qualified nurse on duty to attend to any emergency which may arise."

She goes on to say:

"there are about 75 pupils at school. Over 50 of these pupils need regular speech therapy. We have one part-time speech therapist. The school needs two full-time speech therapists plus an assistant. We as parents are not asking for these things for ourselves but for our children. It is their right. They cannot go to ordinary schools."

My constituent ends:

"Please, please help us to get the nursing staff and speech therapists that our children are entitled to. Please, we beg you to help us in our campaign."

Another of my constituents, Mrs. Gerrard, writes:

"My husband and I are parents of a child who attends Dorin Park Special School in Chester. We are extremely concerned and worried to find that there is no full-time 'Speech Therapy' at the school."

That is a school, incidentally, that the parents praise highly. The letter continues:

"It is extremely vital that two full-time speech therapists, plus an assistant be employed at Dorin Park. As parents we cannot understand the reasons behind neglecting to employ someone, the education of the children being foremost. The children must come first and not the cutbacks. We would be extremely grateful for any help".

Mrs. Gerrard has a five-year-old child who suffers from severe cerebral palsy. I believe that the House would wish that such a fine school should have a full complement of speech therapists.

I repeat at this juncture that the budget for votes 1 to 5 exceeds £15 billion. On behalf of my constituents, and thousands of parents elsewhere in England and Wales, I claim a bigger share for speech therapy and physiotherapy.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has raised the issue of speech therapy. I must tell him that I was rung by a speech therapist at 8.15 this morning who said that she had read in *The Guardian* that morning that the House would debate the estimates. She asked whether the pay award would be fully funded today and she asked me to ensure that the Minister addressed the issue of speech therapists' pay, because speech therapists had been struggling to get their pay award for many months. Whether it will be fully funded is another issue that they have been anxious to find out about. I am grateful that my hon. Friend has raised the matter and I hope that the Minister will make a reply that will give the speech therapists some hope that the pay award will be made and funded.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her apposite intervention. I am certain that the Minister will respond fully on this important matter.

I shall conclude my remarks on speech therapy by quoting briefly from a letter sent to me by Mrs. Dorothy Price, the chairman of the governing body of Ysgol Delyn, a special school. She says:

"The children have very specific needs which require the expertise of qualified therapists. The feeling is that if we don't have a statutory right to provide the necessary service surely we have a moral obligation."

She goes on to say:

"We are reneging on our responsibilities to these young people if we don't provide the service that has been shown to be needed."

First, I ask the Minister, in the knowledge that those matters are appropriately to be described as a moral issue, whether the Government will enable those youngsters to have a statutory right to that necessary service. Secondly, will the Government give extra cash to the authorities that must deliver speech therapy and physiotherapy services? Thirdly, have the families of deprived children the right to take that case and similar cases throughout England and Wales to the European Court? Fourthly, will the Government launch a campaign, under the auspices of the

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careers service, to promote careers in speech therapy and physiotherapy? Fifthly, will the Government give speech therapists and physiotherapists sufficient salary and status to attract applicants for training and for designated and advertised posts?

I note that £1·5 million was paid in 1987 to British Telecom in respect of the priority fault repairs service for general practitioners and pharmacists. I further note that for the current year £2 million is earmarked. That is extraordinary. Are the telephones of GPs and pharmacists so very faulty? I know that British Telecom is making a small fortune from repairing those faulty telephones—if it is repairing them—so why is priority repair hideously expensive? Does the Minister know how many telephones needed priority repair in 1987? We know that British Telecom's profits in 1987 were huge. Was its telephone service to GPs and pharmacists as unreliable and bad as the figures suggest? I look forward to receiving from the Minister a breakdown of the figures, which are to be found under the appropriate vote heading. If £2 million is earmarked for the repair of GPs' and pharmacists' telephones, there must be something very wrong indeed.

The social fund stands at £179 million and is for budgeting and crisis loans. It is also for community care grants, maternity expenses, funeral expenses and heating expenses in exceptionally cold weather. I do not think that the social fund is enough, and I would urge the Government to enlarge it.

I know from my work as an hon. Member who holds regular surgeries that the social fund is the last bastion of defence for the poverty-stricken and those who are destitute. One of my constituents came to me in distress, saying that he needed a new pair of shoes, and I said that I would try to help him. In the end, I am glad to say, the Department of Health and Social Security offered him £30. My constituent, who was under great pressure, had to repay that £30 loan which was described as a "budgeting loan".

My constituent desperately needed the pair of shoes but he did not feel that he could repay the loan at £3·50 a week. After all, he came to me because he was not managing on the weekly cash that he had. In the end, a kindly social fund officer rescheduled the budgeting loan at £1·41 a week. My constituent accepted that, but he is under immense pressure in finding that £1·41. He does not have a lot of money——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying a little outside the terms of the debate. We are discussing hospital community services and related services, whereas the hon. Gentleman is straying into the social services. I am sure that he will bring his remarks back to the subject under debate.

Mr. Jones: I am glad of your intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have brought me back into strict order, but I thought that while we were discussing the Supply estimates I could make the point on behalf of a desperate constituent.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on the question of nurses' pay. I have had deputations and much correspondence on the subject and the nurses in my part of the world tell me that, although a pay award of 15 per cent. has been trumpeted, many of them may receive only 4 to 5 per cent.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield made a strong and independent point about charges for dental examinations and eye tests, which we have debated in this place and on which we know the other place has a point of view. If the Government do not listen to the points made in another place and by the hon. Member for Macclesfield, the well-being of several million pensioners will be at risk. I urge the Government to listen carefully. If they do not, politically they will suffer greatly.

6.58 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): As we all know, this debate takes place during the year of the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service. We all agree that in the 40 years for which the service has existed it has expanded enormously away from the concept of a tick-over service once outlined by Aneurin Bevan. It is now treating more patients, with more staff, in more hospitals, for more illnesses and disabilities, than ever before. What is more, it is receiving more Government finance than at any time in its history.

As has been said, the supplementary estimate will give our nurses the largest pay award that any Government have given the nursing profession. Opposition Members carp about the pay award as if it were the Government who had decided upon the award and the Government who were going to restrict it. Yet, as I am sure Opposition Members will have heard, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 14 July:

"£803 million was the figure estimated not by the Government but by the nurses' pay review body."—[*Official Report*, 14 July; Vol. 137, c. 547.]

They will also know that Mr. Trevor Clay said:

"There are many problems at local level. But some managements are succeeding in some districts. Why can't others make the same speed?"

I cannot criticise any Government who provide £803 million for the nursing profession. I hope that the grading problem will be sorted out as soon as possible. We must all recognise that it is a new dimension in nursing. We all know that it will produce difficulties and we should not imagine that they will be sorted out in a matter of three of four months. To hope for that would be unreasonably optimistic.

This supplementary estimate relating to the nurses' pay award has already produced much controversy in the Chamber. That suggests that, like the Supply estimate on which it is based, it is a source of controversy between the two sides of the House, as estimates have been in the history of the Health Service. We are all aware that Supply estimates and the inevitable supplementary estimates are merely guesstimates—no doubt informed guesstimates—by the Treasury and the DHSS. They are not estimates that are demand-led by the Health Service, the regions and the districts. They are figures chosen by Treasury officials to fit an extrapolation which may or may not be correct and which we seek to improve as the months of the financial year pass with supplementary estimate after supplementary estimate until we arrive at a figure that we think approximates to the resource needs of the NHS.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in South Glamorgan health authority, nurse is being set against nurse? Operating

theatre nurses are being told that there are only a certain number of grade G posts, so some of them will have to go down to grade F, even though they have the same responsibilities as their colleagues on grade G

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I do not want to get involved in grading. I am not an expert on it, nor have I had complaints about it from my district health authority. In fact, I have not had a single letter about it.

I want to pursue my point about the estimates. They are the only way by which the Health Service is funded. We pass them year after year and we have a right to expect that they should be more than informed guesstimates. They should have some bearing on the demands within the service. Those demands are the yardstick of the resources that need to be provided.

I am pressing my hon. Friend the Minister for a better way of funding the NHS than the system that has obtained in the past 40 years. These estimates, both supplementary and Supply, do not give me the basis for calculating how the global figures in them are reached. I do not know whether they assume additional savings within the Health Service, or a percentage increase in the number of patients to be treated and staff to look after them, and whether they take into account the effect of inflation on the equipment that hospitals will have to buy. I do not know what emphasis they place on savings in general health care. We all know that about £100 million has been saved by privatising certain services in the Health Service in the past nine years—mainly domestic and catering services. But what savings could be made by using the private sector of medicine to relieve demands on certain parts of the NHS for specialist treatment? Does the Department have a figure? If so, are those savings assumed in the estimate, let alone the supplementary estimate? Without such knowledge, statements about underfunding have little validity.

Yet underfunding was almost the keynote of the third report of the Select Committee on Social Services. The report, entitled "Resourcing the National Health Service: Prospects for 1988-89", gives two definitions of underfunding: first, it is

"the amount of funding less than that required to maintain current service levels and planned development";

secondly, in a retrospective sense, it is

"the amount of funding required to maintain the service at a constant standing in relation to changes in demography, technology and policy aims."

Neither definition refers to further measures aimed at making existing funds go further with better management.

I admit that in paragraph 11 the Committee states that it accepts that the better use of resources can lead to higher performance but it goes on to say that that

"does not of itself solve the continuing problem of underfunding."

That is such a definite statement that one must assume that the Committee is arguing that, with or without savings, the National Health Service is underfunded. I cannot help wondering whether the Committee has allowed itself to be persuaded by certain district and regional health authorities that such is the case.

I cast doubt on the Committee's conclusions because some health authorities appear to do rather better out of their budgets than others. As reported in *The Times* last week, some hospitals also seem to have a better record for treating patients than others. I recognise that, as the Committee pointed out, if budget savings or lower average costs mean treating more patients, that can lead to increased total costs. However, the obverse of that argument seems to be that the fewer patients treated, the lower the costs. That is clearly a self-defeating concept.

I am not arguing against more money for the NHS, but the old Parkinson rule—that expenditure tends to rise with income—still holds good, and I would be sorry if the Select Committee's comments were read as if they endorsed those who argue that the NHS is as efficient with its budget as it can be and that large additional sums for it are imperative to stave off further reductions in hospital services. It cannot be for nothing that the Trent and Birmingham health authorities have asked BUPA to provide them with a system for costing the services that they give. Probably I am not comparing like with like—I speak with a special interest in the matter—but I wonder why kidney dialysis units run by private health care companies for the NHS can provide dialysis that is 30 to 40 per cent. cheaper than the NHS dialysis units, and still make a profit. Carrying that argument to its natural conclusion, the present figure of 47 new kidney patients on dialysis per million could be almost doubled, which would put us right up alongside the top levels in western Europe. Will my hon. Friend explain, if she can, that wide diversity of charge?

Another area in which considerable sums of money could be saved and a better service provided is hospital laundry. By September 1987, privatisation of laundry work had saved £8·1 million, but considering that laundry and linen services cost the NHS £231 million a year, according to the National Audit Office report published in April 1987, one must wonder whether that is the best that we can do——

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: No, I shall not. Other hon. Members want to speak and the hon. Gentleman will have his chance.

A member of the laundry service in my constituency tells me that he believes, and it is the considered view of his trade, that savings of as much as £100 million are waiting to be made if private launderers are encouraged to tender for hospital contracts. Despite all the talk about privatising services since 1983, the amount of hospital laundry work, by value, being handled by the private sector has decreased. Yet I know from experience that the supply of sheets, pillow cases and blankets is often extremely haphazard in the National Health Service——

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: —so much so that the service spends at least——

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: No, I shall not give way. It is no good shouting at me.

The service spends at least £100 million on disposable linen substitutes, although I doubt whether anyone prefers them to ordinary linen. When I was a patient in one of the hospitals in Oxford, I was asked by the nursing staff to take up with the administrator the wretched supply of linen and blankets to the patients. I was asked to do that because, as a Member of Parliament, I was assumed to

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

have some clout with the administrator. I am glad to say I did have some, because we did get a better supply—but what a miserable state of affairs.

I ask myself why the private sector is finding it so difficult to submit tenders for hospital laundry. I am told that the private sector, when asked to tender, is asked to tender in such a way as to make the chances of it wishing to proceed extremely improbable. I shall give three examples. When the Lewisham and north Southwark district health authority asked a private tenderer to submit a tender for its laundry service, it required a book containing 226 pages. The tender documents for the Peterborough hospital contained 186 pages and that for south-east Kent contained 238 pages. My constituent told me that one tender document was six books long and took him nearly four hours to read.

I shall quote a letter from a hospital laundry contractor who supplies hospitals all over western Europe. This is a letter that the contractor wrote to the district general manager of the Airedale health authority, giving his reasons for not tendering for the work. It said that the company

"is sorry to have to inform the Airedale Health Authority that it cannot submit a tender under the conditions to tender laid down by the Health Authority. This is in spite of investing hundreds of man hours and many thousands of pounds in the exercise to date."

The letter continues that the company

"has twenty years' experience of providing Full Rental Textile Care Services to hundreds of hospitals, clinics and old people's homes. It is part of a Group whose whole raison d'être is serving healthcare institutions. It cannot permit itself to enter into a contractual obligation which it believes to be neither commercially responsible and reasonable nor potentially a successful service to the customer."

That company told me that its standard contract is usually only five pages long, but the three examples I have given involve tender documents hundreds of pages long. One is forced to the conclusion that health authorities do not want to put their laundry service out to tender, whether savings can be made or not, and achieve that objective by asking for massive tender documentation. I remind the House that we are talking of little, simple things such as linen, blankets and towels. By imposing unreasonable contract terms, they do their best to dissuade private tenderers, despite the willingness of those same tenderers, to invest in the necessary equipment. They, or those responsible for running the laundries, prefer to have it in-house, perhaps because the wage structure relates to the number of pieces processed per week. Dare I say that hospital laundry managers have a vested interest in exaggerating the piece count? The private sector tell me that when they win a tender, the number of pieces processed falls by between 17 and 40 per cent., simply because payment is made on a different basis.

By the same token, is there any reason why the capital accounting procedures used in hospitals should favour in-house as opposed to external tenderers? In-house tenderers are allowed to discount their equipment purchases at the unrealistic figure of 5 per cent., and we all know what the standard price for money is in the market.

I have touched on three areas of National Health Service spending where the private sector can provide services that could mean major savings. Major savings mean getting more out of the resources that are available. If we are to move away from the idea that the National Health Service is chronically underfunded, we have to improve both the way in which we draw up our estimates and ensure that the resources available are used as wisely and prudently as possible.

7.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Although this has been a short debate, it has been interesting. I welcome the opportunity to take part as a Front Bencher in a debate on a report of the Social Services Select Committee, having for a number of years taken part in such debates as a member of that Select Committee when I was a Back Bencher.

It is a pity that the words of the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), were not listened to by more of his hon. Friends. When he got to his feet, I counted two of his Front Bench colleagues listening to him and five Back-Bench Members, which, of course, has been par for the course in recent health debates. When the Labour party spokesman got to her feet a little later the number went up to seven Back-Bench Members, but, of course, that included the Chairman of the Select Committee. I am afraid that it needs no more figures to demonstrate the real interest of the Labour party in issues to do with health care.

I shall answer briefly one or two of the points that have been made. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) asked for a statement on dental and eye charges. I do not know whether she heard it, but a statement was made earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and I have nothing to add to it.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) asked a number of questions, including questions about speech therapy and British Telecom. I hope that he will understand that, because of the short time available, I cannot answer his questions in detail, but I undertake to write to him.

We have had three splendid speeches from Conservative Members. I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson). I especially appreciated the excellent, robust speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North. I enjoyed the elegant and thoughtful remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury, who might like to know that, on provisional estimates for renal dialysis, it looks as though the number of new patients per million is now up to about 50, so we have further progress there.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield will forgive me if I deal with his points in a moment.

As for the priority given to Health Service spending, the figures speak for themselves. This year alone the Government are spending some £23·5 billion on the NHS in the United Kingdom. Our spending will rise by nearly £2 billion over last year. That is a cash increase of some 9 per cent., or about 4·5 per cent. in real terms after allowing for general inflation. We have allocated a slightly higher proportion of our money to the regional health authorities in England this year, so the figures should be 9·5 per cent. in cash terms and 4·8 per cent. in real terms for the RHAs.

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: Spending on the National Health Service this year will have risen by 39 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. That compares with an increase in public spending as a whole of 16 per cent. in real terms over the same period. In other words, spending on the Health Service under this Government has risen two and a half times as fast as public spending in general. I am sure that the Chairman of the Select Committee will agree that this is the biggest budget that the National Health Service has ever seen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North—who has left us—left us with the picture of Labour Members and, sadly, one or two Select Committee Members acting as bewildered children in a shop full of goodies, looking for the gaps on the shelves. My only concern is that his metaphor was a shop full of sweets—I would have preferred a shop full of fruit, but the point is well made.

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: I should like to get a little further into my speech, because I want first to answer some of the points made by hon. Members who have been here the whole time.

Hospital and community health service spending on staff for all groups in the United Kingdom last year, including agency staff, was more than £11 billion. Of that, the estimated pay bill for our nurses and midwives was £5·2 billion; for doctors and dentists in the hospital and community health service it was £1·6 billion; and for the professions allied to medicine it was just over £500 million. We have accepted the estimates of the full cost of this year's review body awards which come to £803 million for nurses and midwives, £168 million for doctors and dentists, and £45 million for the professions allied to medicine. The £538 million sought in the summer supplementary estimates is the additional amount required on top of the 4·5 per cent. included in the public expenditure White Paper for England for the hospital and community health service. The hon. Member for Birkenhead is nodding. He is with me, even if no one else is. Other items are included in other supplementary estimates.

The difference between these estimates and those in the review body report is accounted for by employers' costs, that is national insurance and superannuation. The assessment of the hon. Member for Birkenhead of the historic size and importance of this supplementary estimate is far more accurate than the somewhat trite remarks of the hon. Member for Peckham.

We are employing more nurses than ever before. The last count last September showed a further increase to record levels. In England, there are 405,200 whole-time equivalent nurses and midwives—that is 490,000 on a head count. In itself that makes the regrading exercise so much more of a headache. It is a fact that more nurses in our employ are better qualified than ever before, including in the community nursing service where more than 80 per cent. of staff are qualified. I believe that that is all to the good.

It is a firm Government policy to improve nursing education through Project 2000 and to reduce the service burden of students so that they are no longer treated like skivvies. We feel just as strongly as the Royal College of Nursing about that and I believe that our stand has been courageous and welcome.

It is also a firm Government policy to look after nurses and midwives for their own sakes and because they are our core work force. In this country we rely very heavily on nurses and we have relatively fewer doctors compared with other countries. Our job and theirs is to look after the patients and we can do that only with a skilled, productive work force in a professional atmosphere with high morale whose contribution is recognised in the pay packet.

Mr. Galbraith: I am slightly worried that the Minister will not answer the very important question that we raised. If more money is required as a result of regrading than that already set aside by the Government, will they find the additional money to fund fully the regrading exercise?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I think very highly of him. However, every time he rises I cannot help remembering that he came to this House after being a consultant in the National Health Service. He gave up £10,000 in salary to do so. We are certainly looking after someone very well out there. If he will bear with me, I hope to answer his question in full shortly.

We hope that the Opposition will not vote against the mammoth package of extra money for the nurses and midwives. I noted that the Labour party had a vote last night to which attention was drawn earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard). The national executive committee of the Labour party had to decide whether the Royal College of Nursing should be allowed anywhere near the Labour party conference. There was another split in the Labour party. There was a vote of 21:1 against the RCN going to the Labour party conference. The one was the Leader of the Opposition and the deputy leader was among the 21. I have checked up on this and I can state that the RCN is welcome at the Conservative party conference. I confirm that we expect to see the RCN at Brighton in October.

We have had plenty of humbug and hypothetical questions tonight. If the Labour party had won the 1979 general election there would not have been a nurses' pay review body or a supplementary estimate of the size that we are discussing. My concern about the Opposition's approach and that of the Select Committee on Social Services on occasion is that they are so negative. Every change is seen as a problem and every effort to cope with problems is seen as a failure, even when it is a blazing success. Every improvement is ignored and every opportunity to run down achievement is seized. The hon. Member for Birkenhead again described the pay awards as very generous. We are content to accept that compliment.

I want now to consider what is happening in Macclesfield. As my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield is aware——

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady has not given me enough time to answer all the questions that she asked. I will come to them in a moment. I hope that she will allow me first to pay a courtesy to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield who served on the Select Committee for Social Services with such distinction for so long.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield does not mind, I want to read a letter sent to me by Mr. Richard Jordan, who lives in Macclesfield. I imagine that he is a constituent of my hon. Friend. I checked with Mr. Jordan

[Mrs. Currie]

and he said that he would be delighted if I were to read out his letter. His handwriting is a little shaky and hon. Members will understand why in a moment. He wrote:

"Dear Mrs. Currie,

I am fed up with hearing the complaints about the NHS, of course everybody wants more money, but please tell us all how wonderful the service is, the Macclesfield General and West Park Hospitals have brought me through two heart attacks and now two strokes, hence my bad writing.

All the staff at our hospitals are marvellous and I hope you will praise them. Doctors in our village on the spot at home within minutes, ambulance, doctors, nurses, equipment is here within the half hour, immediate doctor and nurses attention on arrival at hospital, food very good, with varied menus, sisters and nurses nothing too much trouble.

When I had my strokes the doctor and even the specialist from the hospital called at home to confirm my condition and examine me. My local doctor saw to the nurses, physiotherapy, calling and providing me with a wheelchair, stick, chair, and everything including oxygen etc. I felt that the NHS has done so much . . . We are so grateful to the NHS and feel sure there are many more people who feel the same way."

He comments further about the cheerful and expert service. That is the service in Macclesfield, and it is repeated throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead asked one or two specific points. I will consider those and then consider the regrading exercise in some detail.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: As my hon. Friend the Minister has referred specifically to my constituency, I want to confirm everything in Mr. Jordan's letter. I have splendid doctors, wonderful nurses and, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, a new district general hospital. However, with regard to my local hospital, perhaps she will refer to the fact that its new operating theatres are closed for several sessions a week when they could be relieving people who require hip replacement or knee joint replacement operations. They are closed because there are inadequate resources to staff the hospital and theatres to operate 100 per cent. of the time. We have growing waiting lists in important specialties. I fully accept that we have an excellent hospital and that it provides fine service, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister should direct her attention to the point that I have raised.

Mrs. Currie: As my hon. Friend is aware, part of the difficulty in some of the theatres, as has been shown in recent research studies, has arisen in obtaining the key staff, especially the nurses, to work in them. That is why we are undertaking a clinical grading review so that highly qualified staff who accept a lot of responsibility should be paid appropriately. We are certain that that will help to alleviate the problems in future.

Mrs. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood). It is a little late.

Mrs. Currie: If it is a matter of being a little late perhaps the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) will stay here a little longer and hear what I have to say.

Ms. Short: I am here for the next debate.

Mrs. Currie: Right.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead asked about Medical Defence Society subscriptions. As he is aware, the doctors' and dentists' review body recommended that two thirds of the costs of subscriptions should be reimbursed directly. As the hon. Gentleman will realise, the cost to the health authorities can be estimated quite precisely and they have been included.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead also asked about Whitley. As he is probably aware, the settlements are coming in fairly close to the figures that we anticipated. Others are not yet settled, and we do not normally speculate while pay negotiations are still under way, for obvious reasons. I hope that the hon. Member for Birkenhead will be satisfied with that reply.

Let us consider the regrading exercise. I suspect that there has been some misunderstanding and I want to assist the House. First, it does not apply to all nursing staff. Managers and students are excluded by agreement. About 85 per cent. of our nursing staff are affected, but that means that we are talking about a large proportion of the half a million nurses that we employ. The nurse managers are the subject of a separate grading exercise. Students will be affected by Project 2000. However, under the 1988 review body awards, the minimum for senior nurses will be 5 per cent. The minimum for students will be 6·3 per cent. and the minimum pay rise for all the nurses will be 4·2 per cent.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead asked several questions about how the pay bill was divided and calculated.

Ms. Harman: We know all that.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Member for Birkenhead asked some questions and I am answering them. He obviously did not know the answers.

The Government set up a sample survey of staff and asked them of what their work consisted. We tried to work out, by grossing up, how many staff will be involved in changing grade. We gave the figures to the review body along with our considered views on the increase in pay needed for other reasons such as inflation or the extra costs of living in London. We accepted what the review body said about the costs of the exercise to the National Health Service. I shall remind the House of precisely what Sir James Cleminson said in the review body's report. In paragraph 154 he says:

"Our estimates are necessarily approximate because they are themselves based on estimates."

We provide estimates of manpower levels and pay bills every year. That is how the DHSS cash was calculated, and we accepted the figures in good faith. If the hon. Member for Birkenhead thinks about it, he will agree that the method that I have described is easily the obvious method of calculation. Had he recommended it, I would have said that it was an intelligent and serious approach to a fiendishly difficult problem.

With the exception of funds for the London supplement, the total sum allocated to regional health authorities was in proportion to their initial cash limits. This tried and tested method has been used in previous years. We considered doing it differently; other methods have their advantages and disadvantages.

Hon. Members asked whether we are satisfied that the estimates are accurate and whether we will implement the exercise in the spirit in which it was intended. Of course the answer is yes. When such large numbers of staff are to be regraded there are a limited numbers of ways for a Government to respond. They can offer the figures and accept the calculations in good faith—which we did; that meant requesting a set amount of cash as a supplementary

estimate—they can reject all the calculations and use guesswork, which we were not prepared to do, or they can say "Go ahead, never mind the cost." But that implies offering a blank cheque. I accept the strictures of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield that that would have been irresponsible. We have issued much guidance, which is all in the Library. I sometimes wonder why we put it in the Library, because I do not think that anybody reads it.

I shall set out precisely for what the money for which we are voting is intended. I shall set out in public the views that we discussed in private with regional health authorities. The money is to regrade jobs as they were in post on 1 April this year. We accept that that is a snapshot, but there must be a set date or it is not fair. The money is not for new posts or to fill vacancies as at 1 April. That would be growth, which has already been argued for. Some 1·2 per cent. is provided for RAWP and 1·5 per cent. for cost-improvement and income-generating programmes. There has already been more than 2·5 per cent. growth this year.

The money can be used to replace agency staff. It is not intended to permit health authorities to bow to trade unions or industrial relations pressures. The entire review body system for nurses, midwives and professions allied to medicine was set up precisely because those professions had put their patients first despite industrial action by others. In a press release last week, the Royal College of Nursing told us to get on with it. It said that it was confident that the Government would keep their promises and that the sooner the exercise was finished the better.

The money is not for health authorities to think up their own gradings. This is not a local version of regional pay. We have put our views about regional pay to the review bodies, but that is a completely separate issue. It is essential to have consistency of grading across the country so that the same grade does the same work. Our officials will be visiting health authorities during the summer to ensure that this consistency is achieved. That is only fair and it is what we have agreed with the staff.

The hon. Member for Peckham bleated on about the sufficiency or otherwise of the enormous sum on which we shall be voting. We have received no firm information and we shall not act on rumour, especially rumour put about by one or two trade unions that might want to bid-up gradings, to try to poach members or alarm good staff.

It is early days and there is a long way to go. We are unlikely to have any solid information before the autumn —much closer to the deadline of 31 October. Any other views are pure speculation, and many of them are plain wrong.

I shall write to the hon. Member for Birkenhead in more detail about the issues that he raised, but I should like to put the regrading exercise in context. It is the biggest change to face nursing for many years. It is the biggest personnel activity since the National Health Service was established. It is probably the biggest review this decade of health care staff in Europe. It is certainly far bigger than anything we have handled before and it affects far more staff, every single one of whom is personally assessed and regraded. It is a heck of a lot bigger than regrading the staff in the citizens advice bureau in Birkenhead and it is light years away from the proverbial whelk stall which, on the admission of Opposition Front Bench spokesmen, Opposition Members could not run.

It is worth remembering the regrading exercise in the Halsbury report, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Birkenhead. I have read the report, which says:

"Within the time limits which we set ourselves to submit our report we have not been able to carry out evaluation in depth of the work of each grade . . . what we have seen and heard has left us in no doubt that an evaluation of this kind is urgently needed."

That was November 1974. We are undertaking the exercise because we have the management skills and the resources. I hope that the House will honour and recognise our commitment.

7.36 pm

Mr. Frank Field: There seems to be some question about when the debate should finish. Before I make my brief concluding comments, will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, say whether I am right in thinking that this debate can run for three hours?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: By a resolution of the House of 22 June, this debate can last three hours. If the House wishes, the debate may continue until 8.23 pm. I understand that some arrangement may have been made to finish the debate earlier so that the second debate can begin. The resolution of the House is clear.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for raising a point of order at this stage, and I understand what you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, said about formal arrangements being made. In her opening remarks, the Minister criticised Labour Members for not being available to debate the Health Service. She did so in the knowledge that her office refused my request for a meeting to discuss underfunding in my constituency. An apology was given on the basis——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a point that would be perfectly legitimate in a debate, if he were called.

Mr. Field: You kindly informed the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that an informal agreement has been made. When these agreements are made, the experts in the usual channels should talk to the people——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I made clear the resolution of the House, by which I am bound. I added in parenthesis that I thought some informal agreement had been reached. It is my job to carry out the resolution of the House. I hope that is clear to hon. Members.

Mr. Field: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for saying that and I hope that hon. Members have heard your remarks. My hon. Friends and some Conservative Members have been present for all the debate. My hon. Friends do not now wish to take part, so I can therefore bring the debate to a conclusion.

I think that the Whips have an important lesson to learn from tonight's proceedings. I hope that it will be learnt by Labour and Government Whips. It is not pleasant for hon. Members who have been present throughout the debate—who have much expertise and who wished to contribute to the debate—to be leaned on so that some informal agreement can be adhered to. That is a sour note for me to begin my summing up on, but perhaps it is appropriate, given the comments made by the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security.

[Mr. Field]

I have merely two things to say. Many hon. Members made efforts to divide what I said from the sentiments that were expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). Perhaps my hon. Friend made her points more gently than I did, but there was certainly no disagreement between us. It was strange for the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) to have to make his point. Apart from the hon. Members for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), who did not think that it was necessary to discuss the estimates, there was no disagreement at all.

Opposition Members are concerned about one central issue, which I put to the Under-Secretary of State. I hope that she heard the message, if not from Opposition Members, from practically every Conservative Member who has spoken in the debate. They are as pleased as we are about the size of the supplementary estimate. They and Opposition Members are pleased that, officially and unofficially, we welcome the Government's commitment fully to fund the pay award. We have raised a single crucial question. Is the regrading exercise to be screwed up because of a cash ceiling, or will the Government give the green light so that the regrading exercise can take place and fulfil the review's expectations that the Prime Minister outlined?

Being the written word, *Hansard* does not take account of the way in which hon. Members shake their heads. It is important for us to recall that, when I asked whether the exercise is to be cash-limited, the Under-Secretary of State said no. She shook her head like one of those dogs that sit in the back of cars. When the cars stop, their heads move. It was a terribly important intervention from her.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman should beware of reading anything into my gesture when, at one stage, I talked to the Whip, who was sitting on one side, and to my Secretary of State, who was sitting on the other side. I apologise if I made my point in a rushed way, but I am conscious that a large number of hon. Members are waiting to speak in the next debate, and we must be courteous to them also. We did the calculations in good faith. We accepted the recommendations of the review body in good faith and in good heart. We are voting today on the biggest supplementary estimate that the Health Service has ever seen. The regrading exercise is being done in detail for 500,000 people.

We have no hard information and no information that will confirm any of the rumours or negative comments that are being put about. We already have some information that we may well have got it right. I hope, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman also hopes, that all the experience that is going into the matter will bear fruit and that the net result will be some contented nurses and well-cared-for patients.

Mr. Field: From the Under-Secretary of State's careful statement I hope that we may infer that, when we return after the summer recess, we may seek more time to consider a further supplementary estimate so that we can make a reality of the Government's commitment fully to fund the nurses' pay award.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will the hon. Gentleman, who is Chairman of the Select Committee, agree that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State herself admitted that the pay review body stated that this is its best estimate? Therefore, there could clearly be an error. Should we not be able to accept from that, if indeed there is an error after a responsible clinical regrading is carried out, that the Government should have the courage and decency to come forward with another supplementary estimate?

Mr. Field: As usual, I could not have phrased the point better than the hon. Member for Macclesfield has. I hope that that message has clearly gone to the Government.

Mr. McCartney: As Chairman of the Select Committee, will my hon. Friend ask the Under-Secretary of State to reconsider the matter and agree to meet me and discuss the basic point relating to the underfunding of my health authority?

Mrs. Currie *rose*

Mr. Field: I shall not give way to the Under-Secretary of State. As my hon. Friend spoke, she was beckoning with her first finger. I hope that, when the regrading exercise is completed, the Under-Secretary of State is as happy to give signs to all the nursing profession as she is to give them to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

We have an informal agreement to which the Select Committee was not a party. We have used four minutes of the time allowed for debate on the next topic, and I apologise for that. If the Whips want informal agreements, they should talk to the right people, and, in this case, it is Select Committees.

Original question deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

Class VII, Vote 5

TRAINING COMMISSION

Adult Employment and Youth Training

[Relevant document: First Report from the Employment Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 526 of Session 1987-88) on the Department of Employment's Estimates 1988-89.]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £281,927,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31 March 1989 for expenditure by the Department of Employment on a grant in aid to the Training Commission (formerly the Manpower Services Commission).—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that, under the resolution of the House of 22 June, this estimate is to be considered in so far as it relates to adult employment and youth training.

7.45 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I am pleased to be able to introduce this debate, which gives the House an opportunity to consider and discuss employment training.

The Committee took evidence from the Training Commission, the Minister, and the permanent secretary at the Department of Employment. We published that evidence, and I hope that it will illuminate matters and inform the House. As yet, the Committee has not come to a common view on the merits of the new programme. I

emphasise that the views that I shall express in opening the debate are my own and that other hon. Members will speak for themselves.

I fear that, compared with our competitors, training is something that we as a nation do not do terribly well or excel in. In the first half of this century, our survival was often held to depend on military capacity. But from now on it will depend as much or more on the efficiency and effectiveness of our industry, research and development, and investment in the skills of our people. When we compare ourselves with our competitors, there can be no room for complacency.

In the last Parliament, the Committee could not have been other than impressed to see young Japanese people going to school until aged 20, leaving with a thorough grounding in mathematics and science, and then joining the great Japanese companies and receiving a further year's training in the speciality of the company involved. Plainly, such enterprises benefit from a highly competent work force. Today, it is a matter not of just getting state of the art, modern, high-tech equipment, but of having a highly skilled work force to exploit and get the best out of.

Because of time restraints, I shall briefly mention only one other country. A fortnight ago, the Committee spent a couple of days in the Federal Republic of Germany. One had to recognise the thorough, comprehensive training that is given to the whole of the younger generation there. Of the 16 to 18 year group, 20 per cent. were in grammar schools preparing for university, 20 per cent. were in full-time vocational schools, and 56 per cent. were in the renowned dual system of apprenticeships. The average annual cost of an apprenticeship place was £8,000—incidentally, all paid for by employers, who seem to be as convinced of the value of investing in skills of their people as that of investing in their machines. We visited a railway workshop called Duewag making rolling stock. Many apprenticeship places there cost £10,000. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. That firm has a buoyant, flourishing export trade. Coming from Britain—the country that invented railways and once built them all over the world but is now closing its railway workshops and will soon be importing rolling stock—it was an eerie experience to be shown a video of that firm's rolling stock being sold in many countries on every continent of the world. Obviously, training is a vital ingredient of success.

I refer directly to the estimates and, in particular, last year's estimate for the new job training scheme. We discovered that the initial sum that was allowed for the JTS was £215 million. Because of poor take-up, that sum was cut to £156 million, but, eventually, only £64 million was actually spent—in other words, just 42 per cent. of the reduced figure. There was a massive underspend. We must recognise that the programme was wildly unsuccessful. It was hugely unpopular, with an extremely large number of drop-outs. There were resources for 232,000 entrants. Over 100,000 people entered the programme, but, by the end of the year, only about 30,000 were in place, so the Training Commission agreed that the programme had failed.

As there are several similarities between the JTS and the new employment training scheme, we asked the Training Commission what lessons it had learned from the experience. The Training Commission suggested four things: first, to start with realistic, not over-ambitious targets; secondly, to give sufficient financial incentives, both to trainees and managing agents; thirdly, to sell the scheme better to employers, some of whom were hesitant to take on the long-term unemployed; and fourthly, to gain the co-operation of all the parties involved on whom it is dependent for the delivery of the programme: employers, local authorities, voluntary associations and trade unions. We were told that these are the lessons that need to be incorporated into the new programme.

Before looking at how successfully the lessons might have been learned, may I say that in none of the countries that we have visited has training or training programmes been a cause of acute political controversy between the parties. The approach to these matters has been agreed by all those principally concerned.

In those countries, there is thus a consensus approach, and everyone gets on with the job. Indeed, on a visit to the DGB, the German TUC, I specifically asked whether there were any differences between the parties on training, and was answered with a categoric no.

Only in Britain have these matters been rent by acrimony. Why? The answer is partly the inadequate nature of programmes, and the motives for introducing them. We have had YOPS, TOPS, CP, JTS, and much else—all schemes which, in their time, we were told to be proud of, yet now all scrapped. Therefore, it is not perhaps surprising that there is some cynicism. Few of those schemes were meant to be permanent; they were conceived as temporary palliatives to ameliorate the effects of unemployment.

In answer to question 121 in his evidence to the Committee, the Minister of State, whom I am pleased to see in his place, said of the community programme:

> "You will know that the Community Programme originally was—if I can put it this way without being too crude—to fill in the time of the unemployed in ways useful to the community. That was the idea behind it."

The schemes were specifically designed to have a "register effect", in other words, to reduce the unemployment count. I fear the Government's motives were suspected. Many people saw the schemes as a cheap way of massaging the unemployment figures for electoral reasons.

What the country needs is not temporary expedients, not cosmetic palliatives, but high quality, credible, training programmes, ideally aiming to give us a work force as well trained or better trained than any in the world. That needs agreement, and the active co-operation of all parties concerned. It means a national consensus as to what is required. To obtain a consensus people have to listen to each other, and that includes the Government. It is no good the Government saying that they have a huge majority, therefore they can do what they like, because that way leads to disaster. It means, for instance, the Government listening to the trade unions. That is not something that the Goverment have been very good at. They have preferred to regard the unions as the enemy within, to be undermined and eliminated. That is not the way to reach agreement or consensus. The trade unions must be valued as essential partners.

I turn now to the new employment training programme. It does not, of course, address the training needs of the 90 per cent. of those in employment. That is another story for another time. It is a programme for the long-term unemployed—and it is targeted on two groups: the 18 to 24-year-olds who have been unemployed for six months, and the 18 to 50-year-olds who have been unemployed for more than two years.

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

I fully support the concept of a programme for the long-term unemployed. As a result of the seven-year recession that we suffered after 1979, we have between one and two million people who have been unemployed for years. Unless something is done specifically for them many will never work again. Unemployment is not an orderly queue, where those waiting longest are first off. The reverse is the case.

The programme is not, of course, an exercise in job creation. To succeed it should ensure that the long-term unemployed get a fairer share of the jobs which are available. The Committee has paid great attention to the long-term unemployed and in the previous Parliament we produced a report advocating a job guarantee for the long-term unemployed. I do not know whether Ministers have seen that report, but they might care to read it at some point.

The most useful thing that I can do this evening is to turn to the question marks over the new programme. The first is the level of funding and the quality of training. The numbers of people to be put through the programme annually are scheduled to increase from the 400,000 who were on the old programmes to 600,000 on the new programme—an increase of 50 per cent. but with no new money. How is it possible to increase the numbers by 50 per cent. and at the same time to enhance the quality of the training without any more money? The participants will spend only 40 per cent. of their time on directed training, in other words, two days per week for about six months. Perhaps we could hear what vocational qualifications that will achieve.

Let me come back to the lessons learned from the new job training scheme. The first is the need for adequate financial incentives. The Government are great believers in financial incentives. The last Budget was predicated on the need to give already wealthy people thousands of pounds of incentives to get them to work. So what are the financial incentives to come on the programme? The fact is that most of the participants on the present community programme will be worse off on the new employment training programme.

Many of the participants on the community programme are young single men. The pay is an average of £67 a week for a part-time place. In a letter dated 2 July, the Minister of State told us that a single person aged 22, with travel costs of £8 per week, would receive a net income of £33 per week—that is for doing three days' work or work experience. Like such single people, many others will be more than £20 per week or as in that case £30 per week worse off. Presumably that is the way in which more people are put on the programme for the same amount of money.

The new employment training programme moves away from the idea of some sort of rate for the job for the work part of the programme to benefit plus. That, not surprisingly, is controversial. Some people see it as a move to workfare, the approach which was discredited in some states in the United States of America. The plus is some £10 above benefit. Out of that, the first £5 of travel expenses must be paid, reducing it to some £5 per week. Being out of the house and being on the programme will inevitably involve extra expenses, such as buying food, so people could be worse off financially.

On 24 May, the Secretary of State, who I am pleased to see in his place, stated:

"we are aiming to ensure a position in which no one is worse off when taking part in the programme than they would be on benefit."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 281.]

Well, yes, but should there not be an incentive that makes them better off? My modest suggestion when the scheme was first announced was that the plus above benefit should be doubled, because that would be something of an incentive. To do so would cost £180 million per annum. We are told that the Treasury is currently awash with revenue, so it cannot say that it has not got the money. I should like to reiterate that suggestion this evening—

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent) *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman who is an extremely valuable member of the Committee. However, the intervention may take time from the time available for him to make the speech which I hope to hear later.

Mr. Rowe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. If, as he began by saying, training is indispensable to people's future employment, should they not value it a great deal more than enforced idleness? Therefore, should they not see the benefit of a training programme as being of considerable advantage to themselves?

Mr. Leighton: Yes. That is precisely what was said about JTS, but it failed. When we asked the Training Commission why, it gave us four reasons and one of the things it suggested was that a financial incentive should be offered. Some may argue that there should be no such incentive and that people should value the training and do it for nothing, but the Training Commission considered that a financial incentive was important.

The other major lesson that the Training Commission drew from the failure of the JTS was the need to secure the support and co-operation of all the other parties involved and on whom the Training Commission is dependent for the delivery of its programme.

The other parties involved in the programme are the employers, the local authorities, voluntary organisations and trade unions. The Secretary of State knows that he faces some problems in that regard and that the conditional support of the TUC is less than full-hearted. The vote in the general council was extremely close and it will be a contentious matter at the congress in September. Britain's largest white collar union, the National and Local Government Officers Association, and Britain's largest unions, the Transport and General Workers Union and the National Union of Public Employees, are actively opposed to the programme.

Trade unionists have expressed a number of concerns about the programme, which include the low level of allowance and the perception that employers will get workers for £5 a day, thus exerting a downward pressure on wages. They are concerned that trade unions had to be consulted about the proposed schemes for the community programme, but that trade union approval is no longer necessary for the employment training programme. The principle of parity on the Training Commission has been broken—six extra employers' representatives have been placed on the commission to outnumber trade union representatives. I do not understand why, but we may receive an explanation tonight.

The most important worry for some unions is whether the programme is voluntary—for the critics of the programme that is the key issue. At present, the programme is not compulsory, perhaps for no other reason than that there are not nearly enough places for the client group. The Secretary of State has said may times that the programme is voluntary and that he has no plans or intent to make it compulsory. Nevertheless, many people have the strong fear that, if the unemployed vote with their feet, as they did with the JTS, they will be pressured into the scheme or lose benefit.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: I am just about to quote my hon. Friend, but I hope that she will forgive me if I do not give way.

The Secretary of State has been asked many times, as he was on 24 May by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), to state that he will not designate the scheme under section 26 of the Employment Act 1988 during the lifetime of this Parliament. I hope that I have anticipated the point that my hon. Friend was seeking to make. However, each time the Secretary of State has declined to say that he will not designate the scheme. If he did not designate the scheme that, more than any other step, would defuse opposition to the programme. If the Secretary of State really does not intend to designate and thus make the scheme compulsory, I cannot understand why he will not make that simple categoric statement. So much depends on it.

The Secretary of State is aware that many voluntary organisations that have participated in the community programme have written to hon. Members to express their worries—one of the main ones is the lack of funding to continue project training.

The Under-Secretary will know of an organisation called Mutual Aid, which he has visited. It sent me a document that showed a nice picture of him visiting that organisation and described the kind things he said about it. He might care to know that Mutual Aid has written to me because it is worried about the new programme and it voices its criticisms of it.

The Secretary of State knows that many local authorities, including many Conservative-controlled authorities, are declining to participate. The Minister of State wrote us a letter to inform us that Kensington and Chelsea will not participate, apparently because they believe they will be out of pocket.

I believe that a number of improvements will be necessary to obtain the support of the partners, who are necessary to deliver the programme. I welcome the £50 allowance for child care for single parents. I hope that that will prove to be the thin edge of a desirable wedge to develop child care in this country. The Secretary of State might care to have a word with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer about removing the existing tax disincentives for workplace nurseries and creche facilities. It will also be necessary to ensure that single parents coming off the employment training programme obtain jobs with sufficient pay to enable them to continue to finance such child care.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West) *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend will have a chance to make his point in his speech and I am not anxious to prolong my remarks.

A programme directed at the long-term unemployed is vital. I am sure that, after the recess, the Select Committee on Employment will want to pay great attention to ascrutinising and monitoring the programme. I believe that what we have presently is half a loaf and I shall devote my time to seeking to obtain some improvements so that we get the whole loaf.

8.5 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): As time is short and as many colleagues on both sides of the House wish to speak, I shall be brief.

The debate must be put in a wider historical context. Last summer I read an extremely important work on Britain's industrial decline during this century by Correlli Barnett entitled "The Audit of War". That describes the collapse of our competitive industrial position vis-à-vis the other developing European countries from the post-industrial revolution era until now. It highlights a number of the essential ingredients that have contributed to that decline and the key ingredient was our attitude to acquiring skills compared to the attitude in other countries. At the higher level of skill training for management and at the basic level of skill training of the work force we have progressively, over many decades, lost out to our competitors. The Select Committee report has highlighted the effect of chickens coming home to roost after a long time.

In today's edition of the *Evening Standard* there is an interesting article that highlights the problem to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) referred and the problem we face with schemes such as the community programme. The article is entitled

"Thousands can't read after 11 years at skool".

That article states:

"Alarming disclosures are made today about school-leavers who can't read, write or do simple sums . . . after 11 years in the classroom.

Thousands of teenagers leave school without these vital skills and six out of ten are so frustrated in fifth forms of comprehensives that they play truant either part or all of the time.

Dr. Tom Wood, head of a youth training centre, says:

"We have to give basic literacy and numeracy skills to the young people who have for some reason reached 16-plus with limited proficiency in these areas' . . . When teenagers are urged to take part in any training involving the three Rs . . . they usually pretend to be sick to avoid being humiliated . . . One in three of the teenagers questioned at training schemes said they had not been interested in passing exams at school because they thought this would not help them get work."

I know that every hon. Member in the Chamber has visited, as I have on a number of occasions, youth training schemes in their constituencies and in other parts of the country. They will be only too aware of the fact that, in many cases, they cater for the drop-outs from schools—the people to whom the article referred. The most interesting thing that one discovers is that, when training is put in the right context and the trainees can see a skill coming into their hands which they will find relevant to their futures, they are remotivated to learn. Perhaps one of the most important pressures behind the Education Reform Bill, which attempts to deal with the literacy problem in schools, was to address the difficulty of children who are demotivated during the latter years at school. The schemes that we are debating relate to adult and youth training which is designed to help people who have left school recently or some time ago.

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

This debate, which I suspect will become increasingly significant in the years ahead, takes place against the background of the changing nature of the labour market. In many parts of the country, employers are saying over and over again that they simply cannot recruit people to fill vacancies because people do not have the necessary skills. Only today, I had a letter from Leeds city council, which is typical of many of the stories told to Members of Parliament. It states:

"The Council has a nursery building programme closely monitored by the Nursery Committee. The Committee's objective is to spend budgets allocated with the minimum of 'slippage' and achieve set building 'targets'.

One problem experienced in the last few months has been the difficulty in recruiting skilled builders, particularly bricklayers.

One contractor has a contract to build 3 nurseries of a total value of £4½ million and this Contractor . . . has had repeated difficulty recruiting bricklayers to the extent that the contract is now several weeks behind schedule.

The Committee has pursued this matter through its own Education Department and it is hoped that 'Employment Training' and 'Training for Skills' courses could help the situation."

Until recently, in many parts of the country, people were not motivated to take skills training because they could not see any jobs available for them when they had acquired those skills. However, as a consequence of the 23-month record period during which unemployment has plummeted in all parts of the country, that situation is now quite different. We can now say to youngsters, "The problem is that you lack the skills that employers need. This programme is designed to help you obtain those skills."

The old scheme had its shortcomings. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East described some of the shortcomings of the new JTS. Those were highlighted in the Select Committee report which is a most valuable document. It stated that only 110,000 people were in training in September 1987 when the resources of the scheme catered for 232,000. The hon. Gentleman described that as a failure. I am not sure whether one should look at the glass and describe it as half full or as half empty. That depends, I suspect, whether one is on the Conservative or Opposition Benches. Clearly, 110,000 people benefited from that scheme, although at least as many again could have done so. Basically, the scheme was about right, but there were a number of factors in it which did not enable it to develop its full potential.

Mr. Leighton: At the end of the year, there were only 30,000 people in training.

Mr. Batiste: I noted that point. That led to my right hon. Friend asking the Manpower Services Commission, as it then was, to review the scheme to see whether it could be made more attractive. It has done that with a view to providing a scheme that will offer literacy and numeracy training at the lowest level and go right through to the high-tech training that is also needed. It is important to note that the scheme was approved by all the commissioners, including the three trade union commissioners, in the MSC.

The scheme is fair and, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East has conceded, the lessons of the new JTS have been learned, although he argues that the financial incentives should be increased further. I would take rather a different line. If the scheme is to be successful, the greatest incentive must be that those taking part in the scheme see that the skills that they acquire will lead them to a job. Otherwise, we shall run into the danger that it will become an infill operation. The real incentive, if the scheme is to be successful, is that those who participate will acquire something that will be valuable to them in the long term so that they will have an exploitable resource to offer the labour market in years to come.

This scheme is only part of the picture. Training is vital across the spectrum. I should not like anyone to think that, because the Government are putting such a great deal of money into the scheme, that absolves everyone else from responsibility for training. Everyone has a fundamental responsibility for training. That starts in the schools and continues in the colleges, polytechnics and universities. It also lies with local authorities and employers. I am also delighted to see that some of the more enlightened trade unions, such as that of the electricians, are undertaking significant and valuable training schemes of their own. The identification of training as one of the high priorities by some in the modern trade union movement is a welcome sign.

Skill training is about how we tackle the problem of unemployment and how we meet the industrial needs of our society. There is a need for motivation. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are preoccupied with that. The difficulty with a scheme of this kind is that people who should know better pump negative publicity at it. Even if, in the words of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, they would prefer to see a whole loaf rather than half a loaf, they should not condemn it. Those people should encourage its development. It is a disgrace that the TGWU, NALGO, NUPE and COHSE should oppose the scheme.

Ms. Short: It is a disgrace that the Government are putting forward such a rotten scheme.

Mr. Batiste: Opposition Members are taking a negative attitude towards the scheme.

Undoubtedly, young people will look to the scheme as a way to make up for the opportunities that they have missed in the education system as a result of a series of problems inherent in the structure of our society that we are trying to tackle at all levels. People outside the House will see Opposition Members and those in the union movement who oppose the scheme as using that group of people and exploiting them for political ends.

The scheme is a good one. It meets important needs in our society and everyone who is concerned about skill training should do everything in his power to ensure that it succeeds.

8.18 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): In the short time available to me, I should like to concentrate on those aspects of the new training programme which have caused great concern to those organisations involved with the programme. I want to concentrate on the voluntary organisations that are involved.

To set the tone, I should like to quote from the Church of Scotland's Church and Nation deliverance at the 1988 General Assembly, which the Prime Minister attended. It states that it views

"with great concern the Government's plan to end the Community Programme, under which many thousands of

jobs involved with care and support in the community have been created, which jobs will, in general, be lost in September when the programme comes to an end."

It also views with concern.

"the morality of the Government's new Employment Training Scheme believing that the proposals militate against natural justice. (For many years Job Creation has provided union approved wages related to the work done; the proposals depart from this by paying a negligible bonus in addition to the existing state benefit.); and instruct the Church and Nation Committee to communicate with the relevant Government Departments, with a view to having the provisions of the scheme considered."

The Minister will perhaps tell us how he has replied to the deliverance, to which his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister no doubt listened with great concern. I questioned the Minister when he was before the Select Committee on Employment about the attitudes of voluntary organisations. He suggested, not dismissively but curtly, that the bids for places were over-subscribed. That included many bids from voluntary organisations. I then asked the local organisations whether they agreed with the Minister's views. The Dundee association of social services said that there was no evidence of any local discussions initiated by the Training Commission with that organisation, which brings together all the voluntary sector organisations in Dundee. As far as it was concerned it was hardly voluntary, given that after September there was no alternative. Obviously, given the very good work that they do the organisations might well be opened to opting out. In many cases, they were not prepared to sacrifice their organisations without some commitment from the Government to ensure that the organisations would not suffer because they had participated in the scheme.

The Tayside committee on alcohol abuse was very concerned that after September there would be a closure, or certainly a curtailment, of some of its activities. Its service was a giving service and it certainly could not cope with training and managing a particular scheme. It was concerned that the Wishart centre in Dundee might have to close its day centre because its capabilities would be reduced. It could lead to alcoholism research being discontinued and affect the benefits to other organisations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), who unfortunately is unable to be here tonight, received a letter from the Wishart centre. He had written to the Under-Secretary of State for Employment. I should like to put on record the response to the letter from my hon. Friend. It stated:

"Thank you for your letter of 5 July enclosing a copy of the letter you had received from Patrick Nicholls.

I read Mr. Nicholls' letter with great interest—especially the second page which included statements that I had never heard before and which sounded quite promising. Eagerly, I began asking questions about Mr. Nicholls' 'third option'. Unfortunately however, I discover that it is not a viable alternative to community programme or employment training, but 'a tinkering round the edges', as it was put to Dundee Survival Group and the Wishart centre have registered their intent to become a Training Manager with reluctance because we cannot see a viable alternative if we wish to serve our client group."

It went on to refer to something which I shall explain briefly. My constituency is a soft fruit growing area and those who are unemployed or who earn very little traditionally go to what is called the berry picking instead of having a holiday. The letter continues:

"I know we're into 'the berry season', but after advertising for care workers in the Job Centre for ten days I have only had two applicants this week! I really cannot see this new scheme being highly sought after come September. For us, as you know, we have the additional problem that trainees will have to face abuse, threats and working with HIV carriers. Who, I ask you, would do that for a tenner a week for the sake of training?"

That is one more voluntary organisation that does not believe that the scheme is a good one.

The Keep Scotland Beautiful campaign, which employs 400 part-time staff under the community programme, will not be able to keep them on when the new Training Commission replaces the Manpower Services Commission in September. The staff, including 25 in Tayside, will be forced back on to the dole. The campaign says that the people that they employ on the scheme

"are exceptionally good at what is almost a sales business, selling a litter-free environment to the public and receiving training they would never have got from the MSC alone."

The Dundee liaison committee on homelessness was concerned about the way in which the Secretary of State could assist those community programmes which may feel under threat. In a letter to me on 11 July 1988, it said:

"We understand that Mr. Fowler, the Secretary of State for Employment, and his Ministers have been putting the case for additional funding from other Government Departments to ensure that those community care schemes which are wholly dependent on Community Programme funding and are unsuitable for Employment Training funding should be able to continue in existence after the end of August. It is now into July and no concrete proposals for alternative funding have appeared."

Where have those suggestions come from? They have come as a result of various discussions that have taken place in Scotland with the Minister of State, Scottish Office, in particular on 22 June when the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations met the Minister, who obviously gave some sign that he would be prepared to consider a scheme.

It would be useful to highlight briefly which services the schemes provide and then to put on record the separate funding that they would require. The social care schemes supported by the community programme include care attendance scheme, lunch clubs, gardening and decorating for the elderly, services for the disabled, support for single parents, children's creches and adventure playgrounds, youth clubs, home insulation and support for ex-offenders. It would be easy for the Minister to say that all those areas could provide training. Unfortunately, in almost every case they are a scaled-down version of professional, full-time employment. If that training went too far, it would come into contact with that professional area and therefore would have to be discontinued.

The meeting on 22 June proposed two ways of using the programme. The first suggestion was:

"Scottish Office Departments with responsibility for 'Care in the Community' services should set up a Social Care Fund for a transitional two-year period. The Department of Employment might be expected to contribute towards the costs of the Fund in recognition of the contribution the Fund would make to maintain the maximum choice of quality training places."

It goes on:

"a fund of £1 million would allow for 200 places per year. Applications for funding would be assessed and awards made by a committee of officials of the funding Departments of the Scottish Office and by MSC Scotland."

It goes on to say that after a two-year period the recipients obviously would have to find alternative funding, but it would give the community programmes a chance to find alternative funding.

Another suggestion to which the council has received no response yet is for

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

"the MSC to contribute to the 'core' costs of providers of social care training opportunities within Employment Training."

Perhaps the Minister will respond to those two initiatives. Some of the community organisations in Dundee and in Scotland as a whole which are extremely concerned may consider entering the scheme.

The Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have made it quite clear that they are not prepared to participate in the new employment training scheme. They had a meeting with the Minister on 14 July and I spoke to them today. They said that during that meeting the Minister conceded that he had nothing further to add to the assurances that they sought, which were similar to those sought by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), that the scheme would remain voluntary, at least during this Parliament. The Minister still could not give them an answer.

That is extremely important for local authorities, given that the Secretary of State for Scotland, like the Minister with responsibilities for England and Wales, has clawed back considerable amounts of money from those local authorities. The Minister is still considering the plea from local authorities for extra funding for the additional financial aspects of the scheme, if they were to become training managers. He still cannot give them an assurance that if they joined the scheme and used their own funds to top up the money that the trainee would receive the Government would not claw back the money through some form of penalty. Unless the Minister can give some affirmative response to that, it is unlikely that the STUC or COSLA will be able to encourage their members to enter the scheme.

There are many other aspects on which I should like to concentrate, such as the experiences of my colleagues and me in Germany and America. It was an experience to go to the land of capitalism and see how it is retraining its workers. It was an eye-opener to see what the Secretary of State for Employment had seen when he visited the United States.

I welcome the decision to provide a weekly sum for women to enable them to return to work, but the scheme does not go far enough. It does not deal with mothers who have children under school age, so we are still discriminating against women who do not have enough money to send their children to nursery schools or to day care centres. They cannot therefore return to work. That was not what we found in West Germany or the United States. The Secretary of State now has the assistance of an adviser from the other side of the Atlantic, who we hope will be able to influence the Secretary of State and his team. We hope that it will result in the good practices in the United States being followed in this country.

The Under-Secretary of State must refer to the organisations that provide care. He must not just say that the Government hope to do something for them in the future. These organisations need to know now whether they can seriously commit themselves to employment training. It is no use if they operate for a short time and then discover that they have to fold up because money is no longer provided for them. Unless the Under-Secretary of State can give the assurance for which the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have asked, the organisations that provide care will disappear and the people of Scotland will suffer a serious loss. The Minister must give that assurance tonight. These organisations must know exactly what the Government intend to do so that the viability of the employment training initiative can be ensured.

8.32 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I am a member of the Select Committee, but, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the Chairman of the Committee, has already said, we have not yet discussed the details of employment training and reached a decision. He put forward his personal view, as did the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). It is only right, therefore, that I should do the same. The House will not be entirely surprised when I say that I do not agree completely with what they have said. There is a dire skills shortage in many parts of the country. My constituency unemployment rate stands at 2·8 per cent., and we face terrible problems when we try to recruit for all forms of business. There are pages and pages of vacancies advertisements in local newspapers.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend represents a constituency with extremely low unemployment, but I represent a constituency with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. I have received today from the Teesside chamber of commerce details of the skill shortages that it expects to see during the next three months. There are still shortages in every grade, from skilled labour to part-time workers.

Mr. Paice: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention. It demonstrates that the problem affects the whole country and all businesses.

I am surprised that so many Opposition Members have defended the community programme. They slanged it for many years, but now they say that it has been useful. I am not sorry to see its demise. It was always a make-work system. It provided very little good-quality training. In fact, very little training at all was provided and it achieved very little. I understand the worries in the voluntary sector, but it is not the role of the employment training programme to provide the services that are needed in the community. They should be provided in some other way. The new adult programme that is to start in September will be much more flexible than any of the previous schemes. It begins with an assessment of each trainee. As any expert in training knows, the best programme starts with an individual assessment to tailor the training to the needs of the trainee.

For many reasons I welcome the introduction of child care benefit for single parents. In three or four years we shall desperately need those people in the work force. I welcome, too, the flexibility that the supplementary grants system will provide for specific skills training, for which extra money will be required.

I am sorry that the business enterprise training programme has been incorporated in the new scheme. The private enterprise programme for the would-be entrepreneur and the would-be self-employed is to continue. That is good, but it is strange that as soon as people have got their business off the ground they will lose the opportunity

for further training, other than through the new programme. That is where the business enterprise training programme would be of help.

A great deal has been said about the financial benefits that would be provided for the person who is being trained. It is strange to say in one breath that training is vital and we need to spend more on it and to emphasise its value but in the next breath to say that it is not worth while for people to be trained for an extra £5 a week. They are contradictory statements. Everybody on the scheme will be at least £5 a week better off.

Mention has already been made of the Select Committee's visit to Germany two weeks ago. We looked at the dual track programme and the adult programme. German unemployment benefit is paid as a percentage of the unemployed person's previous wage, but there is also a premium, apart from the benefits system, for the adult programme. That premium is 5 per cent. of the unemployed person's previous wage. That works out, on an average industrial wage, at about £4 a week.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman must work it out properly. His figure is wrong.

Mr. Paice: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) makes a sedentary intervention, but she will have to go to Germany and check the figures for herself. Members on both sides of the House visited Germany and they will vouch for the fact that that figure is correct.

Ms. Short: The average wage in Britain is considerably higher than the £80 a week that was implied by the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave, and the average wage in Germany is considerably higher than that. There is something wrong with the hon. Gentleman's arithmetic.

Mr. Paice: I said specifically that the premium was 5 per cent. of the average industrial wage, and 5 per cent. of £80 is £4.

There is no doubt that there is a very great need for effective training. I entirely endorse the comments on that point made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East. I would demur only with his suggestion that we have not achieved anything like it. In my view, the youth training scheme, and now the new employment programme, are very much what the country wants. Contrary to the opinion held by many, I believe that they are comparable to the programmes offered by many of our major industrial competitors in the West.

I grow tired of hearing Opposition Members, trade unionists and others criticising those programmes on the evidence of a few isolated instances. On that basis they castigate the whole scheme. As my hon. Friend the Minister will know, I served for a number of years on an area manpower board. The sadness is that the vast majority of those involved do not really know a great deal about training and are not involved in monitoring or able to make the kind of assessment that matters. If individuals, be they Opposition Members or trade unionists, wish to criticise a particular training programme in a particular place, they should take their criticism to the MSC and ask what is being done to improve the standards. It serves no purpose to castigate the whole scheme.

Mr. Ernie Ross: We had experience of a group who pretended that they were capable of training young people. I went to the MSC and to the Secretary of State for Scotland about that matter and we exchanged a great deal of correspondence. Despite the fact that there was evidence to show that that group was not carrying out its responsibilities, it was given approved training organisation status.

Mr. Paice: I shall not disagree with the hon. Gentleman because I do not know the details of the case. However, I also know of managing agents who were given approved training organisation status but who should never have been granted it. That underlines my earlier point that many of the people who are sitting in judgment on area manpower boards are unfit to make those judgments. That applies to trade unionists as much as to others who are nominated for election to those boards. I do not want to digress and talk about the YTS but will continue my discourse on the adult programme.

Many of the major objections to the adult programme come from trade unions and local authorities operating in areas of greatest need and of high unemployment. Mention has already been made of the "rate for the job". That demonstrates a total lack of understanding of what training is all about. There is no such thing as the rate for the job if one is being effectively trained. In reality, employers will have to make massive contributions to the funding of the schemes. It must also be recognised that the contribution made to a business by unskilled labour is minimal. There is no justification for saying that the employer should pay the rate for the job because the trainee is making a contribution to the business, because he is not. I hope that that attitude represents the final dregs of "The country owes us a living" culture, which brought Britain down in the 1970s. It is time that we——

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that specific point?

Mr. Paice: No, I shall not give way again.

It is time that we got away from cradle to the grave employment and recognised the need for training through one's lifetime and for retraining, however unfortunate may be the reason—including unemployment. Training is not just about time serving. We must abandon the belief that it takes years to learn new skills. That was in the old days of the "Sit by Nellie" approach to training, whereby one was supposed to sit and watch, and learn over the years. Modern training technology has developed a long way since those days, and time scales for the assimilation of skills have been dramatically reduced.

The programme recognises that skill shortages exist, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). It also builds on modern training principles and practices. It offers the opportunity to all unemployed people to gain the skills that they need. It is very sad that the scheme is not being welcomed and recognised as being good and valuable, building on the strengths that the YTS developed over the years. The new programme should be welcomed by all who really care about the unemployed and the unskilled.

8.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): During the present prolonged spell of high unemployment and lack of job opportunities, the provision of proper training schemes becomes a matter of major importance. I remain unconvinced that the Government's proposals are in any

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

way the best method of proceeding. However, if the alternative is straightforward unemployment, the schemes clearly become the lesser of two evils.

Ideally, my party would like to see introduced a proper system of training similar to those of other European countries, and adequately funded and geared to the changing needs of industry, commerce and the individual employees in a rapidly changing world. I regret that the Government have chosen to abandon the rate for the job that was previously paid under the community programme in favour of a benefit plus system—a premium of between £10 and £12 a week, thus leaving its single, under 25-year-old trainees, who represent about 50 per cent. of total trainees, about £10 worse off for a full week of training and work experience than they would have been as part-time community project workers.

I know that that situation is posing major difficulties for existing schemes in my constituency. In the city of Brechin, current schemes run by an energetic Church minister have transformed the lives of otherwise unemployed individuals, giving them employment, improving the local environment, and leading to a high success rate in finding consequent employment. That excellent scheme is now threatened by the Government changes, which mean that individuals will cease to be offered a working wage—and that was at the heart of the previous scheme's attractiveness. Unless local government funding is obtained, that particular scheme will founder and the whole community will be the poorer for it. With cutbacks in local government funding, the chances of obtaining that money from local authorities are growing more and more remote.

By replacing community benefit with job training as the main focus, the Government put at risk about £50 million of Scottish social care projects that may not be able to adapt to the new scheme. I ask the Minister to examine the specific problems being posed to organisations such as the Angus Crossroads caring scheme and other caring groups by proposed changes in employment training programmes. I know of the tremendously good work being done by those groups and the advantages that they offer to families and to individuals by the programmes they have been allowed to initiate and undertake. Some tremendous local initiatives and services will be destroyed unless proper funding is restored.

I reiterate the fears already expressed by organisations such as the Tayside services liaison committee on alcohol, whose employment scheme may be wiped out. The supported flats made available under the Dundee Cyrenians scheme may also have to close. The Wishart centre's effectiveness as a day centre will be greatly reduced, and the Dundee survival group will be struggling to continue its tremendous services for the homeless. The fears expressed by those voluntary caring organisations are repeated in my constituency and throughout Scotland.

Over the past five years, many voluntary organisations have been able to utilise the community programme to the benefit of various needy groups. Organisations that are first and foremost service-giving cannot also take on a major training role without their services suffering. I direct the Minister to those organisations and to the concerns that they express. That point is of particular importance to Scotland, where a proportionately greater number of programmes have been concerned with community care rather than with the environment, as is the case in England and Wales.

I know that approaches are being made by many of those organisations to the relevant local authorities, but with the severe constraints in local authority budgets the chances of obtaining funding are limited. I believe that the Secretary of State for Employment mentioned the possibility of other Government Departments being asked to find funds to assist voluntary organisations that have developed caring schemes under the community programme. What reassurances can the Minister give Crossroads and other community schemes about future funding?

Many parts of Scotland need job creation schemes as well as training schemes—indeed, some would say more. I believe that the Government's offering is hopelessly inadequate. Not more than £400 is, I understand, to be spent per six-month trainee. Sweden spends £12,000 on training its unemployed, whereas the average employment training place here will cost about £5,000 a year. While value for money is always a desirable goal, mere cheapness can be self-defeating. Moreover, restart and the stricter eligibility conditions for unemployment benefit mean that even without formal workfare compulsion the scheme is highly coercive, as has been said earlier. As no time scale is attached to ministerial guarantees of the voluntary status of the scheme, no wonder such concerns are being voiced.

Because of the abandoning of the rate for the job, employment training had destroyed the political consensus that supported the community programme and was one of its strengths. The voluntary sector warned that that would happen. Now voluntary agencies are caught between dependence on local authority funding and trade union good will on the one hand, and the need for MSC funding on the other.

May I suggest some methods that might help such voluntary organisations? Would the Government consider, for example, allowing the Training Commission to permit agency contracts for the community programme to be extended until the end of February 1989, as with project contracts, to provide time for negotiation with local authorities? Could an additional £10 a week premium be payable to single people to bring their weekly income close to what they would have received as a rate for the job? That, I believe, would cost approximately £150 million on a total budget of £1·5 billion, so it is certainly financially feasible.

Initially, the Scottish Office—or the Minister's Department—could exempt local authorities from clawback penalties on the amount that they spend on topping up trainees' incomes. Perhaps a community fund outwith employment training could be introduced to which agencies feeling that they could not provide a quality caring service within employment training could apply for transitional funding.

The scheme is far from ideal. I hope that the Government will look again at funding in Scotland for caring schemes that not only provide employment, but are a crucial lifeline for individuals and their families who are helped by them.

8.53 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I welcome this huge employment training scheme, which is probably larger than any such scheme over the past 25 years. I do not think that it is putting it too strongly to say that training, more than anything, will determine our economic growth over the next few years. It is equally true that the problems of skill shortages are the result of demography as well as the industrial restructuring of the past few years. The demographic problems are well known, although it is worrying to see that the National Economic Development Office survey showed last week that only one in seven employees was aware of them. Nevertheless, there has been an increase of 900,000 in the work force, and between 1987 and 1995 1 million fewer 16-to-19 year-olds will be available for training. That is a source of potentially severe skill shortages in apprenticeships, technicianships and the other forms of training available to young people at present.

The problems are by no means new, and they are common to the whole industrialised world. We have recently been told by Professor Charles Handy that 70 per cent. of jobs over the next 10 years will be knowledge-related, whereas 20 years ago the proportion was only 30 per cent. It has been estimated, probably more cogently, that by the year 2010 even people who stay in the same job will have to be almost completely reskilled three times in their working lives.

Mr. Batiste: Does that apply to Members of Parliament?

Mr. Coombs: I do not know.

Evidence of that is working through into the labour market. While we have 1·8 million extra jobs since 1983, and although we have 700,000 vacancies in the economy, the Engineering Industry Training Board shows that the increase in vacancies is mainly in such industries as electronics, in which vacancies have increased by 95 per cent. over the past nine years, and in instrumentation, where the increase has been 30 per cent. Those skilled industries are creating the demand for labour. Although the demand for engineering operatives, for example, has fallen by 43 per cent. over the past nine years, the demand for technicians and scientists has risen by over a half.

That is why, when we are talking about a high demand for the skilled, flexible worker, I welcome the employment training scheme, not only because of its size but, more important, because of its emphasis on quality. I applaud the youth training schemes, approved training organisations, competence objectives, transferable qualifications and, perhaps most important, the requirement for a knowledge of computers and information technology on every youth scheme.

I have no doubt that the employment training scheme, with its broad scope from literacy to high technology, will be a better-quality scheme than we have ever seen before. Evidence presented to the Select Committee showed that in the west midlands, although there were only 35,000 places available, 125,000, applications were received from trainee managers. A point was made earlier about smaller funding for more places. We should remember that a large proportion of those trainee managers will bring private capital into the scheme to improve the quality of training that it provides.

I believe that the scheme will do an important job in countering skill shortages. However, although the Government should give a lead in tackling skill shortages, the primary responsibility for skill training should be and is with employers. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said, that is a truth which we in Britain have been slow to grasp. For example, a survey was carried out in 1984. The figures for vocational training were difficult to obtain, but it was estimated that the private sector in Britain was spending £2·5 billion compared with £7 billion in West Germany. As a result, Germany was producing three times more engineers than we were. That is still a worrying factor. Two out of three firms in Britain do no training.

Although the good firms spend the equivalent of 4 per cent. of labour costs on vocational and educational training, the average in the United Kingdom is only 2 per cent., and that works out at 0·7 per cent. of turnover. That is ironic when the economic monitor, the Engineering Industry Training Board, says that 43 per cent. of firms complain that skill shortages will constrain their growth over the next six months, yet apprentice recruitment is still only 8,000 a year.

It is equally ironic that, when we are talking about skills shortages in microelectronics, a Policy Studies Institute survey showed that only 51 per cent. of firms were doing any staff retraining. It is also ironic that when apprenticeships are so valuable, half the industrial apprenticeships available in my constituency go unfilled.

The Government are providing help on such matters through, for example, open technology, the regional technical centres, projects such as Trident to improve links between schools and industry and by making sure that the youth training scheme is more clearly and closely linked to the needs of, for instance, the engineering industry. I understand that the engineering industry has just set up a youth training scheme which gives 53 weeks of off-the-job training rather than the normal 30 weeks.

There is no doubt that the major power to solve skills shortages lies with the employer. I should like to see more employers taking up the joint scheme between the National Economic Development Office, the Engineering Industry Training Board, the City and Guilds organisation and the Training Commission to train more craft workers on the German meister system. I understand that the take-up has been poor recently. I should like to see more employers take up the signposter initiative and the Engineering Industry Training Board's green site and primary projects initiative with schools. I should like to see further development of the segmented craft engineering traineeships by companies. Most of all, I should like to see companies give a far higher priority to the recruitment of scientists and engineers.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman should get the Government to do something about it.

Mr. Coombs: This is a private sector responsibility.

When the private sector is paying newly-qualified engineers on average only £10,800 a year and technicians £8,300 a year, about the same as the average industrial wage, it is not surprising that they find it difficult to encourage people into the industry. It was worrying to hear the vice-chancellor of the Open university tell the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts yesterday that, although it is easy to get firms to pay for

[Mr. Coombs]

business studies training for their employees at the Open university, only 30 per cent. of them regularly pay for scientific or technical training. It is in the interests of private sector firms to do that. It is their responsibility. They are the best people to do the training and, in increasing numbers, they must accept that responsibility.

Perhaps understandably, some companies in the small firms sector are put off going into training by the multiplicity of schemes and sources of funding. That is one of the problems addressed by the consultation document on the funding of vocational and educational training, which I understand is still out for consultation. It is daunting that some training schemes are the responsibility of the British Institute of Management, the CBI, universities, and industrial bodies and yet others are the responsibility of different Government Departments.

I hope that as a result of the review of vocational and educational training those schemes will be drawn together, at least in terms of the way in which information about them is disseminated if not in the way they are organised. I hope that greater emphasis will be put on local employer networks within each local education authority, using the chambers of commerce to develop joint schemes between employers which will stimulate training and prevent poaching of trainees between firms.

The final area in which the Government are making a contribution but where more needs to be done and will be done when the Education Reform Bill is enacted is the need to ensure that young people have the necessary qualifications to enter the engineering industry in the first place. It is significant that the qualification for a technician in the engineering industry through the Engineering Industry Training Board will be four passes at GCSE grades A to C. However, only 26 per cent. of school leavers at the moment get passes in O-level mathematics and physics. That will be exacerbated by the declining number of pupils over the next few years. The reason for that low figure is too much specialisation in the fourth year in schools and the fact that too many students drop scientific and technical subjects and mathematics. In Scotland, schools have started to address that problem and, as a result, they have one third more people who are qualified in those subjects.

The Government, through the national curriculum, will, I hope, begin to solve that in a big way. The national curriculum, the technical and vocational education initiative incentive grants to teachers of shortage subjects and education support grants should lead to more pupils taking a wider range of technical subjects. That will form the bedrock of the solution to the skill shortage in this country.

9·6 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I should like first to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the Chairman of the Employment Select Committee, on his contribution at the beginning of this first-class debate. I listened to every word he said. There is no doubt that my hon. Friend knows what he is talking about when he speaks about training. I should also like to congratulate hon. Members on both sides of the House who are members of that Select Committee and who have contributed to the debate. All of them do a first-class job in the Select Committee.

Ms. Short: All of them?

Mr. Haynes: Yes, all of them, under the leadership of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East. I kicked off by congratulating him because the Select Committee would not work properly if he was not at the helm.

I also want to congratulate the Secretary of State for Employment on being here during the debate. I shall not give way to him, but I welcome him to the debate on training. However, he was not present very often when this year's Employment Bill was in Committee. He was swanning around in Sweden and here, there and everywhere, but my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was there regularly and he is here tonight, so I congratulate him. I felt that I must make that point about attendance.

I also want to speak about the principle of training. I shall not go into all the fine details, as the Select Committee does, but I wish to talk about the principle. I went into the pits in 1944 and I had first-class training. The training that was talked about in Committee and the training that the Government propose is labour on the cheap. The Government have poked their noses right into training instead of leaving it to industry. I was trained in industry and the Government had nothing to do with it.

I started at 50 per cent. of the rate of the chap I worked alongside, who was an experienced man. I worked at the coal face during the two-year training course and every two months I got a percentage increase. After two years, I was fully qualified and got the same rate as the other man. That is why this scheme is unfair—it is labour on the cheap. Youngsters in my constituency let me know that in no uncertain terms. I am here on their behalf to tell the Government that the system is unfair, not only for youngsters but for the people who have been taken out of employment because of the Government policies.

There used to be nine pits in my constituency. Now four are left because they got rid of five. Where are all the youngsters and the people who worked in those pits? They have gone on the dole queue. Now the Government provide money for training under the NCB (Enterprise) Ltd scheme. They hold seminars and issue leaflets urging people to take another regular job and retrain outside miming in some other industry. People have been encouraged to accept redundancy so that the Government can do away with the pits and no one will work in them again.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., paid for by the Government, means that these people cannot go on training schemes unless they are guaranteed a job. That is a con trick. If the pits had not been closed they could have continued working in them and contributed to the energy requirements of the nation. We heard a statement today on the nuclear industry, and there will be more. The Opposition said long ago that we would go back to the coal mining industry. I am sorry that we have problems. Once a pit is closed it is finished—it cannot be reopened. We must open new pits in the new seams throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt)—he is probably on the train back home now—spoke of a

shortage of skilled workers in his constituency. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) agreed with him and said that there were such shortages across the whole nation. The tragedy of all this is that the Conservatives have been in office for 10 years now and have not done a great deal about the problem. We are still struggling to provide skilled workers. If the Government went about it in the right way we might get somewhere. They should listen to some of the things being said by Opposition Members such as myself—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I do not know what the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) is laughing about: he does not know what work is. I do. I had to work to keep a family, but his lot are professionals. They have lived on easy street. Some of the beggars are working outside as well, earning up to five or more salaries, while the poor devils that we represent are trying to get work and cannot. And they are conned with this so-called training scheme. It is training on the cheap all right.

The Secretary of State has said the scheme is voluntary, but there is nothing voluntary in this flaming scheme. I remember the right hon. Gentleman saying something in Committee about people's social security benefits being taken away if they did not go on the scheme. Now the right hon. Gentleman sits there blinking at me, but he knows what I am talking about. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) served on the Standing Committee and made a contribution or two—he was one of the few Tories to do so. Opposition Members had to do it all; we had to put Conservative Members in the picture about what was going on.

Every now and again, the Government change the name and direction of their training schemes. They do not even know where they are going. I wish they would listen to what the Opposition say about training. When people who have lost their jobs through Government policy manage to find a job, I will go along with the Government's scheme—but the jobs are not there. In my constituency, I have youngsters who have gone through the two-year training scheme but cannot find a job at the end of it. There is still 12 per cent. unemployment in my constituency. The Government say that unemployment stands still, but in my constituency unemployment will rise and rise because of what is happening.

I believe that the Government are planning further pit closures in my constituency—in addition to the four that have already closed—which will make matters even worse. That will affect not only the industry in my constituency, but suppliers there and in other constituencies. It is a difficult problem, but the Government do not listen. They know it all. They are dogmatic. People must do what they say. We have had enough; we have had a bellyfull; and I tell the Government that the next time that the Prime Minister declares that there will be an election, that lot over there can look out.

9.15 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) talked about labour on the cheap, but I think that that was a Whip's speech on the cheap to cover up the fact that there is nobody else on the Labour Benches to speak in this debate. That is what it is all about. He might have his fan club up there in the Strangers Gallery—all one of them—but where are the rest of them? There are none.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What the hon. Gentleman is saying is totally unfair. He knows full well that my hon. Friends are now back working in their constituencies.

Mr. Riddick: They might be back in their constituencies working, but some of us are trying to represent our constituencies here in the Chamber—that is the difference.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this fascinating and riveting debate on the important topic of training. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) that British industry has let down the nation to a certain extent in this sector. It has not provided enough training. It must be said, however, that Governments of the past two or three decades have not allowed British industry to earn sufficient profits to invest in training.

Like the hon. Member for Ashfield, I had a proper job before I came here. I used to work in sales management in industry—the coal face of industry. I first started work with an American company called Procter and Gamble, which had an American business culture. It carried out all its own training and invested heavily in its own people. I was then poached from the American company—after it had invested in my training and had improved my effectiveness—by a British company, which was fairly typical.

I recently met one of the directors of the Confederation of British Industry in Yorkshire. He told me that at a time of deep recession training and research and development are the things that tend to go. He assured me, however, that once the profitability of British industry picked up, training would be back on the agenda, and it would invest in training once again. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran), who used to be with the CBI, will confirm that that will happen in the future.

That is a question of training people already in work. Tonight we are debating the Government's proposal and their massive training role to help the long-term unemployed. There is an enormous need for high quality training which cannot be over-emphasised. The change in the pattern of job vacancies demonstrates the need for skilled people. There are fewer vacancies for manual, unskilled workers in manufacturing industry, but a far greater demand for individuals in the professional, managerial, technological and service sectors who have the appropriate skills.

If we consider manufacturing industry, it is significant that from the low point of the recession in 1981 to the present day, as the economy has picked up, output has risen by 22·3 per cent. During that same period, employment in manufacturing industry has fallen by 1·1 million—a drop of 18·2 per cent. In other words, productivity has increased by about 40 per cent. British industry needs fewer unskilled manual workers.

However, unemployment remains high. At the same time, the CBI and the chambers of commerce and trade in Yorkshire and elsewhere are reporting very serious skill shortages. For example, an ice-cream factory on Merseyside reported that it could not find enough maintenance fitters or refrigeration engineers. In Manchester, seven new hotels can barely find the staff to open their doors.

The jobs exist. Moreover, now that the baby boom of the 1960s has flattened out, there are marvellous opportunities for our young people. However, we must

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ensure that the long-term unemployed in their 30s, 40s or 50s are not ignored. They must not be left on the scrap heap. That is why the new training scheme is so important.

How do the Opposition react? Apart from the playful little speech from the hon. Member for Ashfield, Opposition Members react with a mixture of bewilderment —in some cases a measure of support and in others downright opposition. The dinosaurs in the union movement, notably the Transport and General Workers Union, the National and Local Government Officers Association and the National Union of Public Employees, complain about workfare and cheap labour. However, they claim to champion the cause of the working class and the unemployed. What humbug.

The response of employers and training organisations to the employment training programme has been very good but if the trade unions wish to cause trouble they can; but if they do that they and hon. Members opposite—in particular, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) who has been stirring things up to such an enormous degree—will bear a very heavy responsibility for depriving some of the most unfortunate people in society of an opportunity to better themselves and have a chance in life.

Instead of complaining about cheap labour many of the long-term unemployed will welcome the opportunity of a long-term future and will then sell their newly-found, newly-learned skills at a decent wage to companies that are prepared to employ them.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) referred to the prospects of the new employment scheme, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said under his breath in a rather threatening way, "We shall see." He does not want it to succeed because the Labour party likes to see high unemployment. It believes that that is good for its political prospects. It is unfortunate that the hon. Member for Oldham, West makes many ambiguous noises about this and gets the hon. Member for Ladywood to do all his dirty work for him. Whatever the dinosaurs of the Labour movement do, the new scheme will start in September and give the long-term unemployed a chance to learn new skills to take long-term job opportunities. The Government are to be congratulated on giving them that chance.

9.24 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am sure that we are all grateful to the Select Committee on Employment for giving us an opportunity to debate this important subject. My hon. Friends regret that the debate has been on a Thursday evening as many of them have had to return to their constituencies. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why"] One only has to stand in the post office to see that the quantity of mail received by Labour Members compared with that received by Conservative Members shows who does more work for their constituents.

Like every hon. Member who has spoken, I want to concentrate on employment training—ET. It is just as ugly as the original ET, but with none of his lovable qualities. Before doing so, I should like to mention youth training. I put on record the Opposition's deep resentment and opposition to the removal of the right to benefit for 16 to 18-year-olds, thus making the youth training scheme compulsory. The level of refusal to take up YTS was low. We do not believe for a moment that that action was necessary to make young people take up further education and training. It was done so that the allowance paid to young people on YTS, which has decreased over the years —the Government deliberately allowed it to be eroded —could decrease further.

It was deeply wrong to remove young people's freedom to choose their training scheme. Good quality training schemes should give young people a freedom of choice. Out of desperation, because they have no income, young people are having to take the first scheme on offer, whatever its quality. Even worse—this has had a big impact in my constituency—the right of young people in receipt of benefit—whose families cannot support their children aged 16 to 18 years in full-time education—to study at their local further education college, take O or A-levels and vocational qualifications has been wiped out by the loss of the right to study for 21 hours. That is an outrage and the option should not be destroyed but expanded to allow young people to stay in full-time education. We are behind in the number of young people who stay in further education compared with our competitor countries. We are deeply critical of the moves that the Government have made in removing the freedom of choice for YTS schemes and young people's opportunities to study full-time if they so wish.

Mr. Paice: The hon. Lady decried the allowance paid to YTS trainees and said that it was decreasing. Does the hon. Lady accept that the amount paid is a minimum, not a maximum, and that many work experience placements pay considerably more in addition? That is constantly increasing, so to talk about the minimum as the norm is quite incorrect.

Ms. Short: A minority of YTS placements receive top-up. It is important that top-up is allowed. It is deeply regrettable that top-up is not being allowed in the employment training scheme, although the model is identical to YTS. We know that a growing minority of young people on YTS are receiving top-up, but if the YTS allowance had remained at the original value of the youth opportunities programme allowance it would be worth not £20+ but £40+. I hope that as the 16 to 18-year-old cohort declines, more young people will be in work with training and not taking any job to avoid YTS. That is what is happening at present and the Government must take action. I hope that more young people on YTS will receive top-up and a decent wage and that the possibility of using top-up under YTS will be used by the trade union movement to improve the position of young people in the labour market. That is not only desirable but likely to happen.

I now refer to the adult training scheme, or ET, as the Government have now decided to call it. The Opposition's view is that it is a deeply flawed scheme and a tragically wasted opportunity to provide improved training for the long-term unemployed. There is a desperate need to expand training opportunities for everyone, but, in particular, for the long-term unemployed, because of the changes that are taking place in our economy. Conservative Member after Conservative Member has said how deplorable it is that we have skill shortages and that there is not more training. The Government have been in power for nearly 10 years. They have eroded training

mechanisms. They have cut the number of skillcentres, got rid of the industrial training boards, cut the apprenticeship system, and so on. They deplore the lack of training in our country. It is a serious lack for the economy and for the quality of life and work for individuals, and the Government are responsible for it. They should organise things so that we have more training rather than less training. ET is deeply flawed, but we desperately need more and better training for the long-term unemployed.

It is also our view that the community programme, which is now to be abolished, has provided enormously valuable schemes to care for some of the most needy and desperate people in our communities. For example, in my constituency, mobility for the disabled is provided through a community programme. It includes decorating many elderly people's homes, doing up their gardens, schemes for disabled children, and so on. They are important community services, but we do not believe that they are all that should be on offer to the long-term unemployed. We have always argued that the CP should not have been only part-time but should have been a mixture of part-time and full-time work, according to people's needs.

There should have been more training opportunities for the long-term unemployed. When crucial services were being provided through the CP to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, the jobs should have been permanent. Long-term unemployed people should have been given priority for such jobs. As they acquired skills and knowledge through working with such vulnerable people, they should have been allowed permanently to stay in their jobs and use their skills to take care of the local community, instead of constantly being forced to leave the scheme just as they had learnt to do their jobs particularly well.

We have consistently argued that point. That has always been our view. We said it when CP was first launched, we said it throughout the life of CP, and we say it now. Instead, what do we get? We get employment training, which builds on the failed job training scheme, rather than the best of the community programme. We continue to be told that it is a £1·5 billion programme. Of course, that is not true. There was some training in the community programme. Many schemes funded and organised training for themselves. After a great deal of pressure on the Government, funding was provided for training. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members who do not know about these matters would listen, they might learn something. After the scheme was launched, the Government provided funding for training in the time when people were not working. It was building up nicely, and the Government cut the budget. We demanded training. At last we got a budget, the programme was starting to build, and the Government deliberately cut the money. Conservative Members should not tell us about the lack of training in the community programme. When they launched the programme it failed to provide training and it was a deliberate part of the Government's strategy to cut the training that we later squeezed out of them.

I was referring to ET. We are constantly told that the budget is £1·5 billion. Of course, people on the scheme are to be paid £10 or a little more on top of their benefit. A large part of the budget is simply benefit money that people would otherwise receive. We are talking about half that amount of money. It is not such a big budget. Conservative Members should face up to that fact and be honest about it.

As someone who had worked in this subject for many years before I was elected to the House, written reports, done research and demanded improvements in schemes and more training before most Conservative Members even knew their way around the initials of the Manpower Services Commission, it is my view that, in their obsessive desire to cut wage levels, the Government have constantly destroyed our efforts to improve training opportunities for young people and the long-term unemployed. The Government use the schemes to lower wage expectations and restructure the labour market. The expectations of young people in employment have been deliberately lowered by the youth training scheme and a number of other schemes which subsidise employers who pay low wages. The success of that is measurable. Much of the inspiration behind this scheme has been the search to reduce the wage expectations and conditions of those in employment. Because the Government have that ulterior motive, they are throwing away a major opportunity to improve our training provisions for long-term unemployed people.

Some of us remember when the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was the Secretary of State for Employment—all these measures were tried before. He tried to bring in the removal of benefit rights as a means of forcing trainees on to YTS. He tried to introduce benefit-plus for the long-term unemployed, but he failed. He then threatened to abolish the Manpower Services Commission because he was so angry about having failed. The MSC now has much less independence and authority than it used to have. The Government now have compulsory YTS and are bringing in the benefit-plus scheme because they seek to lower the wage expectations and not because they wish to help the long-term unemployed or improve our training provision.

We object to the benefit-plus model because one of the most immediate and desperate experiences of the long-term unemployed is poverty. Any of us could live on benefit for a short time because we have things that we have bought in better times and we might have a little in savings. However, if one is forced to live on benefit levels for months or years, one becomes extremely poor and cannot replace shoes, children's clothing, sheets, or bedding. The overwhelming experience of those who are long-term unemployed is grinding continuous poverty. Conservative Members talk about the need for people to make sacrifices to obtain training, but they do not know the reality of the poverty in which people have had to live.

This morning I received a letter from a constituent who was desperately upset. After three years of unemployment, he had found a place on a community programme and received £90 per week for working three days one week and two days the next. He said how happy he had been, how he worked hard because he always worked hard, that he liked working and was proud to work and that it made him feel better. He has just been told that he will be put on benefit-plus, get £10 and have to work full-time. He is distraught because he does not understand it and feels insulted. He had felt that his life was just getting better. He has written to me, pleading that I represent his case and try to get something better for him.

I advise Conservative Members that when this scheme hits the streets and many more people experience what is on offer, and when the overwhelming majority of 18 to 25-year-olds who predominate on the community programme and who are the guarantee or primary group

[Ms. Short]

for this programme, find that they are about £20 a week worse off, they will be extremely angry. There will be a lot of hostility to the programme.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I have heard what she has been saying about poverty being the major problem, but surely another major problem facing long-term unemployed people is boredom. They are bored because they have nothing to do. Surely this is an opportunity for them to learn some new skills and to have a new start in life. That is what the programme is about.

Ms. Short: There is absolutely no question but that poverty is the primary problem. Other problems are that the long-term unemployed are isolated from society, and feel that they have no friends and that they cannot make a contribution. All those things are hurtful to people who then feel demoralised and unwanted, and who start to respect themselves less. They lose the confidence to apply for jobs. We know, because all the research tells us, that that is the effect of long-term unemployment. So what should we do? Should we make them an offer that does not make them any better off so that they have to grind on in poverty or should we make them an offer that gives them the chance to acquire skills and a decent income?

Opposition Members believe that the long-term unemployed are entitled to the chance to acquire skills and a decent income, but the Government are so determined to reduce the wage levels of some of the poorest people in our community that they bring in this kind of scheme, which will impoverish even more those who are already impoverished so that they are worse off than with the offer of the community programme.

It is said that benefit-plus will give an extra £10 per week, or even a little more because some special categories will get £11 and a few pence extra per week. When Conservative Members talk about the degree of TUC approval, they should remember that that "approval" came reluctantly because the TUC had feared something worse if it did not negotiate what it could from the scheme.

We are told that the scheme is the same as the TOPS allowance. People are willing to train full time and people have queued up for TOPS courses for such an allowance. When the skillcentre in my constituency kept waiting lists, they were years long. People wanted to train to obtain a skill in which there was a shortage, so they knew that they would get a job. When people are unproductive they are entitled to a training allowance. That might make them a bit better off compared with what they receive in benefit and they also get their bus fares paid and so on.

When people are put in a workplace and are producing goods and services alongside other workers, they expect to get some pay. They are entitled to an income that takes account of the work that they produce. It is not good enough to say that, in the case of the employment training scheme, they will receive £10 on top of their benefit. They must receive pay in proportion to their productivity. If they do not, they will be used to undermine the jobs and wages of those in work. That is what happened with YTS and YOP. The Minister's Department has produced a number of research papers that have shown that if young people are introduced to the workplace as free labour, they will displace other workers from jobs.

The employment training schemes threatens the long-term unemployed because it is worse than the community programme in terms of those people's income levels. It threatens people in low-paid work—the places on the scheme will be concentrated in such work—because that scheme will be used to displace workers. That is why we, together with many trade unions and many of the long-term unemployed, object to it so strongly.

How cynical can the Government get? I have with me a brochure handed out to employers to try to get them involved in the scheme. What does it tell them?

"Employment Training gives you the opportunity to hire people whose training you have been able to check yourself . . . You might regard the training period as an extended interview."

Now we get down to it. The Government might as well say, "Take on 20. Use them, they are free and keep the ones you want." An "extended interview" is not the high quality training that Conservative Members have tried to pretend the scheme is all about. The Government's expensive advertising budget has been spent trying to pretend that "an extended interview" means high-quality training. It is in their brochure and they are their words, not ours.

Ministers are aware that there is deep opposition to the scheme from the trade union movement, the voluntary sector and many local authorities, including a number of Tory local authorities. There will be a great deal of conflict. Roger Dawe, the director general of the Training Commission, has said that if one wants to learn the lessons from the failure of the JTS one must have consensus, support from local authorities from trade unions and so on.

Ever since the Government introduced the scheme we have pleaded with them to give us some basic assurances. We have sought an assurance that the scheme will be voluntary. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has already referred to the duplicity of the Secretary of State who has constantly said that he has no plans to designate the scheme under section 26 of the Employment Act 1988 which gives him the power to take away people's social security benefits should they refuse a place on the scheme or leave it early. However, the right hon. Gentleman will not say that he will not designate the scheme. He is playing games. He has no plans to designate it now, but if things go wrong he will do so later. The Government are being dishonest and if they are considering the possibility of designation, they should tell us.

With the new availability-for-work tests there is an increasing compulsion on people to join schemes. People are called in and are threatened with the loss of their benefit. They are asked whether they are looking for a job and what wage level they are willing to accept. If they do not give the right answers they lose benefit anyway. Compulsion is creeping in through the availability-for-work tests and if that does not do the Government's job, they will designate the scheme and make it compulsory.

We are opposed to the scheme because it is not good enough. It is not good enough for the long-term unemployed and it has the potential to destroy the jobs of those already in work. It will not provide good training. We desperately want a scheme that will meet those criteria. If the Government will agree to pay a decent rate when people are working and producing—and an allowance when they are training—and if they give an absolute

assurance that the scheme, including the availability-for-work tests, will be voluntary and if they will provide adequate funding for training, we will campaign for the scheme. I plead with the Government to heed what I say and what has been said on many occasions. We shall go out to the trade unions, which are rightly opposed to the scheme, and say, "OK. We have got something better now; let us all work for it."

We want a decent scheme for the long-term unemployed—they vote for us, and a lot of our relatives and friends are part of that group. We have relatives and friends who have been on training schemes and I do not believe that Conservative Members could say the same.

This is a desperately urgent and important matter to us. Of course, we want to form a Government, but in the meantime we want something better for the long-term unemployed and this is not the answer. There will be dissension and conflict and the scheme might well fail. The Government have made a grave error because they are obsessed with cutting the wages of the poorest people in the country.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): In the few minutes available to me, I shall not be able to do justice to the interesting and valuable contributions from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that hon. Members will accept that, if they think that I have not given their contribution sufficient treatment.

Before I reply to the specific points that have been raised, I wish to put matters into context. It is obvious that the Select Committee's report and this debate have concentrated primarily on the new employment training programme. That is entirely right, given the significance that we attach to it. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) was right when she said that the Committee had given us a valuable opportunity to discuss those matters.

Employment training will have a budget of about £1·5 billion in a full year, which will make it the largest programme of its kind anywhere in the world. The fact that the Government are investing that sum of money in employment training is a measure of our intent to help the long-term unemployed back into work. The case for training the long-term unemployed is clear and it should command the support of all Members of this House.

The prospect for jobs is better now than it has been for a decade. Unemployment has fallen for 23 months in succession by a total of 835,000, which is the largest and longest sustained fall on record. For the last six months, unemployment has fallen by an average of 40,000 a month. That is a direct reflection of the strength of the British economy. More than 1·8 million additional new jobs have been created since 1983. The economy is entering its eighth successive year of growth at an average rate of 3 per cent.

There is therefore every reason to believe that unemployment will continue to fall, provided that people who have been out of work can take the jobs which are increasingly available. That means, above all, that they need the chance to train in up-to-date skills.

We know from recent surveys that there are some 700,000 unfilled job vacancies in the economy as a whole. We now have a unique opportunity to train the long-term unemployed so that they can take advantage of those opportunities.

However, there is now clear evidence of a concerted campaign of intimidation directed against organisations which want to play a part in employment training. Of course, anybody is entitled to say that he does not want to take part in the new programme, but what is unacceptable is that anyone should try to intimidate other people into boycotting employment training.

There is clear evidence that officials of the Transport and General Workers Union have been involved in a number of violent demonstrations against officials of the Training Commission, the employment service and voluntary organisations that want to run training projects under the new programme.

In March, the newly elected executive of the TGWU voted to oppose employment training, despite the fact that their general secretary, Ron Todd, was one of the MSC commissioners who designed the programme and recommended it unanimously to the Government.

Since then, there has been a series of unpleasant incidents involving members and officials of that union. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment wrote to Mr. Todd about that in April. He undertook to carry out an investigation. We are still awaiting a substantive reply. My right hon. Friend has now had to write to Mr. Todd again to draw his attention to two further incidents. One of those involved the week-long occupation of the Birkenhead job-centre——

Ms. Short: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Lady took more than her fair share of the time and she will have to forgive me if I press on.

One of those incidents involved the week-long occupation of the Birkenhead jobcentre, as a result of which no help could be given to unemployed people in that area. It is absolutely typical of that sort of demonstration that it is the unemployed who suffer.

Now we have the Liverpool city council not only opposing employment training, but threatening action against anyone who seeks to work with it. Liverpool city council, which is, of course under the control of the hard Left, voted on 29 June to boycott employment training. Not content with that, it also voted to take a whole series of steps designed to bully voluntary organisations and private companies in Liverpool into boycotting the programme. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Ladywood does not like what she is hearing, but she will have to realise that she associates herself with those people by holding the views that she does.

If those threats are carried out, the unemployed people of Liverpool will be deprived of training and the elderly and disabled will lose the benefits of many of Liverpool's voluntary services.

Unemployment in Liverpool is higher than the national average. But if the council has its way, it will be even higher because the city's unemployed people will lose the opportunity to train for employment and return to work.

Even after hearing some of the speeches this evening, I remain an optimist and I should like to think that all hon. Members will join me in condemning that attempt to victimise those unemployed people who are most in need of help. It is the same destructive attitude that we saw in

[Mr. Nicholls]

Dundee earlier this year. The conclusion is quite inescapable. If the hard Left cannot have jobs or training on their own terms, it would rather have unemployment. That is its message to the unemployed of Merseyside today, just as it was its message to the unemployed of Dundee in April.

I want to make it absolutely clear that the Government are not going to be deflected by any campaign of intimidation. The programme will go ahead as planned on 5 September. The Government will not turn their back on the unemployed. As a nation we need their skills and experience if we are to sustain our economic growth. I believe it is the duty of everyone in our society—including local authorities and trade unions—to help unemployed people get back to work. That is what employment training is all about and that is what is at stake.

The speech by the hon. Member for Ladywood did nothing to dispel the ambiguity which has surrounded the Opposition's attitude to employment training from the outset. Her speech contained the usual familiar recital of complaints about the programme—complaints which we have answered time after time.

It is obviously asking too much of the hon. Lady, given her particular prejudices, to ask her to take my word for it. Therefore, I refer her to the comments of Mr. Peter Ashby, writing in *The Independent*. The hon. Lady may sneer, but let us consider Mr. Ashby's credentials. He is not an uncritical supporter of Her Majesty's Government; he is a long-time member of the Labour party. He is a committed trade unionist and he spent three years working for the TUC. He is head of a body called Action on Long-Term Unemployment. This is what he had to say on the views of the hon. Lady, commenting on the views of her hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher):

"Michael Meacher's defence of the Labour Party's policy on employment training is sadly unconvincing."

We are all entitled to an under-statement.

"What he does not answer is the basic question: will the party support employment training?"

He continues:

"It is surely time for Michael Meacher and his colleagues"—

and we must assume that they include the hon. Lady—

"to speak out in favour of long-term unemployed people having the option of high-quality public-sector training.

It is too late in the day for those in positions of leadership to remain sitting on the fence. Unless they declare themselves in support of a programme, it will go down at TUC Congress."

He concludes:

"I hope from Mr. Meacher's letter that he is in favour of employment training. If so, could he please tell us in simple English?"

Of course he cannot, and the hon. Lady did not do so either.

In the few minutes that remain, I shall try to deal with some of the central points. Although the hon. Lady knows the facts, it is possible that some of her hon. Friends do not. Yet again she raises the old canard that Tory authorities are not in favour of the scheme. Again she mentions the case of Kensington and Chelsea. I can tell the hon. Lady that the position of Kensington and Chelsea is perfectly honourable. It has decided that for the time being it wants to wait and see, and it made it clear that it will not come into the programme yet. If the hon. Lady thinks that she can derive some satisfaction from that, she is welcome to it.

The hon. Lady is concerned that the programme will not be voluntary. There is not much point in trying to convince the hon. Lady that anything conceived by the Government is a right and proper approach.

The TUC, again not uncritical supporters of the Government, has given its conditional support to the programme. It is absolutely inconceivable that the TUC would have done that if it thought that the Government intended to make the programme compulsory. Accepting for the moment that there are some grounds for the fears of the hon. Member for Ladywood, surely she realises that the moment that we attempted—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Lady will stop howling from a sedentary position, I shall try to deal with some of her points, inadequate though they were. If the Government tried to make the programme compulsory, the TUC would immediately withdraw its support and that would be the precise opposite of what we want. If the hon. Lady will not accept my word for it, she ought to reflect on the TUC's attitude.

The hon. Lady well knows that what she is asking the Government to do is to say that they will never at any time in the future invoke the Social Security Act 1975 that was passed by the last Labour Governmnt, at a time when her hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West was a Minister with responsibility for social security. It would go against everything that we have planned and it would be against our best interests to do so.

I am afraid that we have again heard the hon. Lady say tonight that the Labour party is united against the scheme. Again I remind her, if she will not accept my words, of what Neil Fletcher, the chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities education committee, had to say about it. He referred to the hon. Lady's employment training policy as "political posturing" and he is reported as saying that

"If the Labour movement goes down the boycott road, the first achievement will indisputably be to destroy upwards of 20,000 jobs. The avalanche of public odium that we would achieve by any such boycott would be well deserved."

The unemployed, employers and the economy need the programme. That is why I say that employment training deserves the unreserved support of Members on both sides of the House.

9.56 pm

Mr. Leighton: I hope that the House will take the view that the Select Committee performed a worthwhile service in allowing the House to debate employment training and that the debate has shed some light on the subject, as well as generating some heat. The Training Commission does not believe that the programme is set in concrete and it will keep it closely under review. When we return to the House after the recess, the programme will already be in operation. I feel sure that the Select Committee will want to monitor and scrutinise the programme closely and to report to the House on its scrutiny. I trust that the House will be able to look again at the issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Question is, That the motion stands over under the Standing Order.

Mr. Nicholls: I was obviously too generous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The motion is stood over until Ten o'clock.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. I had it in mind that I might fill the vacuum with a few more words of wisdom and peaceful remarks, but if you are saying to me that I am not entitled to do so I shall resume my seat and will allow others to fill it with equally spurious points of order.

If I am entitled to do that, let me assure the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) that I shall look into the specific points that he put to me about programmes in his constituency. We do not intend the community programmes —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must explain to the Minister that technically the position is that until Ten o'clock we ought to move on to the next item of business, the British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order 1988, but it would be inconvenient to call the Minister to begin his speech on shipbuilding, to interrupt him at Ten o'clock for the House to dispose of the estimates votes and then to return to shipbuilding. It is a difficult and, to me, a unique experience to have this hiatus.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems that I could use the few seconds that remain to us to thank you for your guidance to the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Minister will put it to me, I shall listen to his point of order.

Mr. Nicholls: The point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was trying to raise with you——

It being Ten o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates), to put forthwith the deferred Questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Supplementary Estimates, 1988-89 (Class XIV, Vote 1 and Class VII, Vote 5).*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1988-89

CLASS XIV, VOTE 1

Resolved,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding, £538,303,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Department of Health and Social Security on hospital, community health and related services, including a grant in aid.

CLASS VII, VOTE 5

Resolved,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £281,927,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Department of Employment on a grant aid to the Training Commission (formerly the Manpower Services Commission).

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question which he was directed to put pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.).*

ESTIMATES 1988-89

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £57,388,304,000·00, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1989 as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 256, 329, 339, 510 and 605.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the three foregoing Resolutions and upon the three Resolutions agreed to on 7 July by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Major, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) (NO.2) BILL

Mr. Norman Lamont accordingly presented a Bill to apply a sum out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the year ending on 31 March 1989 to appropriate the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament, and to repeal certain Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Acts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed.

Shipbuilding

10.1 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That the draft British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.

The order concerns British Shipbuilders' borrowing limit. This is the statutory ceiling on the funds which the corporation may acquire in the form of public dividend capital from the Government, and loans from the commercial market. The order merely gives British Shipbuilders the power to receive the money. It will always be for the House to decide what actually should be made available through the estimates procedure.

The limit presently stands at £1,550 million, as a result of the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Act which received the Royal Assent in July last year. The terms of the 1987 Act enable the borrowing limit to be raised by amounts not exceeding £150 million at a time to £1,800 million, subject to affirmative resolution of this House. I now propose that the borrowing limit be so raised by £150 million to £1,700 million.

I have stated very clearly on a number of occasions in recent weeks that British Shipbuilders has continued to consume alarming sums of money relative to its size. The total now stands at almost £1·8 billion since 1979, while employment is now only 6,261 people. No hon. Member should be surprised to see that the borrowing limit needs to be raised yet again—for the fourth time, I might say, in the last two years. The increase last July amounted to £20,000 per employee. This year's increase amounts to a further £24,000.

Of the £150 million provided by the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Act 1987, around £100 million has been spent so far. British Shipbuilders forecast, that it will need the rest over the summer and early autumn so that, without the approval of this order tonight, there would be a risk to the corporation's ability to continue trading before the next Session of this House. This is the fourth time in the last two years that the House has had to vote extra money to save the business from closing down.

Since the 1987 Act received the Royal Assent, borrowing has been needed for three main reasons. Contract losses have continued to mount. For instance, the first of two ferries for Caledonian MacBrayne built by the Ferguson yard was discovered to be seriously overweight. This is likely to cost the taxpayer around £4 million more than expected on a ship priced at £7 million. None of the corporation's orders has been carried out without contract losses. Secondly, under-recovered overheads have been running at a high rate because of the chronic shortage of orders and work at the yards. Thirdly, the dispute with the customer for the Danish ferries at North East Shipbuilders has meant that no instalment income has been received for many months. British Shipbuilders has had to meet all the building costs itself, although the programme of work has continued. I will touch on that again later.

These and other costs have all required cash, including borrowing from the market and public dividend capital. For the same reasons the corporation will not be able to operate its business within this year's external finance limit of £80 million. The House has been invited to vote a further £74 million as a summer supplementary estimate for British Shipbuilders. The external finance limit will be revised formally once we are clear about disposal possibilities for the remaining facilities and the share of any further costs that the taxpayer will need to cover this financial year.

That history of losses provides the background to my policy for the corporation. We are not selling parts of the business because of some ideological hang-up. We are selling them for sensible commercial reasons. We believe that the parts of shipbuilding that are capable of survival in this country will be managed more efficiently in the private sector, and must face up to market conditions.

I now turn to the programme of disposals that I announced on 18 April when the letter of intent from Kvaerner for its proposed purchase of Govan was received. On 27 June I was delighted to announce the terms that had been agreed with Kvaerner. These have now been notified to the European Commission. I trust that the Commission will accept the terms at its meeting next week, so that the sale can be completed in early August as planned.

Kvaerner offers Govan a future. As British Shipbuilders had not succeeded in attracting other orders beyond the two ships for China agreed early last year, it is plain that the only alternative facing the yard was closure. I look forward to welcoming Kvaerner to these shores. Quite apart from the other business that it intends to bring, there is the prospect of at least one major merchant shipbuilder continuing in Great Britain. As I have said before, my aim now is to discover to what extent it might be possible to return all of British Shipbuilders' yards to private hands. The corporation is nearing the end of its life as a nationalised industry, and there is no realistic prospect of its ever achieving commercial viability in its present form.

It is of course important to stress that we are looking for serious purchasers with sensible business plans and substantial financial backing. We shall sell the parts of the business to substantial interests with a prospect of developing the business for the reasonably foreseeable future. We owe it to the work force and the taxpayer to negotiate on that basis. We are not prepared to facilitate asset-stripping, or to inject large sums of public money into flimsy or speculative ventures. I have to tell the House plainly that I cannot guarantee that we will find credible purchasers or affordable orders and work for every part of the business. My aim is to return every part of the business to the private sector on a basis that is fair to the purchaser, the taxpayer and the work force wherever possible.

British Shipbuilders now expects bids for Appledore from at least two groups interested in continuing merchant shipbuilding at the yard. British Shipbuilders will shortly set a bid date, which I expect to be in early August. As for the other yards, our main objective is to retain merchant shipbuilding as the principal business if that can be achieved on reasonable terms acceptable to ourselves and the European Commission.

Interest has also been expressed in Clark Kincaid and the Ferguson yard at Port Glasgow. I expect British Shipbuilders to set bid dates for those facilities in the near future. There remains considerable interest—I stress the word "considerable"—in Marine Design Consultants at Sunderland and Dundee. I expect bids for MDC will be invited a little later in the programme. In all these cases

there will, of course, be delay between the receipt of bids and any request for consent for disposal to allow for negotiations with the parties.

There are, as I have told the House before, a number of parties interested in acquiring all or part of the British Shipbuilders facilities at Sunderland. However, I have to say that they are taking their time in bringing serious propositions to John Lister, the chairman of British Shipbuilders, as the basis for bids. There are naturally important points that need to be discussed in advance of bids on such matters as compliance with the European Community sixth directive and the various qualities that British Shipbuilders would expect to see in an attractive bid.

I am aware that two bidders in particular have made a great deal of their interest in acquiring the business in the press, especially the local press in the north-east. It can only be in the interest of the people of Sunderland if the people who say that they have plans for the yards now come to the table with solid propositions and evidence of financial backing. For that reason, we have to set a definite target for bids to be received for North East Shipbuilders Ltd. in Sunderland. John Lister has agreed to set a final date soon for bids for NESL which will certainly not be later than the end of September.

I am particularly conscious of the uncertainties facing the work force at North East Shipbuilders. I am only too aware of the concern that that is causing to the work force and its families in Sunderland, which is a particularly troubled town at the moment. The House will recall that, apart from its appalling record on losses in recent years, the immediate problem at NESL began with the difficulties that I announced on 18 April between British Shipbuilders and its Danish customer. That dispute still drags on. Meanwhile, British Shipbuilders has cancelled a considerable number of contracts with Mr. Johansen and how has a number of excellent ferries completed in the River Wear and ready to sell. It is making considerable efforts in that direction, but ships take time to sell in today's markets. Meanwhile, inevitable layoffs have already begun at the yard, as was always expected from the moment that the order began if further orders were not attracted into the yard alongside the Danish ferries.

There is also a great deal of interest in the possible order for a series of general cargo ships from Mambisa, the Cuban deep sea shipping company. British Shipbuilders has put in an application for intervention fund support in connection with that order. After careful consideration, I have decided that I cannot offer such support to British Shipbuilders.

As I have said before, my reasons for that are not political or ideological. They are practical and commercial. I am simply not satisfied that British Shipbuilders could build those ships to cost or could do so within the terms of the sixth directive by which we are willingly bound. I have seen no persuasive argument to the contrary, and I have seen a good deal of evidence that supports my view. For instance, the last four ships for Cuba overran their intervention fund support, which was already a considerable cost to the taxpayer, by between 12 and 17 per cent. of cost. If we look back over the history of British Shipbuilders, we see that intervention fund support over the years has cost the taxpayer £250 million. Trading losses on top of that intervention fund support total about £1 billion. Most of us could find more attractive ways of spending £1 billion of public money on one public service or another.

However, I am prepared to consider intervention fund support for the Cuban and other orders from any who may successfully negotiate the purchase of a yard in Sunderland. Such a purchaser would have to accept the risk of contract losses over and above intervention fund support. Any new purchaser or manager would strive to avoid such trading losses. My Department has established that the Cuban company Mambisa has the authority to purchase these ships and to negotiate price and credit terms. One of my officials has been to Cuba to discuss that very matter.

It remains now to be seen whether any of those interested in the yards could negotiate satisfactory terms and they certainly face fierce competition. However, Mambisa has confirmed to my official that it is prepared to allow plenty of time for negotiations to take place.

All this confirms what I told the Select Committee on 28 June. The Cuban order is now a serious opportunity and there never was a June deadline for any contract. However, it is important—so that there is no misapprehension—for people in the north-east to understand that the order is not, and never was, a forgone conclusion. The Cuban order simply is not in the bag or readily available for anybody.

Mambisa is pleased with the ships that it has bought in the past and is happy to order again, but only on competitive terms that are attractive to it, which is, of course, the basis on which any prospective customer would proceed. If the order was won by any British bidder, work would be unlikely to start on the Cuban ships for some months. It could not start this year. The Cuban order, even if it is won, is not, of course, big enough to provide sufficient work to occupy both yards in Sunderland and all their work force. The Cuban ships are not the only ships that prospective purchasers are talking about with British Shipbuilders and my Department.

The situation is extremely difficult and it is important for me to play fair with the people of Sunderland. It would be quite wrong for me to disguise from the House or from the people of Sunderland the fact that there is a very large question mark over the future of the Sunderland yards. We must face up to the fact that there is no clear or certain expectation that any order for any ships can be found for those yards—under any credible ownership of the yards—at acceptable cost.

I have said before that I am not convinced that merchant shipbuilding offers the best future for the town, if it can be sustained only by huge subsidies for occasional orders. The whole business runs the risk of continuing on a hand-to-mouth basis, which is no certain future for the work force and their families. Substantial lay-offs, if not redundancies, are inevitable over the next few months. If no satisfactory bid is forthcoming, I shall in due course announce a package of measures for the town that will be designed to create new opportunities and which will underline all the efforts already being made to secure its economic future. I very much hope that that will not prove necessary, but it is the Government's duty to the people of Sunderland to help them to attract new enterprise and jobs should the need arise.

The order before the House tonight is essentially a technical matter, which is designed to allow British Shipbuilders to continue trading within its statutory

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

trading limit. It is the occasion for a shipbuilding debate in which hon. Members who represent shipbuilding constituencies and other hon. Members who have legitimate interests in shipbuilding may give their views.

British Shipbuilders now has its programme of disposals well in hand. There are inevitable uncertainties. Some facilities may close. However, I hope that in place of a corporation which still makes appalling losses we shall shortly see a merchant shipbuilding industry which is strengthened by these disposals and has a promising future into the 1990s and beyond. I shall make every effort to ensure that we improve the prospects for profitable industrial activity and for secure employment which will last in all the shipbuilding towns.

10.18 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I had intended to begin my short speech by saying that the Opposition welcomed the order and the fact that at least the borrowing limit is to be raised, which is a sign that the Government do not intend to pull the plug on British Shipbuilders at the moment. However, in the light of the speech that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has just made, that welcome would be quite inappropriate. We have just heard nothing less than the sounding of the death knell of British merchant shipbuilding and, in particular, the death knell for shipbuilding on the Wear. The Chancellor's announcement that he is not prepared to provide intervention fund support in the present circumstances is nothing less than a knife in the back for the workers in Sunderland.

This debate traditionally provides the opportunity for asking questions about the future of the British shipbuilding industry. We have had precious little information from the Chancellor tonight, except for that staggering announcement of his refusal to support the British merchant shipbuilding industry.

We are within a week or so of the House rising for the summer recess. Events of great importance are likely to take place during that recess, and I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to ensure that I and the hon. Members whose constituencies are involved and who have an interest in shipbuilding are kept informed and allowed to question the Chancellor and his Department about each stage of the operation. We need to be able to continue to make the case for British merchant shipbuilding over that period, as it has certainly not been made by Conservative Members.

I was going to express a welcome for this order, but I was not going to welcome the reasons for extending the borrowing limit. They lie in the uncertainty, delay and confusion that have arisen because of the Government's attitude to the decisions they have to take. Because the future, particularly in Sunderland, is so unclear and, in the light of the Chancellor's speech, so gloomy, costs are rising, workers are being laid off and losses are sure to mount. Because of all that, British Shipbuilders continues to need the increase in borrowing limits for which the order provides.

The Chancellor had the opportunity this evening to provide the House and the industry with information on which the industry could base some sort of future and make better plans to reduce the inevitable haemorrhage of costs that will occur over the next few months. Instead, I fear that the industry will be left with no incentive except to bear the losses as they happen and to look forward to a future without hope.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the future for Govan. It has a future of a sort in the hands of Kvaerner, and subject to the permission of the Commission it has a future with the intervention fund subsidy that is available. But it is reasonable to ask why it was necessary to give the yard away if the subsidy approved by the intervention fund is to be continued. That is an instance of the ideology that the Chancellor denies is at work.

We also heard some cryptic remarks about the future of Appledore Ferguson and Clark Kincaid. We were told that British Shipbuilders was setting bid dates. It should be put firmly on the record that British Shipbuilders is not taking the initiative in this respect. To the extent that John Lister and others are setting bid dates, they are doing so under the direction of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The most pressing question arises not in respect of Govan, Appledore Ferguson or Clark Kincaid but—it was clear from the Chancellor's speech—in respect of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. Layoffs are already taking place and by Christmas no more than 200 men will be left on the site. By early in the new year the yard will have no more work and will close unless orders are secured. It is essential to the future of British merchant shipbuilding that the yard's future should be secured. It is surely common ground among all who care for the future of the industry —that must include the Chancellor—that the future of the yard depends on securing orders, not on the form of ownership.

Orders are the lifeline for NESL. The overwhelming priority for any Government, Minister or person concerned with the future of the yard must be to secure orders to keep it and the industry alive. The Government have their priorities wrong; they deny their commitment to ideology, but say that ownership must be established first, and only then can orders be examined. It is that order of priorities that threatens the survival of the industry.

The yard desperately needs orders. An order—subject, I agree, to the factors that the Chancellor mentioned—is available. One crucial precondition to the securing of that order is that intervention fund support should be made available. The Chancellor had an opportunity tonight to make it clear that, if British Shipbuilders, NESL, could reach agreement on price and could raise the necessary financial support—I will come to that in a moment—the difficulty that might arise in the absence of intervention support might be removed, the yard would be encouraged and helped to secure the order, and only then would the Government insist, if they wished, on sorting out ownership.

It is the Government who have reversed that order of priorities and insisted for reasons of no validity—reasons which rest entirely on their own dogma—that the order should take second place to ownership.

It is not as though the Chancellor's arguments bear any real examination. First, the doctrine peddled by the Chancellor speak very little for his confidence in the new management that he appointed only a year or so ago. I believe that he should have come to the House tonight to express some confidence in the new management, which has recognised the problems facing British Shipbuilders,

especially the yard in Sunderland, which has taken great steps, with the co-operation of the work force, to get matters right. The Chancellor has expressed a substantial, if not fatal, vote of no confidence in both management and work force.

Secondly, the Chancellor bases his argument on the need to ensure—as he puts it—that contract losses, if they arise, will be borne not by the taxpayer, but by a new private owner. Even on the Chancellor's terms, that argument does not stand up. I do not believe that the case for the inevitability of contract losses has been made. If the Chancellor is simply making that assumption, it amounts to a tremendous vote of no confidence in the yard and its management.

I shall assume for the moment that the Chancellor was right in saying that, if the Cuban order were obtained and intervention fund support provided, there would still be contract losses, but there is no escape by selling to a private owner. No private owner worth his negotiating salt would sit at the opposite end of the table and ignore that factor when deciding what price to pay or, far more likely, what sum to demand to take the yard away. The taxpayer will pick up the bill for contract losses, irrespective of whether the yard remains in public ownership. Ownership is irrelevant to contract losses; as it is irrelevant to securing the orders and to the survival of the yard. It is the Government's dogma alone that makes ownership relevant at all.

There are real questions to be asked and answered. Unfortunately, in a remarkably uninformative speech, the Chancellor has provided little information on any of those real questions. On the Danish ferry contract, we have had no indication from the Chancellor of what the legal position was, how the negotiations were proceeding, what the Export Credits Guarantee Department's attitude was, what would happen if Johansen finally defaulted, and what that would mean for the work programme on the remaining ferries? We have no information on that, which is extremely disappointing.

What about the Cuban order? As I have said, that is the one remaining realistic prospect for keeping the yard open. The Cuban order was denied as a possibility for months by the Chancellor. It was only when the yard and its management insisted that it was a real possibility that the Chancellor deigned to take it seriously.

There was also a question about the application for intervention fund support. British Shipbuilders wrote expressing considerable interest in the order, referring to the price it thought that it would bid and the amount of intervention fund it would need. However, the Chancellor's Department told British Shipbuilders that help would be very unlikely. When it raised again and in public the need for intervention fund support, it was rebuffed with the excuse that no application had been made. That kind of double dealing epitomises the lack of support and interest that the Government have shown in securing the Cuban order.

However, at least a senior civil servant has now been to Cuba and presumably has entered into serious negotiations. We hope that he has come back from Havana with some serious propositions. Again, we heard very little information about that from the Chancellor tonight.

Will the Chancellor confirm that he believes that the Cuban order is a real possibility? Will he also confirm that British Shipbuilders—subject, I agree, to foreign competition—can bid successfully for the order? Will he further agree that with intervention fund support and a level of financial support in a package—which we, above all, must be able to organise in the City of London in the form of a package that will at least match that available from other supplying countries such as Spain—the Cuban order would be available and would save the yard? That is what we had hoped to hear this evening from the Chancellor. Instead we heard the sound of the slamming of the door.

If the Government insist on their ideological obsessions and on selling the yard before they consider support for the order, there are still real questions which the Chancellor has not deigned to answer. How many bidders have we had? How many are serious? How many of them would keep the yard going as an entity? How many intend to split up the yard, retaining only such bits as design capacity? What are the deadlines? Is there a serious prospect of the Copson bid or order materialising? If it materialises, what are the plans to bridge the gap that would inevitably arise? All those are real and practical questions, the answers to which will determine the fate of thousands of jobs and of this vital yard and part of the British merchant shipbuilding industry.

We have had no answers from the Chancellor to those important questions. I am left with welcoming the order. However, I suspect that the increase in borrowing powers is itself a poisoned chalice and that this is not an act of generosity, but something that will be hung around the neck of British Shipbuilders in future as further evidence of how unsustainable it was. Time and again we hear the figures trotted out about how much public money is being devoted to the industry. The Chancellor has conceded in earlier comments that large proportions of that money have gone to warship yards that have since been privatised and to restructuring and causes other than trading losses. I hope that these further sums will not be added into that quite unfair and misleading total.

As the Chancellor is aware, I recently visited Sunderland and the two yards on the Wear. I was impressed, as any visitor would be, by the evidence of the taxpayers' investment and by the immense facilities available to the yards. I was also impressed by the keenness and realism of the management and the tremendous efforts made by the work force, which has suffered grievously in terms of job losses in recent years. I formed a very high opinion of the efforts made in those yards to sustain a future that is so important to British industry.

I am sorry to hear tonight that the Chancellor does not share that enthusiasm. No one discounts the difficulties involved, but I had hoped that the Chancellor would reaffirm his commitment to British merchant shipbuilding and NESL. Sadly, we did not hear that reaffirmation tonight.

10.34 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): The size of the borrowings revealed to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is perhaps not a shock—the seriousness of the position has been rehearsed on many occasions over a long time—but it shows that we are indeed in a crisis and cannot just accept a continuation of the previous scene. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that action is needed.

My right hon. and learned Friend will understand the concern in the north-east about the fate of Sunderland Shipbuilders. He is, I know, aware that this is regarded as a regional problem not just of concern to all parties on Wearside but in the wider area.

Enormous efforts have successfully been made to modernise the local industry and provide alternative employment prospects on Wearside. My right hon. and learned Friend cannot, however, be ignorant of the serious unemployment problem in Sunderland. We must do all we can to seek to ensure a future for the town's shipyards.

There are signs of a changing world scene for shipping. It would not be right to say that the sun is rising and that there are rosy prospects, but ship demand is growing. There are signs that the era of cut-throat competition, which depressed prices and led to dramatic borrowing to cover British Shipbuilders' losses over many years or more, is easing. Prices are rising, and our main competitors in the far east are experiencing problems. The Japanese are suffering from the high yen. When I visited Japan earlier this year with a Select Committee, I was interested to note the difficulties that the Japanese are experiencing with all their exports because of the strength of the yen. For the first time, Korea is experiencing industrial relations problems. Demands are being acceded to for very large wage rises. These eastern competitors will not have the easy time that they had in the past.

The shipbuilding recession is an international problem and the House has rehearsed the problems many times over the 13 years of the recession. On many occasions, I have drawn attention to the need for international action. At last, there are signs of that happening. Discussions are now under way between the Japanese and the EEC to seek to establish some stability in the shipbuilding market.

I have referred to the concern on Wearside and in the north-east, but the reduction in capacity has a far wider knock-on effect on the engineering industry. The House is aware that I have been involved with the marine equipment industry for a long time. Twice as many jobs are involved in the manufacture of parts of ships as in assembly in the shipyards. Those jobs are nationwide, not only on Wearside.

Inevitably, there is much uncertainty on Wearside about the future of Sunderland Shipbuilders. However much we should like him to, I understand why my right hon. and learned Friend cannot reveal details of any discussions with potential purchasers of the yard or discussions with the Cubans or other potential purchasers of ships. Will he, however, undertake that any information about potential orders from Cuba or other shipowners will be made available to a potential purchaser of the yard so that the potential purchaser will know the state of any negotiations?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider the possibility of the two sites in Sunderland being converted into private ownership separately? I remind him that at one time they were two separate businesses before British Shipbuilders came into being. Will he give way on the end of September deadline if serious negotiations are in progress at the time? If by then there is a serious possibility of either site—or both sites—in Sunderland being transferred to a purchaser, will he undertake to extend the deadline?

One must accept that one cannot go on building ships at 45 or 50 per cent. losses. It is a measure of the Government's support for the industry that they are prepared to continue the intervention fund at 28 per cent. A 28 per cent. subsidy on future merchant orders will be available to any purchaser of the Sunderland yard and my right hon. and learned Friend should spell out that fact. I ask him to understand the wide concern in the north-east about the future of the industry, and I hope that he can give the House some assurances on my specific points.

10.40 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the Minister's speech. It was even more dreary, pessimistic and disappointing than I expected it to be. Some of his remarks were positively damaging to any prospect of the privatisation of NESL on which he is so bent. Any potential purchaser who took much notice of his speech would immediately be put off.

The Minister has created an absolutely hopeless mess for the future of NESL, because of his ideological obsession with privatisation first and, perhaps, orders later. That point can be illustrated in a pragmatic way. On many occasions, the Minister himself has acknowledged that the Cuban order is a serious possibility. He acknowledged that point tonight, despite saying that he was not prepared to give intervention fund assistance for it at the moment. That statement is to be welcomed, compared with his remarks earlier in the year that the order did not exist at all.

Having acknowledged it as a serious possibility, the Minister must surely accept that any immediate purchaser of NESL—a purchaser on whom he is insisting—will have to clinch the Cuban order, unless there are so many orders around the world at the moment that each potential purchaser can come along with different prospects. If that is the case, the scenario is different from the one that has continually been painted in debates over the past few years, when we were told that there were no orders in the world.

The Minister acknowledges that the Cuban order is essential. Some other things can be exciting in the longer term, but they will not happen unless the gap, or some of it, is filled by the Mambisa order in the near future.

I do not understand how the Minister has the audacity to talk about potential purchasers taking their time. Only a few weeks ago, he announced his determination to privatise NESL. Some people—one or two—have been seriously working night and day, putting other matters aside, to try to put together a package that will save the yard. If one is trying to put together a bid, I can hardly believe that it is helpful not even to know what the bid deadline is or what is happening with the Cuban order. It is a chicken and egg situation. How does one put together a business plan for NESL when one does not know what

is happening with the Cuban order? How does one hope to secure the Cuban order when the Cubans do not even know with what ownership they are placing the order?

It is ridiculous for the Minister to say that people are taking their time. Some of the people who are not taking their time, other than the one or two serious potential bidders, are the growing number of sharks, charlatans and comedians who are coming on to the scene and, looking at the pickings. That is ridiculous when we are talking about 12 to 15 potential purchasers. It is so ridiculous that, I suppose, I could walk out of the Chamber and announce that I am to put in a bid for NESL, and my name would go on the list. Anyone can walk in off the street, ring up the Department of Trade and Industry, and another joker will be put on the list as a potential bidder. That is the ridiculous situation that has been created.

Men have been laid off and will be laid off in their hundreds in the next few weeks—that affects their families—but they do not even know the names of the potential bidders—the "blue tornado" and the rest of the jokers. The men do not even know whether this measure will provide them with some future security. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has created that situation by his insistence on privatisation before anything else can happen.

Let us look at the outcome. From a pragmatic point of view, the position is ludicrous. There are only one or two serious prospects. As an example I shall take Mr. Zacchi and his consortium, which seems serious about wanting to secure the Mambisa order. We can also take as an example Mr. Copson and his bucket boats, which is a more long-term proposition. How does it help fitting together those different propositions and working out whether things can be built and outfitted in Pallion, Southwick or North Sands and how the facilities could fit together in a way that would maximise them when those people are, in effect, having to bid against each other and against a deadline that they do not even know?

Apart from the Minister's blank refusal, which I suppose was not that unexpected, there was the appalling announcement that in no way will there be intervention fund aid without privatisation. The other appalling development was his announcement that the bid deadline might not be until the end of September. As he knows, there will be hundreds more redundancies by them. If the Minister allows the damaging uncertainty to continue until that time—when there are people who, if he would only clarify the position, could start talking seriously about bids in the next few days—the position becomes even more damaging than we thought.

In conclusion, the Minister has created a mess and it is his responsibility to get out of the mess. There is a way out of it. If one puts ideology aside, the common-sense way to proceed is to say, "We have one or two potentially serious possibilities—the Cuban order, Mr. Copson and one or two others—and the job with which we should now get on is clinching the Cuban order, doing the work on Mr. Copson's proposition and talking about the one or two other potential orders. Let's leave NESL as it is at the moment to get on with that job."

When those orders have been clinched when we know whether Mr. Copson can build his bucket boats and whether he can get a licence and overcome some of the other hurdles facing him, and when the NESL's existing management who, at the top level, from the chairman down to the managing director, are one of the best managements in British Shipbuilders for a long time and who are supremely qualified to work out the practicalities of building those ships and arranging cycles and time scales to save the greatest number of jobs—when all that has been done, if the Minister must, we can then debate the privatisation of what has been achieved. That is the logical way to proceed.

If the Minister does not do that, this debate may mark the final announcement of a malicious and unnecessary sabotage of the largest remaining part of the British merchant shipbuilding industry.

10.48 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate, because the decline of shipbuilding in this country has a significance which should not elude British industry as a whole and which is worth emphasising.

I am not suggesting that there is any great significance in the motion to increase the statutory limit up to which British Shipbuilders can raise additional public dividend capital or raise commercial loans. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has explained his object in that regard and what he has told the House that British Shipbuilders requires is analagous to a private company seeking to increase its authorised but unissued share capital or to raise the borrowing powers in its memoranda and articles of association.

What matters in any enterprise is the reason for which that additional finance is contemplated. The sound reason is to fund expansion beyond the scope of any current earnings and cash flow. The less happy reason which applies in the case of British Shipbuilders is to enable a company to accommodate the effect of cumulative losses, to cover the cost of cuts which managers euphemistically describe as "rationalisation" and to cover the cost of redundancies without breaching statutory limits.

Not surprisingly for British Shipbuilders, this evening's order comes after a decade of huge losses. The industry has struggled with the massive problems of over-capacity throughout the world, cut-throat competition, spectacular changes in marine technology and production methods in the shipyards. As such things had an effect, it must be said that British shipbuilding labour has all too often shown itself to be poignantly ignorant of the vital need to be flexible on matters such as demarcation and of the need for greater productivity.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): That is not true.

Mr. Wardle: I am not saying that there has been no progress, but there has not been enough. There is no question but that our labour has priced itself way beyond the competition offered by far eastern shipbuilders.

The sad story of Britain's shipbuilding decline from 80 per cent. of the world market to one third of the virtual captive market that existed during the rebuilding boom of the late 1940s and early 1950s and down to our present minute and paltry share of the market is a well-documented case study of industrial decline, upon which I shall not dwell.

The last chapter of that case study was the ill-judged nationalisation that scraped through in 1977. In the past decade, that has resulted in the massive drain of £2 billion of taxpayers' money. The purpose of that support has been to preserve the jobs of a few workers and—rightly perhaps

[Mr. Wardle]

—to sustain the shipbuilding communities. It might have been kinder if, long ago, the attention of such communities had been turned to other products, fresh markets, new enterprise and a renewed sense of determination.

No amount of taxpayers' money, grants or subsidies will turn the industrial clock back. It is sad that Opposition Members cannot accept that and cannot accept its significance for Britain's industry. No amount of subsidy will halt the inevitable progress of change. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may shout as much as they like, but it will not. The harsh fact of life that must be faced is that competition is here to stay. There are cheaper and more flexible sources of labour, and sophisticated technology and cheaper raw materials at the disposal of shipbuilders in Japan and—more worrying for our industry—in South Korea.

British Shipbuilders undertakes a production task whereby two thirds of the product cost is bought in and one third is open to management and employee control. That is not a basis on which our yards can compete with the far east.

The problems are not unique to shipbuilding; industrial change is taking place everywhere. In the early 1980s, countless firms in the black country faced a similar acute problem of over-capacity in world markets. Those companies had priced themselves out of the market as a result of wage-driven inflation.

Mr. Gould: What?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) may express surprise, but I worked in that part of the world and saw examples of the good times and the bad. I saw the problems and I have witnessed the resurgence. There is a lesson to be learned by the shipbuilding industry. The sooner Opposition Members grasp the import of that lesson and encourage the shipbuilding communities to understand it, the sooner prosperity will return to those yards.

Mr. Gould: I have borne the hon. Gentleman's outrageous lecture with equanimity for some time, but will he estimate a guess as to the importance and relevance of the 60 per cent. increase in the real exchange rate, brought about by an excessively tight monetary policy perpetrated by his Government, to the problems experienced by British industry in the period he mentioned, and especially industry in the black country?

Mr. Wardle: It was undoubtedly a factor, along with the increase in oil prices in the 1970s. I recommend that the hon. Gentleman looks at the comments of his colleagues and the level of unemployment that they were predicting in the late 1970s before this Government came to power.

Wherever industrial change has been accepted as a challenge, and wherever the hankering after yesterday's markets has stopped, industrial and commercial resurgence has already begun, with new technologies and new opportunities to exploit. I hope that the British shipbuilding industry will grasp that vital lesson.

We have heard all about the resourceful and wholly commendable initiatives taken by the Government to provide subsidies for the possible Danish and Cuban orders and latterly to find suitable buyers. We have heard about Govan and Kvaerner and the initiatives taken towards Appledore and Ferguson, but, so far as the Wear and North-East Shipbuilders are concerned, the harsh reality of market competition must be faced. There will always be pockets of specialist shipbuilding enterprise in this country, but, on the Wear, we should not perpetuate a long-gone past, but create a new and prosperous future.

10.55 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The speech to which we have just listened has been a complete waste of time in this short debate which is taking place at a disgracefully late hour about an important industry. I shall cut my remarks short and just make one or two comments about Govan shipyard.

The way in which Sunderland has been treated is outrageous. The Minister's speech, far from being helpful to the prospect of privatisation and the prospect of obtaining the orders that Sunderland desperately needs, has been extremely unhelpful and damaging. Sunderland has been treated in an utterly disgraceful way.

The deal concerning Govan has gone through, subject to the European Commission's approval. Although I have expressed my views on privatisation on a number of occasions, I have to accept that the privatisation of Govan will now go ahead. It is not an unmixed blessing, even with the orders that are coming to Govan, because 500 redundancies will accompany them. So far as making the yard profitable is concerned, it helps if one obtains the yard for nothing, all the assets, plant and machinery are written down to nil in the 1986-87 British Shipbuilders' accounts and if all the losses and any prospective losses on the orders in the yards at the time are borne by British Shipbuilders and, ultimately, by the taxpayer. Kvaerner is getting an extremely favourable deal at Govan, but I wish the company well at the yard because the interests of my constituents who work there are bound up with the success of the yard.

I want to ask about intervention fund support in the long term. It was announced in a written answer on 27 June that the two gas-carrying ships which are definitely to be ordered at Govan are to have intervention fund support and the two other possible orders will also be eligible. The sixth directive was meant to last for five years and we are only 18 months into it. The Government have already reneged on the directive, as they are not making support available to British Shipbuilders so long as the company remains publicly owned.

I hope that the Minister will tell us about the longer-term prospects of the sixth difective, both in Govan and elsewhere. It was intended to last for five years and there has already been a considerable resiling on that by the Government. Those hon. Members who still have shipbuilding interests are entitled to ask the Minister to tell us something this evening about the longer-term future of the sixth directive and intervention fund support. I should like to say much more, but I know that hon. Friends with constituency interests are anxious to be called.

11 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The shipyard in my constituency is important to its economy. If the shipyard in Appledore were to be closed, or turned into a marina or a block of luxury flats, there is

no way in which 520 jobs could be found for 520 very skilled people. I feel confident that privatisation will not lead to the closing of the yard.

I am puzzled by the unpleasant tone of some of the Opposition speeches. I appreciate that my shipyard, if I may use that familiar phrase, is different. At least half the men on the shop floor welcome privatisation. There is an exceptionally good relationship between management and men. The management, the men and I have had no difficulty in discovering who will be putting forward the bids. Would-be bidders have approached me and have asked to meet me. John Lister, the chairman of British Shipbuilders, has fobbed me off over making a closer link, sooner than he wishes, between the prospective purchasers and the men on the shop floor.

The Minister welcomed a large delegation from the yard to his office only last week. It was an immensely helpful and successful meeting. Of course he was unable to tell the men everything that they wanted to know. Commercial constraints mean, quite properly, that until bids are on the table, commercially sensitive information cannot be released. Everything cannot be put on the table during union and management negotiations when a prospective purchaser is being tempted to buy.

The yard has a good order book and a good future. There are no worries about far eastern labour, because nobody else makes such splendid little ships—dredgers—as Appledore Ferguson. The yard has made tremendous advances in the use of modern technology, with beautiful computer-aided design. It has already led to great advantages.

The fears and concerns that have been expressed more inelegantly than Opposition Members may realise will not be justified in the long run. Privatisation will lead to more jobs and to the expansion that the dead, cold hand of the state could never achieve.

11.2 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): You will forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I err slightly on the inelegant side, too, but I must outline the consequences of the shattering blow that this state of affairs represents for my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). Sunderland was built on shipbuilding. Well within the memory of many of the people who live and work there today, Sunderland was once the largest shipbuilding town in the world. Male unemployment now stands well in excess of 20 per cent. In some areas there are whole streets where hardly anyone has a job. A generation of children is growing up who may never have any work, except that provided by a Government scheme. If the Minister and hon. Members detect just a little anger on this side of the House, I have given him the reason for it.

I must knock on the head a couple of falsehoods that were lobbed in by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle). He referred to workers pricing themselves out of jobs. The workers in the Wearside shipyards take home on average £110 a week. Their gross pay is between £145 and £160, depending on their grade. It is outrageous for the hon. Gentleman to talk in those terms. They are merely an illustration of his ignorance.

The hon. Member spoke about the need for flexibility and claimed that there had been demarcation problems, although I was interested to note that the Minister did not make such an allegation. Indeed, anybody with a knowledge of the industry would avoid making such an allegation because the workers in Sunderland have been extremely flexible. As one of them put it the other day, they have seen more changes than the traffic lights in Fawcett street. They have bent over backwards to make their industry viable. There is no sacrifice that they have not been prepared to make.

It has not been pointed out clearly enough just how much what has occurred has been in direct contradiction to the advice of the management of British Shipbuilders. Mr. Lister, the widely respected chairman, who was appointed just over a year ago by the Government, has left nobody in any doubt about his view of the situation. When he appeared before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on 14 June, he was asked by my hon. Friend the

> "Did you think when you were appointed last year to be chairman that you were going to be presiding over the fragmentation of your corporation within the year?
>
> A: I would not have joined if I had thought that for a moment. I thought that my job was to turn it round and make it viable. After six months I believed I could see a way to do that, or I would never have come.
>
> Q: So, as an experienced businessman, you can see that, in keeping the corporation together in its present form, whether publicly owned or not, it would have a future?
>
> A: Yes."

Later, Mr. Lister said in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter):

> "In my view, if you took one yard out of British Shipbuilders it would not be able to exist in the form that it is . . . we would not be able to sustain the research and technical effort at the level that is necessary.
>
> Q: Have you advanced that view to the Department of Trade and Industry?
>
> A: Yes, I have.
>
> Q: With what response?
>
> A: I think they accepted it.
>
> Q: Did they indicate what they were going to do about it?
>
> A: Their response was to suggest that we would sell Govan to Kvaerner.
>
> Q: I do not see the logical connection between the view you have expressed and the sale of the yard.
>
> A: Neither do I."

What is occurring is happening in the teeth of the interests of the work force, without regard to the social consequences and in defiance of the view of the management appointed by the Government. If there is some bitterness in Sunderland, it is due to a feeling—the Minister used the phrase "ideological hang-up" and perhaps that best describes it—that this is privatisation at all costs.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North in saying that we should do our best to obtain the Cuban order and then discuss the form of ownership. The workers in Sunderland are practical people. Unlike some Members here, they dwell firmly in the real world. They have done their best to preserve their industry and the generations of skills that have been accumulated. As I say, let us get the order and then argue about the method of ownership.

11.8 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Member for Devon, West and Torridge (Miss Nicholson) kindly referred to the joint interest that we have in Appledore Ferguson. I understand that she is to visit the Newark yard in Port Glasgow in my constituency

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

at the beginning of August. Hugh Hagen, the convener of the shop stewards' committee, informed me this evening that he is looking forward to her visit.

Miss Emma Nicholson *rose——*

Dr. Godman: I do not have time to give way. This is too serious a matter for many hundreds of families in my constituency.

My hon. Friends and I must be brutally realistic over this matter. We must ignore the Minister's professions of ideological innocence. The Government are getting rid of what is left of British Shipbuilders. That is accepted by the shop stewards and employees at Clark Kincaid and at the Newark yard of Appledore Ferguson. It is now received wisdom. The Minister spoke of serious purchasers with sensible business plans, and I should like to speak about both facilities. Clark Kincaid is the only marine engine builder left on the Clyde. It is now building an excellent work force, entirely unlike that described by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle)—a speech characterised in some respects by its insensitivity and stupidity. If our workers are paid so highly, why has Kvaerner come to Glasgow?

Clark Kincaid is building two engines for Chinese ships which are under construction at Govan. As I have told the Minister before, the Chinese superintendent engineers are delighted with the quality of the workmanship of the first engine, which has been test-run for scores of hours. Clark Kincaid would, I believe, become a much more attractive prospect to serious purchasers if Kvaerner would give us some indication that it would purchase the engines for the liquid petroleum gas carriers from the lower Clyde. I for one do not believe that the intervention fund money should be used to purchase equipment that is to go into a ship from outwith the European Community. Statistics from the Department of Trade and Industry prove that more than 90 engines for ships built in European Community shipyards—I see that the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) agrees with me—have come from engine builders outwith the EEC. In my view, that was not and is not the purpose of the intervention fund principle.

As I have said to Kvaerner, it could display plainly its commitment to the west of Scotland by placing orders with Clark Kincaid, which in my naturally biased view is among the best engine builders in Western Europe. When a replacement was built in the north-east for the Atlantic Conveyor, which was sunk in the Falkland conflict, the engine was built by Clark Kincaid. Cunard's technical director sent a letter saying that he had not encountered that quality of workmanship before. When the Atlantic Conveyor was extended at Scott Lithgow in my constituency, the superintendent engineer at Cunard told me, "This engine is a superb product of which the whole of Scotland can be proud."

If Kvaerner places those engine orders with Clark Kincaid, it will make it a much more attractive prospect to a would-be buyer. I hope that considerable sympathy will be shown to the management buy-out proposals. Those involved know the lower Clyde and are trusted and respected by the committee of shop stewards, who, led by councillor Robert Jackson, are demanding—rightly, in my opinion—that they be allowed to talk to the would-be purchasers. Is British Shipbuilders denying that facility to these highly experienced, mature and wise shop stewards? If so, it is a disgrace. They are a credit to the members they represent, and they will negotiate sensibly and realistically with a serious would-be purchaser.

Ferguson's—the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West will have to forgive me; to me it will always be Ferguson's of Port Glasgow—has been mentioned in that august journal the *Greenock Telegraph*, known to my Scottish colleagues and of course the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). Last night's editorial stated:

> "Appledore Ferguson is our one remaining shipyard. Whatever happens, they must not be sold down the river. British Shipbuilders must make sure that they find a buyer who can give reasonable guarantees about the future of this excellent little yard."

That is precisely what it is—an "excellent little yard". Despite what the Minister said about the recent error on the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry, that remains the fact. The error was the responsibility of the designer, as he knows. It had nothing to do with the work force, which is entirely blameless in that regard. The designers who committed the error have parted company with British Shipbuilders.

Appledore Ferguson is a first-class little yard. The shop stewards and the convener, Hugh Hagen, should be given the facility to speak to would-be purchasers. I believe that Ailsa Perth of Troon is a serious would-be purchaser with sensible business plans. I wish to hear from the Minister that the board of British Shipbuilders will give every facility to Hughie Hagen and his colleagues to meet would-be purchasers, whether they are from Ailsa Perth or elsewhere. That is what I am seeking for my constituents who work at Clark Kincaid and Ferguson.

As everyone here knows, when a company is acquired, the work force is acquired with it. That is a fact to which the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West alluded. Incidentally, I hope to visit the shipyard in her constituency at the beginning of September, with her agreement. It would be difficult to refuse to do so, given that I accepted her visit to my constituency.

I wish to ensure that the shop stewards at Clark Kincaid and Ferguson—they are fine, decent, honourable men, whom it is a privilege to represent—are not barred from talking to would-be purchasers. After all, they will be purchased along with the material facilities in the yards. I want to see both yards continue, although it looks as if that will be under private ownership. I want the best deal possible for my constituents at Clark Kincaid and Ferguson in Port Glasgow.

11.18 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): We have had the opportunity to hear a little industrial rubbish from the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), who does not speak much in the Chamber. Having listened to him, I can understand why that is. We have heard "I'm all right, Joe" from the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). The Minister gave us a homily on borrowing powers, which amounted to the ability of British Shipbuilders to borrow its own death grant.

This is the death knell of British Shipbuilders. The Minister comes to bury it and I come to praise it. It has done a superb job in concentrating the industry, in keeping it going and ensuring that it can survive to inherit the

turnaround in shipbuilding that will come in the 1990s, in which we need to be an active player. Thanks to the Minister's policies, we shall not be. Having done all that, British Shipbuilders is being sabotaged by the Minister. He is normally the genial face of industrial incompetence, but tonight he was the shamed face of industrial murder. It is no wonder that he had such a miserable and unhappy expression throughout the debate, bearing in mind the news that he brought. He was telling us about industrial murder.

A hole was knocked in British Shipbuilders by taking out the defence yards, so that they made no contribution to the whole. The idea that obsessed the Minister earlier in the year was the giveaway of Govan, which was 40 per cent. of BS's capacity. I shall not repeat my Victor Kyam joke that the giveaway is such an obsession that when it comes to Harland and Wolff, which is not part of British Shipbuilders, the Government are not bothering to check whether Mr. Tikkoo, who is presumably a Hindu, is a Protestant Hindu or a Catholic Hindu, before he is given the yard.

We are seeing the dismantling of British Shipbuilders. The Minister has told us that what is not sold will be scrapped, closed, sunk, made redundant or ended. That was his message. It was also the message that he gave to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. He said:

"I rather think there won't be any yards in the ownership of British Shipbuilders in 12 months' time."

Can there be a more incompetent way of dealing even with the dismantling of British Shipbuilders? Is not that an invitation to every shark and to every crook—to all those strange creatures which swarm in these waters—to come in and take the pickings? Is not that treating British Shipbuilders like a rummage yard to be picked over? Is not the Minister saying to anyone who wants, "Come in. There are bargains here. There are profits for the asking"? Is he not saying to anyone who might place orders with British Shipbuilders, "Hold on to your orders. You'll get better terms and a better deal. You'll even get the yard"? Is not that incompetence?

What swindler in the City would announce that the company was to go within a year whatever happened and then, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman has done tonight, start knocking the goods and saying that they are not up to the job—that the vessels that the yards produce are not adequate for the purposes for which they are intended? What kind of industrial performance is that? What confidence does it show in British shipbuilding and in the industrial future of Britain?

The Minister compounds his asinine attitude to the sale of a national asset with dogma, particularly on the question of NESL. He has told us that the Government will not consider giving help—the kind of help that every other Government would give their shipbuilders. The Government will not consider helping NESL to win the Cuban contract. The Cubans want those ships, which are of a good basic Austin and Pickersgill design. All other Governments will provide help and say, "We shall build up a package and help with the financing." The Chancellor of the Duchy, on the other hand, has told us that the Government will not do that unless the yard is sold first, they will not do it if the yard remains publicly owned.

Effectively, that is the death knell of the shipyard. The lay-offs have already begun: by the end of August there will be about 370 lay-offs; by September, 600 to 700 lay-offs; by Christmas, there will be only a couple of hundred people left, and by February next year the yard will run out of work. The Minister has said that that yard must now twist in the wind while the agony of finding a buyer who can take on the Cuban contract continues. He should have been saying, "We will provide the help to get that contract for British Shipbuilders to keep the yard going and to keep the jobs in being." All that he has promised tonight is a little industrial mortician operation when the yard is closed. I am surprised that he did not promise the area a garden festival, as garden festivals have been passed round British industrial areas like wreaths under this Government.

It is a bitterly frustrating job being in Opposition and having to watch such industrial incompetence and sabotage going on. We are having to watch mistakes being made and the Government ruining a great British industry. We cannot stop it happening. The Government have the votes. We cannot argue against it, because sheer prejudice from the top—from No. 10 Downing street—is forcing this treatment on a British industry. What we can do is to pin the blame for the sabotage of the industry right where it belongs—on the Government, on the Minister and on his Department—the Department of Trade and Industry reduction and industrial sabotage. They are responsible for sounding the death knell for North East Shipbuilders Ltd. and for British Shipbuilders.

11.23 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has a racy turn of phrase which usually enlivens our debates, but I think that his flair for light entertainment is a little ill-placed in this extremely serious and important debate about the future of British shipbuilding. The hon. Gentleman added to the attacks on my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), the one hon. Member to whom I do not need to reply.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The Minister agrees with him.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with 90 per cent. of what my hon. Friend said. Unlike the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, unlike me, and unlike any other hon. Member who has spoken in the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle has considerable experience of running a business in difficult trading conditions—and successfully. He spoke a great deal of business common sense in the face of a lot of completely hopeless wishful thinking and irresponsible financial suggestions from the Opposition.

Unfortunately, it is important that we make things clear to the people who are so worried in the shipbuilding towns. Several times I was accused of not being sufficiently informative. I was only too informative. I was probably looking serious and grave because I was setting the facts before the House, as everyone should know them. As my hon. Friends the Members for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) acknowledged, I had to hold back commercially confidential information. I will not give details of people who might be customers or purchasers and who do not want details about them to be disclosed. That would sabotage the outcome that hon. Members have said they want. I put forward the position as clearly and fairly as I could to the House. The only sensible way of proceeding is that which I set out.

[Mr. Clarke]

I begin with the one yard that has a secure future—Govan—as a result of the policy that we have followed. The Opposition attacked the arrangements for Govan, on the absurd basis that we have somehow given away that asset to a Norwegian company. Of course, we have had to cover the cost of the losses on finishing the Chinese orders. Of course, we had to cover the cost of redundancies which were not the responsibility of Kvaerner, and we have made arrangements that I believe satisfy the Commission rules. They are prudent; they do not write off debt; they are fair arrangements that give that company a future. We have also complied with the sixth directive, to which I shall return.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) made it sound as though the sixth directive forces Governments to give up to a certain level of aid. That is wrong: it does not. Other European countries do not give aid, but there is a limit if they do. We readily accept that to ensure fair trading within the sixth directive, with which we have complied.

For the future, we have made it clear to Kvaerner that, within the rules that appertain at the time, intervention fund support would be available for orders by Kvaerner. If the four ships are ordered, Govan has a work load well into the 1990s. The alternative was closure. Our policy has been successful in Govan, so it was absurd to attack what has happened there——

Mr. Millan *rose——*

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way to the right hon. Gentleman, as he is the least troubled Member in the Chamber, since Govan is safe into the 1990s, subject only to the approval of the European Commission, which I hope we shall get tomorrow.

Opposition Members will not face up to the background of what has happened to the other yards. I explained that background and set out the purpose of the policy. Opposition Members keep accusing me of being obsessed with privatisation, but this policy is not, in its origins, about privatising the yard. It is the Opposition who are obsessed with privatisation. Because an element of people bidding for particular yards has entered the scene, they are so obsessed by their preference for retaining what has proved to be an especially disastrous nationalisation of the yards that they insist on turning all their speeches around privatisation and saying that that is the root of the problem. It is not.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said that the reason for the cuts and lay-offs in the work force is the Government's activities. It is not: it is because there are no orders. The Danish work in Sunderland is now running down. Lay-offs were bound to come at this time. It is because there is nothing to build that lay-offs are taking place. If a Cuban order, an order for a bucket ship or any other order were obtained now, work could not begin until next year. Lay-offs are inevitable and it is misleading people to suggest that the present situation arose because of the Government and could have been avoided.

We did not start with the problem of ownership. We began by looking at British Shipbuilders' application for the intervention fund support for the Cuban order. That is the background to the order tonight. This is the fourth time in two years that we have had to come to the House for more money. Last year it was £20,000 per employee; it is £24,000 per employee this time—and we shall all approve that in a few minutes' time. The history has been one of making losses over and above intervention fund support on every order.

But the hon. Member for Dagenham, supported by his Friends, says, "Never mind. Let's just get the Cuban order"—the implication being, "at any price." The business is highly competitive: the Cubans are not bound to order with us. But the Opposition say that we should carry the cost overruns at the taxpayers' expense and then sort out ownership. That cannot be done. Such an approach would not only be in breach of the sixth directive and disallowed by the Commission, but would be disallowed quite sensibly, because it is utterly irresponsible trading of the sort that the Opposition indulged in with the Polish ship order when they were last in government.

The Opposition cannot claim that they envisage a serious future for the corporation. They simply say, "Let us get the order at any cost. Let us carry on as we are now." The Government examined the matter and have said, quite sensibly, that there can be no future in going along that path.

Mr. Gould: The Chancellor can resolve the dispute by giving a simple answer to this question: will he provide intervention fund support for the Cuban order, irrespective of ownership?

Mr. Clarke: We shall not give intervention fund support to British Shipbuilders, because its history is that it cannot comply with the sixth directive and it cannot stop making cost overruns on top.

The Cuban order has only become serious during the past few weeks, because Mambisa has only just received authority to place the order. We shall allow the Cubans to negotiate with any serious bidders and they will be notified of any bidders that we recommend. We shall give any serious bidders information about the order.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), we shall look at separate purchasers for the separate yards, if they come up. Mr. Copson—who needs a licence for his bucket ships—must apply for the licence. Mr. Zacchi, who has gone public, must put propositions to us. There are other purchasers who want to build other ships, but they have not gone public. We are negotiating with them. If other people think that they can buy these yards and take orders at intervention fund support levels within the sixth directive, the Government will consider them.

We shall also look at Appledore——

It being one and half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13 May, be approved.

SET-ASIDE REGULATIONS

Resolved,

That the draft Set-Aside Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 1st July 1988, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Church of England (Pensions)

11.33 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Church of England (Pensions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

This Measure is the latest in a series of Measures designed to modernise and improve the pension provisions of those who minister in the Church of England. I shall give a few details of the pensions payable. On completion of 37 years' service, a full pension of £5,330 is available to Church of England incumbents and, as a result of clause 1, the clergy scheme is extended to include deaconesses and licensed lay workers on exactly the same terms. The sum payable is reviewed annually and increased each April by at least the same proportion as the previous year's increase in the national minimum stipend for incumbents.

In addition, a capital sum of £12,900 tax-free is payable on retirement, which can clearly greatly help with the acquisition of a retirement home for members of the scheme. Further financial assistance in the form of loans at low interest rates is also available—repaid, if so desired, from the estate of the beneficiary on death. For those who do not want to purchase their own homes, the pensions board has purpose-built or other residential homes.

Widows of members of the Church of England pension scheme, which is now a non-contributory scheme, and covers the clergy and auxiliary ministry alike, are entitled to a survivorship pension equal to 60 per cent. of the pensions that their husbands would have received. In addition, every diocese has a group team assurance scheme under which widows receive a lump sum equal to three times the previous year's national minimum stipend.

Any child under 18 years of age at the time of a scheme member's death also receives a pension, as of right, until he or she reaches the age of 18. The sum is usually one sixth of the late father's pension entitlement. The pensions board can, in addition, give discretionary help to retired ministers or scheme members, their widows or widowers.

These broad provisions are, I believe, generous and highly commendable. They place the Church of England pension provisions, if not at the very top of private schemes, well into the upper quartile of such schemes. The payment of pensions now costs the Church Commissioners £39 million a year, taking the cost this year, for the first time, above the cost of stipends for working clergy. During the past five years, the commission contribution has increased no less than 73 per cent., which is way above the rate of inflation and indicate substantial real improvements for clergy pensioners.

There is, however, one area of provision about which the ecclesiastical committee has expressed regret in its report to the House, as hon. Members who have read it will note. It relates to the provision of pensions for a first spouse when a scheme member was divorced or has remarried. The General Synod took the view that, because the statutory or obligatory provision of pensions for first wives is the subject of an investigation by the Lord Chancellor's Department, it would be premature for the General Synod to go it alone, as it were, before the wider civil provision comes before the House.

Some members of the ecclesiastical committee took the view that the Church of England should have been a bit bolder and set the trend rather than wait to follow it. The fact that, for better of for worse, it decided not to go it alone, although perhaps regrettable, should not be allowed to detract from the broad general qualities of the Church of England's pension arrangements that I have described, nor suffice to deem the Measure other than expedient.

The matter was explored thoroughly in the oral evidence taken by the ecclesiastical committee, and in response to vigorous probings by, among others, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the chairman of the Pensions Board, Mr. Howard Gracey, made it plain that on an ex gratia, although not non-statutory, basis, the board makes provision by way of housing and of finance for divorced wives.

It would, I think, be tedious to take the House through every clause in the Measure, particularly as it has, in the ecclesiastical committee's report, substantial explanatory notes on each clause. By providing for a unified, non-contributory scheme for incumbents and auxiliaries alike, the process of steady improvement in provision has not been neglected, as evidenced in clause 3, with the provision, for the first time, of pensions for widowers, in clause 5 of lump sums payments on death—in addition to those payable on retirement—and provision for early retirement otherwise than on grounds of ill health, which is already provided for. These are all good grounds in themselves for commending the Measure to the House.

11.38 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) was kind enough to refer to the debate in the ecclesiastical committee, when several of us raised the status of divorced clergy wives. He correctly reported the committee's decision and its regret that the pensions board would not act imaginatively. The Church's behaviour on that is, to put it mildly, rather pathetic. Many of us look to it to take the lead, not to follow the secular state.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention to the commissioners' impressive record of building up pension entitlements for the clergy and other Church workers. The Measure has been a long time coming—so long that some people thought that it would have gone through by now, and have made retirement plans on the basis of it being on the statute book. I shall not take up further time and prevent its enactment.

11.39 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I will be even more brief than the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). The Measure is welcome. I confirm that it is the general view that the provisions of pensions by the Church is generous, good and fair. The Measure helps in that. I also want to flag up a linked issue to which the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) referred once in passing. This relates to the other side of the coin. The other matter that concerns the clergy and their families and for which they plan during their working lives is where they will live after retirement.

Another matter that is not quite as certain or secure sometimes is adequacy of accommodation for clergy in their retirement. I hope that the Church will complement its good work in this Measure by ensuring that all those

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

who give their lives to the ordained ministry can be assured, for their entire retirement, of adequate and suitable housing of a type and in a place that they wish. That is equally important, and where it has not been met and achieved, it lacks the provision that pensions now have by virtue of this consolidating and expanded measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Church of England (Pensions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

Prisoners of War (Compensation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10.40 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I begin by drawing the attention of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to all-party early-day motion 119 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) which has now attracted 176 signatures and which will, I promise, attract a great deal more. The motion summarises succinctly what I am about to say. It states:

"That this House, in welcoming the growing friendship between Japan and the United Kingdom, believes that this friendship will not fully blossom until the wrongs done during the Second World War to Allied prisoners are fully accepted by the Japanese Government and due reparation made."

In 1941, at a moment of great peril for our country, locked as we were in deadly conflict with Nazi Germany, the Japanese struck suddenly and without warning at the Americans, the Dutch and overselves in the Pacific. By the time Singapore had fallen, over 50,000 British service men and women and civilians, 20,000 Australians and 1,700 Canadians who had defended Hong Kong with great gallantry had fallen into enemy hands. Such was the appalling treatment of these helpless prisoners that over a quarter of them were either to be slaughtered in cold blood or to die of disease, malnutrition and unbelievable brutality by the time the Japanese surrendered.

I was a member of the personal staff of the Supreme Allied Commander in South-East Asia, Admiral Lord Mountbatten. I was in Asia in 1945 when the Japanese surrendered. I was moved to tears by the first sight of the pitiful survivors who came out from the hell of Japanese captivity. Many of them, still in their 20s, were to die prematurely, many more were disabled and crippled for life.

It is difficult at this distance of time to describe what they had endured. Field Marshal Slim, one of our greatest soliders, has put on record what the victorious British 14th Army found as it over ran the prison camps. He wrote:

"The state of these camps and of their wretched inmates can only be realised by those who saw them as they were at this time. Except for derelict huts and bashas, the camps were little more than barbed wire enclosures in which wild beasts might have been herded together. The Japanese and Korean gaolers, almost without exception, were at the best callously indifferent to suffering, or at the worst, bestially sadistic. The food was of a quality and a quantity barely enough to keep men alive, let alone fit them for the hard labour that most were driven to perform. It was horrifying to see them moving slowly about these sordid camps, all emaciated, many walking skeletons, numbers covered with suppurating sores, and most naked but for the ragged shorts they had worn for years or loin cloths of sacking. The most heart-moving of all were those who lay on wretched pallets, their strength ebbing faster than relief could be brought to them."

He concluded:

"There can be no excuse for a nation which as a matter of policy treats its prisoners of war in this way, and no honour for any army, however brave, which willingly makes itself the instrument of such inhumanity to the helpless".

I will mention just one case—I could mention a thousand—recounted to me by a former prisoner who suffered greatly. He refers to what happened to one of his comrades in Sonkrai camp on the notorious Siam-Burma railway. He said:

"He was chained to the teak tree at the entrance of the camp and we had to pass him every dawn when going out to

work and at night when returning to Camp. We could do nothing to assist him or even get near him. He was left to die —in his own filth—exposed to the heat of the day and the cold at night. Tropical exposure is a nightmare. He grew weaker; no food or water was given to him and as death approached he lapsed into hallucinations and delirium. At nights, you could have heard a pin drop as we listened to his cries. It was sheer agony. In the end he died; a shocking and unnecessary death. The Japanese guards danced round his body shouting with glee. They enjoyed every moment of it."

I was already a Member of Parliament when, in May 1951, hon. Members pressed the Government of the day to ensure that when the peace treaty was to be signed later that year there should be compensation for the appalling sufferings our men had endured. I recall vividly the powerful arguments of Jackie Smyth, VC, who had fought in Burma, the eloquence of George Thomas, who was later to become our Speaker and is now Lord Tonypandy, and the moving personal testimony of the late Lawrence Turner, the hon. Member for Oxford, who had been a prisoner and whose health never recovered from the experience.

It was not to much avail, for under the provisions of the treaty our service men were awarded the princely sum of £76·50, while civilians received £48·50. The excuse for accepting such derisory sums was that the Japanese economy was in ruins.

All that was 37 years ago. It may be asked, why revive the argument now? There are two reasons. First, we should demonstrate that violations of international law, as Japanese behaviour certainly was, are never to be tolerated by civilised nations and that, where there has been a denial of basic human rights, adequate reparation must be made.

Secondly, since the 1950s the wheel of fortune has turned favourably for Japan. Today, she is a stable democracy and the second richest nation on earth. She plays a responsible role in the management of the world economy and is ready to help in the eradication of world poverty. All that is greatly to the credit of the Japanese people and their Government, but, if the slate is to be wiped clean and Japan is to take her place in the comity of civilised nations—if she is to enjoy the respect of the international community and to be honoured for her virtues and achievements—there has to be contrition for past crimes and proper compensation for the victims still living and the families of those whose lives were destroyed. That is the view of many hon. Members. It is certainly the view of survivors of Japanese prison camps and for them we should realise that the years are fast slipping away.

A lead has been taken by the Hong Kong Veterans of Canada, who have lodged a claim for compensation with the United Nations Human Rights Commission. They are supported by the International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Veterans Federation and the International Commission of Health Professionals, all of whom have status as non-governmental organisations to engage in such an undertaking.

The Canadian initiative has been systematic. Their approach to the United Nations Human Rights Commission is based on resolution 1503 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council of 1970. Their case is founded on an impressive in-depth study of the medical sequelae of what happened to the victims of Japanese cruelty. It presents a declaration of principle for consideration by the United Nations of compensation for gross violations of human rights. I understand that Australian veterans may be taking parallel action. There is to be a preliminary hearing at the United Nations in New York next month.

I am advised that, although Japan did not sign the Geneva conventions, that has been held by experts in international law to be of no consequence, since the Japanese Government of the day were aware that such a code existed and that the conventions had been accepted as the customary law of nations.

I hope, therefore, that I shall not be told by my hon. and learned Friend, as my colleagues have been told by other Ministers, that article 14(b) of the peace treaty specifically waived all claims that were not expressly provided for in the treaty itself, and that, in 1954, it was agreed that payment of a global sum of $4·8 million would be regarded as a full discharge by the Japanese Government of their obligations under article 16 of the treaty. No Government had and no Government have any right to sign away an obligation by another state to compensate for gross violations of the human rights of individuals and for the death and injury that occur in future years as a result of the sufferings that the Japanese inflicted on their helpless captives.

The relevant conventions expressly forbid such action by Governments. The regulations annexed to the 1907 Hague convention concerning

"the laws and customs of war on land"

provide that

"a belligerent party which violates the provisions . . . shall, if the case demands, be liable to pay compensation. It shall be responsible for all acts committed by persons forming part of its Armed Forces."

Article 130 of the third Geneva convention of 1949 refers specifically to grave breaches of human rights, such as

"wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment including biological experiments, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health."

They were hourly and daily occurrences in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps. Article 131 significantly goes on to state that

"no High Contracting Party shall be allowed to absolve itself or any other High Contracting Party of any liability incurred by itself or by another High Contracting Party in respect of . . . breaches."

I am advised that the International Committee of the Red Cross supports the legal argument of the Canadian veterans that the peace treaty that the allied powers entered into with Japan does not remove Japanese legal and financial obligations to the victims of violations of the Geneva conventions. The conventions clearly provide that Japan shall not be absolved from compensation liability in respect of breaches committed by its armies during world war 2.

The Geneva conventions literally follow the Hague convention of 1907 and do not abrogate it in any way. Therefore, they are part of the customary law of all nations. A further consideration strengthens the Canadian claim and thereby strengthens any British or Australian claim. One of the non-governmental organisations supporting the veterans is the World Veterans Federation. My hon. Friend should note that, at the fifth international conference on legislation concerning veterans and war victims held at Bad Ischl on 21 to 24 April this year, it was agreed that there should be compensation for victims of acts contrary to international humanitarian law because of the post-traumatic stress disorders of such acts. A

[Sir Bernard Braine]

recommendation was made that the World Veterans Federation should initiate and support steps towards that end.

In short, the Japanese should not be allowed to escape the consequences of the damage that they inflicted on helpless prisoners for the rest of their natural lives.

It may be that the Japanese will answer that the peace treaty was the end of the matter—that is what Ministers have been saying. I suppose that if the United Nations ever ruled otherwise, it could not compel Japan to make reparation. If that proves to be the case, I am bound to say here and now that it will confirm the views held by many people in this country and elsewhere in the West that Japan can never be regarded as a civilised nation.

I pray that it turns out otherwise. Opinion in Japan is sensitive to the issue. There has been a stirring of conscience as a result of the revelations of earlier appalling atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army in China before the second world war. The Canadian reference to the UN should help to encourage this process of inward questioning and with this the Japanese Camp Survivors Association in this country heartily concurs.

The Canadian Government are not involved in the claim being made by its veterans and I am not asking that Her Majesty's Government should be involved in any claim that might be made by British veterans. All I ask is that the Ministers here should stop saying that the rights of individual victims were signed away in 1951. It is shameful that such an argument should have ever been used. I have demonstrated that it is unsound in international law. Moreover, the action of the Canadian veterans shows that there is indeed a case to answer.

If our Government cannot help directly, I want an assurance that they will not impede action by the Japanese Camp Survivors Association or any other British veterans. Better still, they should show readiness to provide positive help and information as the Minister for veterans' affairs in the Canadian Government has done in respect of the Canadian veterans.

Therefore I shall listen with the greatest care to what my hon. and learned Friend says in reply but I would, with great respect, remind him that he will be speaking here in a free Parliament, as all his predecessors have done since the end of world war 2, because the men and women of my generation stood and fought cruel and repellent enemies who, if they had prevailed, would have blotted out our freedom. There is therefore an obligation on the part of any British Government to those who died and to those who suffered in enemy hands. It may be very late in the day but I submit that there is still time for the new democratic Japan to make amends if it will. Our Government should encourage her to do so.

11.58 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) for permitting me to participate in his Adjournment debate. He has a distinguished record, not only in this House but previously, to our country during time of war when he served, as I am delighted to record as a Staffordshire Man, with the North Staffordshire Regiment. I am only sorry that it was not with the South Staffs. There is another bond between us apart from our joint membership of this House, because my father served on Mountbatten's staff of the South-East Asia command during the second world war as a Royal Air Force liaison officer.

I join my right hon. Friend in this debate because I had occasion to have at my surgery one survivor of the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps, Mr. Robert Kelly, now aged 72 years, who worked on the infamous bridge over the River Kwai. For somebody of my post-war generation, like my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, to see before me a man who had worked in that infamous and intolerable labour camp in those appalling conditions brought home to me, as I hope that it will to my hon. and learned Friend, the fact that our generation owes a great deal to that generation and the sacrifices that it made.

In adding to the contribution which my right hon. Friend has made so eloquently, I shall add only two points. First, those men are a diminishing band. They are now in their twilight years and many are in straitened circumstances. It must be borne in mind that not only the physical but the mental anguish that they suffered at those barbarous hands all those years ago will have unquestionably debilitated them and impaired their earning capacity during their lifetime. They therefore find themselves more readily in straitened circumstances than their fellow citizens who served in the war but who did not go through those horrors.

My right hon. Friend has already said that, in 1954, when the agreement was signed, Japan was on its knees, it was trying to recover and rejoin the comity of nations. Today Japan is probably the most economically powerful nation on earth. I do not believe that it is immoral or improper for hon. Members to campaign on behalf of their constituents and to suggest to Japan that, in view of its enormous success—which it has been able to enjoy as a result of joining the free world and the free trade of that world—it should feel able to make some further recompense.

I do not believe that £76·50 paid in 1954 should represent the full and final settlement. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will be able to assure my right hon. Friend, myself and our 200 colleagues on both sides of the House who have signed the early-day motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce), that Her Majesty's Government will not be found wanting by our constituents.

12 midnight

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad to have this opportunity to answer a debate that has been instigated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of our House. His largesse of spirit has been shown so often in such debates—not least by what he has said tonight. It is a pleasure for me to answer any debates in which he participates having regard to the great kindness that he has shown me, and the support that he has given me over the years. It therefore saddens me that, although agreeing with many of the points that he raised, I shall be unable to give him much more satisfaction than some of my predecessors have done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) is right to say that those of us of the post-war generation who today live in freedom owe an enormous debt of gratitude to those who served in the

war. We owe a particular debt to those who suffered as dreadfully as those whom my right hon. Friend starkly described, those who suffered at the hands of the Japanese. My father spent most of the war fighting in the far east, but, happily, he was never taken prisoner. He has told me of things that, once experienced, he has never forgotten; he remembers them as vividly as my right hon. Friend.

There is no dissent about the facts. We also know that the suffering was shared by thousands of Americans, Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and other allies and by many thousands of civilians who were also treated appallingly. Although it is more than 40 years since those events, some wounds do not heal. If we had suffered in the same way, would the bitterness and anger ever disappear? I doubt it. Therefore, I am not surprised at the response that my right hon. Friend has had from a number of veterans to the case that he has raised.

I also understand the feeling at the heart of this matter —the feelings of those who, having suffered at the hands of the Japanese, now see a rich and successful Japan. They must believe that they surely deserve some further compensation.

My right hon. Friend, drawing on his 40 years of experience, was able to recall vividly the debate in the House in May 1951, when I was two years of age. At that time, it was a live issue and a great deal was said. Arguments were put forcefully and passed into the minds of the British negotiators. Behind the debate in the House lay many hours of discussion with the Far East Prisoners of War Association, which made a valuable contribution to the debate.

The negotiations proceeded on a bipartisan basis, the treaty of peace with Japan was signed by a Labour Government and ratified by their Conservative successors. The British delegation led the way in insisting that there should be a specific provision for compensation for former prisoners of war. That was not in the original treaty, and it is an unusual provision in a peace treaty, which reflects the uniquely dreadful treatment suffered by our service men in the far east.

As we know, the result was the peace treaty signed in San Francisco on 8 September 1951, which formally brought to an end the state of war between the United Kingdom and Japan. The treaty contained a number of articles, of which two are particularly germane. Article 14 concerned the general question of compensation and recognised that reparation should be made. It gave the allied powers the right to seize and dispose of Japanese property, which, alas, although my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point castigates the point, I fear cannot be readily evaded. Article 14(b) concludes with these words:

"Except as otherwise provided in the present Treaty the Allied Powers waive all reparations claims of the Allied Powers, other claims of the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of any actions taken by Japan and its nationals in the course of the prosecution of the war . . .".

Article 16 makes specific provision for the compensation of prisoners. That is what we might call the British article, upon which we insisted. Under that article, the sum of £4·5 million was paid and there was an agreed minute between the Japanese and the allied powers recording that payment and stating that the payment would be recognised

"as a full discharge by the Japanese Government of its obligations under Article 16 of the Peace Treaty".

Out of that, we in the United Kingdom received just over £1·6 million. That was made available to the former far east prisoners of war. The sum that has been described was the sum that was paid. Although the sum of £76 was worth a good deal more in 1952 than it is today, I well understand and appreciate that it was extremely small sum.

Sir Bernard Braine: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend puts me in difficulties. I wanted to make the case. I do not want to be discourteous to him, but would he allow me to finish?

Sir Bernard Braine: I want to ask my hon. and learned Friend just one question in the limited time available. Does he agree, as a lawyer, that the treaty does not absolve Japan from the conventions? That is the charge that has been put to the United Nations. This is a new situation.

Mr. Mellor: We believe that the treaty that was signed is binding on us and was a full and final settlement. Whether it is right or wrong, that is the position today and we do not see any way round it. I can assure my right hon. Friend that it is not wilfulness on our part; that is just the best objective interpretation that we can give. Every Government have had to defend that position and give such an interpretation over the past 40 years, and I fear that I have no authority to diverge from that.

We can only rest on the fact that it is the function of peace treaties to put an end to claims. If that were not so, we would still be concerned about disputes throughout the centuries. No compensation would be adequate to meet the sufferings of the people concerned. I understand that this compensation will seem to many people peculiarly inadequate, but we can find no legal basis for going back to the Japanese Government and asking for more. It has been the opinion of successive Governments, and it remains the opinion of this Government, based as best we can on an objective assessment of the documents, that to seek to go back on the undertakings to which we put our signature would not be an act of good faith and could not be justified.

My right hon. Friend has raised the Canadian initiative. I am grateful to him for giving me advance notice, with his typical courtesy, of all his points, which I hope will allow me to deal with them. If I run out of time, I shall write to him, because I want him to have a proper explanation.

We do not think that it would be proper for the Government to press the claim. That was one of the considerations that the Canadian Government have had to bear in mind. I understand that it is an independent association called War Amputations of Canada which have submitted the claim to the United Nations Human Rights Commission on behalf of the Hong Kong Veterans Association. I was interested to hear my right hon. Friend say that his claim has the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Commission of Health, Professionals and other non-governmental organisations that have consultative status at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. I understand that a delegation of former prisoners of war went to the 44th Commission on Human Rights in February, but I am not aware that any non-governmental organisation with consultative status raised the delegation's concern in that forum.

[Mr. Mellor]

My right hon. Friend also mentioned that this claim was submitted under the procedures based on resolution 1503. I have every sympathy for the claimants—I cannot stress that enough—but I am afraid that the chances of success under this procedure cannot, in my judgment, be high. One of the criteria applied under that resolution when judging whether claims are admissible is that the allegation of the violation of human rights must be submitted within a reasonable period, and the 40 years that have elapsed may be held to be not within that proviso.

A second difficulty is that the question may be outside the mandate of the United Nations, since that body was not in existence at the time when the violations took plac.. All I——

The motion having been made after half-past Ten o'clock on Thursday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at ten minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 22 July 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Pen Tops

9.34 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I beg to ask leave to present, on behalf of the community of Braunstone and the citizens of Leicester, a petition that has more than 10,000 signatories. It follows the tragic death on 9 October 1987 of Billy Walker, aged 11. His death followed choking on the top of a Bic pen. The Bic company, the manufacturers of the pen, refused—disgracefully—to discuss the matter with its Member of Parliament.

The boy's parents have campaigned courageously so that there may be no repetition of this accident through ignorance or inaction. The petition states:

"The humble petition of the community of Braunstone and Leicester citizens, sheweth That following the tragic death of Billy Walker (aged 11 on 9 October 1987, whilst in Wycliffe Community College, Hamelin Road, Leicester) the notorious hazard of asphyxiation, owing to obstruction of the respiratory system by a pen top, was highlighted. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Government to ensure the taking of immediate steps to remove the danger presented to children through the availability of pen tops and similar objects in both school and home and so eliminating the hazard that led to the tragic death of Billy Walker.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc."

To lie upon the Table.

Official Secrets

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

9.36 am

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Hurd): The House has today an early opportunity to comment on the proposals in our White Paper, which I laid before the House on 29 June. We promised to bring forward early legislation and in preparing that legislation we shall, of course, want to reflect carefully on what is said today.

I believe that the mood of the House—and, indeed, the mood outside—is that the time has come to settle this question. There has been clear discontent with section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 for at least the past 20 years. Serious proposals for reform were put forward by the Franks committee 16 years ago. Both the previous Labour Government and the present Government set out proposals, drawn from Franks, for reform. Despite that, section 2 is still with us. We cannot simply drift on, relying on legislation that no one considers to be reliable, and trusting in an all-embracing definition in which no one has any confidence.

I have studied the matter for some time and I am forced reluctantly to the conclusion that it is unlikely that we shall reach total agreement. There is, however, wide acceptance that the proposals contained in the White Paper are a reasonable foundation for the reform of section 2. Now we need to get on with it.

Hon. Members will have had the opportunity to read the White Paper. A number of misconceptions have been circulating about the proposals and there have been a number of misrepresentations in the press. I should like to lay some of those misrepresentations to rest. It has, for example, been suggested that we propose that no member of the security and intelligence services should ever be able to talk or write about his work. It has also been suggested that we are applying to members of those services a new regime of criminal restrictions, that no information, whatever its origin, on certain matters can be disclosed and that we propose to remove existing defences of prior publication and public interest. None of those assertions stands up.

I should like to set out briefly to the House the basic principles on which the proposals rest.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I assume that now that the Home Secretary has asserted that those theories are untrue, he will at some point return to them and explain why he holds that rather strange view.

Mr. Hurd: Of course. It is sensible to start with the principles, and that is what I intend to do.

First, our proposals apply only to official information, by which is meant information that is held by a Crown servant or Government contractor in the course of his duties. If the information disclosed cannot be traced back to a Crown servant or Government contractor, it is not covered by our proposals. It might have come from a completely different source. If, for example, another Government's information was leaked directly by an employee of that Government, it could be published in this country even though it had also been provided to the United Kingdom Government in confidence. Although the information disclosed was identical to the information

[Mr. Hurd]

held by the Government, it would not be official information and our proposals would not apply to it. Secondly, our proposals apply only to the publication, without authority, of the information that we propose to protect. A great deal of information, even in the subjects covered by our proposals, has been and will continue to be made known with authority of Parliament and to the public.

Of course it will not be an offence to disclose information in all categories without authority. Our central objective is to narrow the law so that it applies only to disclosure without authority of official information which is likely to give rise to an unacceptable degree of harm to the public interest. The first step towards defining such disclosures is to identify the areas of information in which harmful disclosures might be made. We have identified six in the White Paper. For reasons given in the White Paper, we believe that none of the information in two of the areas can be disclosed without the likelihood of unacceptable harm to the public interest. In a third, information useful in the commission of crime, disclosure is by definition harmful. In proving, as they would have to, that the information is in this category, the prosecution will be proving that its disclosure is harmful.

In the remaining three categories—the particularly sensitive areas of security and intelligence, of defence and of international relations—a distinction has to be drawn between information which cannot be disclosed without the likelihood of harm to the public interest, and information which can—the test of harm. That distinction can be made only in relation to a particular disclosure. The task of making the distinction we propose to place on the jury. To make that possible, we propose to define clearly the specific forms of harm to the public interest to which the disclosure of information in each category might give rise.

This is a considerable change from the proposals that the Government put forward in 1979. Under those proposals as under the Labour Government's proposals the question whether the disclosure of information relating to defence or international relations was harmful to the nation would have been decided by a Minister. Of course, we looked hard at the point and retraced the whole history of the idea of ministerial certificates. We decided, having done that, that ministerial certificates had no future. Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I know, fear that we may have gone too far in that direction. It is true that we are setting the prosecution a sizeable task but not one which in normal circumstances should provide insurmountable obstacles.

There is always a risk of a jury occasionally bringing in a perverse verdict, but that is true now and it would be true even if we had retained ministerial certificates. The jury will always have the last word. No one is suggesting that Ministers in place of a jury should decide whether an alleged offender is guilty or innocent. Since that is so, it is better that the jury should make up its mind on the basis of all the evidence than that it should feel that certain relevant matters are being withheld from it. We believe that it is right in principle and practice that the question of specified harm to the public interest should be determined by the jury.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would the Home Secretary place the verdict of the jury in the Ponting case in the category of "perverse"?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot comment on the verdicts of juries in any recent case. I have not done so and I will not do so. I am simply referring to the future. I am trying to deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) that by doing away with the notion of ministerial certificates, we are placing too heavy a weight on the jury. I do not think that that is so.

Even if the jury decides that a disclosure is likely to cause the specified harm to public interest, the discloser will be convicted only if he knew or had reason to believe that such harm was likely to be caused. It is clearly wrong to penalise somebody who had no way of knowing the harm that he was doing. Our proposals will ensure that such a person is not liable to conviction.

Those are the essential elements—the backbone—of our proposals. I hope that most people will accept that they are coherent and reasonable. I want now to address briefly a number of specific anxieties which have been raised.

I mentioned earlier the test of harm to be applied to the disclosure of information relating to security or intelligence. We are not proposing that any such test should apply to disclosure of such information by members or former members of the security and intelligence services or certain other people. This is nothing new. The people in these categories cannot now disclose such information without authority, without risking criminal proceedings. We are not making life more difficult or matters worse for them. We are simply leaving them, for the reasons that we have given in the White Paper, essentially as they are.

I stress again that I am talking about disclosures without authority. Members and former members of the services have in the past been authorised to talk or write about their work, and they will be so authorised in the future, but for a member to disclose information about security and intelligence without authority is, we believe, a betrayal of the trust that the nation places in those services, for very good reasons—because of the nature of the work they do and of the protection they provide for all of us.

We propose that certain people should be designated as having the same criminal liability as members or former members of the services, and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) expressed some concern about this power. Those who are designated will be so told when they are designated, so there is no question of someone being designated because he is thought to be troublesome, or of his being designated retrospectively after an alleged offence. Designation will not be applied to all those who have contact with the security and intelligence services, still less to all those who see the information provided by those services. A certain number of people have duties that involve them working so closely with the security and intelligence services that they acquire an extensive knowledge of their organisation and operations, and we think that these people should share the same liability as members and former members of those services.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Will my right hon. Friend explain in a little more detail whether categories of people or individuals are to be so designated?

Mr. Hurd: They will be designated individually. We shall need to work out carefully how that is to be done. For example, some of the people in my private office are civil servants and officials in a Government Department, who nevertheless acquire, inevitably, an extensive knowledge of the affairs of the services—perhaps a more extensive knowledge, in some cases, than most members of the services.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House, having given that specific analysis of who is or who is not designated, that someone who gave information to the security service on a one-off basis would not be so designated?

Mr. Hurd: I have given that assurance. There will be no question of designating someone retrospectively because something had been said or done.

There has been some anxiety about our proposal that information relating to security or intelligence, defence or international relations that we provide to other Governments or to international organisations should not lose the protection of the criminal law if it is leaked abroad. I recognise that this is controversial. It is one of the few points on which we are strengthening the existing law. We considered it very carefully and I ask the House to do the same. In areas central to the security and well-being of the nation, the most effective means to pursue our interests is through international co-operation, and we find this more and more.

If that co-operation is to be effective in, for example, fighting terrorism, we must exchange sensitive information with other countries. As the law stands at present, despite all that another country may do to protect our information if it is leaked abroad by a foreign national, it is not an offence to disclose it in this country, even if such an offence would do serious harm to the public interest and despite the fact that it was official information. We do not think that that is right, so we propose that such disclosure should be an offence in the same way as it would be if the leak had occurred in this country. There would be a test of harm. The prosecution would still have to prove to a jury beyond reasonable doubt that the specified harm was likely to arise and that the discloser knew that it was. The object of the proposal is to protect international co-operation in those vital areas of the nation's interests.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the Secretary of State tell us what would happen in the case of an MI6, MI5 or other intelligence officer who discovered that his colleagues and perhaps even his superiors were planning to undermine or subvert the Government of the day? Would that official be captured by criminal action or under the provisions of the Bill, or are there other means by which he could bring to light the subversion that might be taking place?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, there are. I am about to deal with the public interest defence. The hon. Gentleman is leaping ahead a little.

Because of the interest expressed in the notion that lies behind the hon. Gentleman's question, that there should be a general public interest defence in the cases that he has mentioned, I should stress that we are not taking away anything that now exists in the way of a defence. It is true, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) pointed out, that there are some words of uncertain meaning in section 2, which one or two defendants have claimed allowed the court to consider whether their disclosure was in the public interest, but it is also true to say that the courts have never accepted those words as referring other than to the public interest as decided by the institutions of Government in this country.

We have set out in the White Paper why we think that the introduction of a general public interest defence can be no part of the narrowly targeted scheme that we propose. We believe that that would bring confusion into the law where we are seeking to achieve certainty. It is not a defence to any other offence that the wider or longer-term effects of the criminal act are beneficial and that that benefit outweighs the harm done. Someone who commits a robbery and spends the proceeds of his crime for the public good is still a robber. The defence that he has used the money for good purpose does not apply.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): What about a specific defence of public interest?

Mr. Hurd: I am talking about a general principle which the hon. and learned Gentleman will accept.

A person who, by some disclosure, knowingly causes unacceptable harm to the public interest in the hope of doing some wider good is still committing an offence. A person who finds himself in the unlikely position to which the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) referred has a recourse in the first instance to his superiors. He may not want his immediate superiors to know of his anxiety or complaint. To that end, last November we established a staff counsellor system, the first counsellor being Sir Philip Woodfield. Such a person can go to the counsellor, bypassing, if necessary, his immediate superiors and having access to the Secretary of the Cabinet and perhaps, as the Prime Minister's written answer on this point explains, ultimately to the Minister responsible for that service, either my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary or myself, and to the Prime Minister. That recourse was laid down in Parliament, although admittedly, it has only recently been brought into being and is in addition to the ordinary processes of responsibility for the services that we are discussing. It is an additional buttress to meet the point raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): My right hon. Friend may have been wrongly advised about section 2(1)(a) of the 1911 Act, which he says is not being swept away, because all judicial figures in the past have accepted that the interests of the Government and of the state are one and the same. My right hon. Friend is correct in remembering that the judge in the Ponting case and the judge in the Compton Mackenzie case took that line. However, tracing cases through, including the *Sunday Telegraph* case of which I have some knowledge, the judicial figures have gone in the opposite direction. Sir Winston Churchill relied on that defence, although he was never prosecuted, and Mr. Duncan-Sandys relied on that defence, when civil servants came to brief them on the lack of preparedness of Britain's military defences, because it was in the interests of the state for someone to go and tell a Privy Councillor that secret. My right hon. Friend is

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

going down the wrong road when he says that it is of no importance to remove that key defence of the interest of the state.

Mr. Hurd: Although my hon. Friend may catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not think that he can show a statement of the court or a judgment of a judge which accepts that those words imply or contain a general public interest defence. In all those matters, under the existing law and under our proposal, a jury will have to make up its mind, but juries do not give reasons and, if my advice is sound, as I believe it is, I do not believe that the courts have established that there is a general public interest defence under the present law.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Secretary of State accept that he has said that, on the one hand, there will be an absolute offence and that, on the other hand, juries may acquit, despite the absence of a public interest defence? Is not the consequence, therefore, that he is inviting juries in a residue of cases to deliver what he would call perverse verdicts on the grounds of the public interest? If that is the logical conclusion, as it surely must be, why does he not write, not a general public interest defence, but a specific public interest defence into the legislation?

Mr. Hurd: That is a contradiction in terms. I am not inviting a jury to do anything. I am simply observing that, in this country, anyone who faces a charge that might land them a substantial term of punishment, has the right for that to be decided by a jury. That is true under the present law and will be true under our proposals. It is certainly not for a Minister to say what a jury will do. If a future Government were foolish enough to indulge in trivial or vindictive prosecutions, a jury is there as a safeguard. That is why we have a jury. I am not predicting what it would do. I am simply observing that it is the jury that decides.

I wish to deal now with the other defence that it has been suggested we should include specifically, that of prior publication. Again, there is no such defence in the existing law. I hope that those who are attracted by the idea of that defence will recognise that, in our proposals, with their central emphasis on harmful disclosure, an absolute defence of that kind does not fit. In relation to the two categories of information where there is no test of harm, we believe, for the reasons that I have given, that any disclosure is harmful.

In relation to the other categories, if, despite the fact that the information has previously been published, the prosecution can satisfy a jury beyond reasonable doubt both that the particular disclosure of that information was likely to cause the specified harm to the public interest and that the discloser knew that it was, I do not see what grounds are there for saying he is not culpable. It will be open to the defence to argue that the new disclosure could do no harm because there had been a previous disclosure, the burden will be on the prosecution to prove otherwise, and it would be for the jury to decide whether the fact that there has been prior publication negates the prosecution's claim that a test of harm has been passed.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I am not sure how that can be true in relation to information given in confidence by foreign Governments. The White Paper rules out the argument of prior publication abroad, because that would be damaging in itself, so, for the purposes of the defence, we are dealing with a first publication and there could be no pleading along these lines.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right in the case of information that is supplied in confidence by a foreign Government—unless, of course, that information had already been published abroad, in which case it would not have been derived in this country and would not be official information. Perhaps my hon. Friend will study what I said at the beginning of my speech as it gives an example of some of the misconceptions which apply. He will find that that covers the point.

I turn now to what has been said about the discipline code for Crown servants. I believe that Mr. Des Wilson is the arch-priest of that doctrine. It has been said in some places that, to counteract the narrowing of section 2, which even Mr. Wilson has been forced to agree we are undertaking, we propose to extend discipline so that Crown servants will never be able to say anything about anything without risking dismissal. This is nonsense. As the White Paper explains, it will be necessary to make some changes to conduct rules to reflect the fact that section 2 has been replaced by a very much narrower law. In practice, the discipline code will continue to be applied much as it is at present. The clarifying changes that I am talking about, which will be needed, will be discussed in the usual way with the Civil Service trade unions.

Although the White Paper does not deal or purport to deal with freedom of information, I want to say a word on that subject. No Government have made so much official information available to the public or Parliament. I shall give one or two examples because at the moment this part of the case has not been brought effectively before the House. Let us take as an example the prison system in my Department, which is possibly the most difficult area with which the Home Office deals. We have opened up the prison system to a far greater extent in recent years than was ever done in the past. The media have been given much greater access to prisons.

Although I am not responsible for Scottish prisons, who would have thought it conceivable even a year or so ago that the media would have been admitted to a Scottish prison in the circumstances which enabled both main television news channels to carry extensive coverage last night? That would have been wholly inconceivable, but such things now happen because Government Departments are opening up and are making available to the public, direct and through the media, far greater areas of policy and administration than ever before.

We encourage boards of visitors to publish their annual reports, often to our embarrassment, but we specifically encourage it to happen. Every Department has similar initiatives to record. The Department of Education and Science has been publishing the reports of school inspectors since 1983. The Ministry of Defence has invited the press into sensitive establishments at Porton Down and Aldermaston. Who would have thought that that would have been possible under previous Labour and Conservative Governments? The Defence White Paper includes a mass of new information.

The Treasury now publishes its economic forecasts. The public expenditure White Paper has grown from a mere 170 pages in 1978 and is now a formidably informative document of 500 pages. To come to what some regard as

the nub of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has given this House more information about the Security Service than any of her predecessors by far.

Perhaps it is inevitable that, like Tantalus, the representatives of the media should always be reaching out for the fruit which is just beyond their reach. I hope that they will accept and not neglect the huge increase in the harvest of information that is now available.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What extra information will be made available and accessible by the introduction of this White Paper, apart from the areas to which the right hon. Gentleman might refer, which will begin to be subject, in any case, to the civil law?

Mr. Hurd: This is not a freedom of information White Paper and we do not propose to introduce a freedom of information Bill. I am simply stating as a matter of fact the outflow and the cornucopia of information from this Government on matters which all our predecessors would have thought should continue to be locked up. I foresee that that flow of increasing information, spreading ever outwards, will continue.

Perhaps we should step back from the detail for a moment to consider what difference the White Paper proposals will make. The answer is that almost all—the great bulk of—official information would cease to be protected by the criminal law. That is a huge change. Any critic of our proposals who does not start by recognising that fact is letting prejudice obscure judgment.

A great deal of the information which is no longer to be protected by the criminal law is of a minor kind and should never have been brought within the criminal law. However, some of it is highly sensitive material. Some of it, like the Budget proposals or the type of economic information which is protected specifically by the 1978 White Paper cannot be disclosed without the risk of some harm to the public interest, but we have decided that the degree of harm which disclosure of such information may entail is not enough to justify the use of the criminal law.

Anyone who has served in Government, and I hope every Member of the House, will accept that that is not and was not an easy decision, nor was it taken lightly. It amounts to an earthquake in Whitehall. We have set the threshold where it seemed to us it ought to be. We are now discussing the boundaries of a small territory within the total empire which needs continued protection. There may be disagreement about how we define that territory and what we call it, but the boundary disputes, important though they are, do not crucially affect the size of the territory or alter the basic fact of the huge change which we propose to bring about.

Some people are arguing that we are introducing harsh new powers over the information in this remaining protected territory. There has been some prattle in the press about censorship, and the word "draconian" springs rather too easily to the lips of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. Now that he has had time to read the White Paper, as opposed to press accounts of what it was going to contain, he can see that, even in this remaining protected territory, we are removing powers and liberalising definitions.

Of course we want the law to protect effectively the territory which we think should still be protected. We want a new law which will work, but we are actually making just two proposals which would extend the present law. The first is to make it an offence for a member or former member of the security and intelligence services to disclose information which purports to relate to security or intelligence. The reasons for this are set out in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the White Paper and have not drawn a great deal of comment.

The second is the proposal which I have already explained, which relates to why we believe that future legislation should protect any information relating to security or intelligence, defence or international relations which we provide in confidence to other Governments or international organisations.

Those two minor additions to the present law will apply to particular categories of information in particular circumstances. Every other move, even in the remaining territory which we believe should be protected, is in the direction of openness. I do not believe that anyone could seriously weigh those two marginal additions against the immense reductions which we propose in the scope of the present law. None could conclude that on balance we are extending or stiffening the law.

Parliament now has the best chance that it has ever had to put on the statute book a reasonable and effective new provision in place of section 2. I do not underestimate the difficulties, but I believe that success would bring a substantial reduction in the way that the criminal law bears on the media; an improvement in the reputation of the law, therefore better protection for information which has to be protected; and a gain in the quality of the workings of Government. We should not miss this chance. I hope and expect that this debate will take us another significant step towards reform.

10.8 am

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I have never had the pleasure of reading one of the Home Secretary's spy novels. However, I feel this morning that I have had taste of his style and I think that he created the title for his next work of fiction—"An Earthquake in Whitehall".

I want to begin with the Home Secretary's analysis of these matters. We cannot discuss the White paper without examining in a little detail the Home Secretary's statement on 29 June. In my 24 years as a Member of this House, I have never known a ministerial statement which was at greater variance with the White Paper that it purported to describe. I must tell the Home Secretary that either by inadvertance or intention he did the same this morning.

The hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) asked the Home Secretary specifically about designation. The Home Secretary was explicitly and profoundly reassuring. He told his hon. Friend that designation was to be related to individuals. At which point a sigh of relief went round the House—at least among those hon. Members who have not read the White Paper, since the White Paper specifies groups. It is not possible to discuss these matters rationally if the Home Secretary does not answer questions with a degree of accuracy. That was the problem that the House faced a month ago.

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Just one moment. The word "group" appears in the White Paper. As the *Official Report* will show, the Home Secretary said that it was limited to individuals.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is making a mountain out of a molehill. It is not possible to designate a group. Individuals must be designated. Individuals will be informed. There will not be a notice saying that that is a group which consists of such and such a category. Individuals will be designated and informed that they have been designated. That is the point.

Mr. Hattersley: I only wish that the Home Secretary had put that in his White Paper, paragraph 47 of which states:

"groups whose duties necessarily involve extensive familiarity with the work of the security and intelligence services"

will be designated. The Home Secretary cannot say that his reply is consistent with what appears in the public text; nor were many of the things that he said in his statement on 29 June.

The Home Secretary rather foolishly said a moment ago that now that I have had an opportunity to read the White Paper, I may have a different view from that which I took on the day of the statement. He will recall that, thanks to his courtesy, I had an opportunity to read the White Paper during the morning of 29 June. He will also recall that other hon. Members were given a similar opportunity.

I hope that the Home Secretary will also recall that, with the exception of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), every hon. Member who had read the White Paper disputed the Home Secretary's description of it in his statement to the House. They disputed the notion that the White Paper dispelled the idea that the criminal law is being used to protect information simply because its disclosure would embarrass the Government.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—who had read the White Paper—referred to paragraph 61 which rejected the idea that Crown servants prosecuted under the new Act could offer public interest as a defence and said that because that idea was not included, the White Paper was crucially flawed. The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)—who also had read the White Paper—urged other hon. Members to read it closely. He said that anyone who had read it would realise that it contained grave defects. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—who had read the White Paper—told the Home Secretary as I have told him this morning:

"the balance of his remarks is confounded by any reading of that paper."

The hon. Gentleman was referring to the White Paper. All those hon. Members disagreed, as I disagree, with the Home Secretary's key passage then and the tone of his speech today, that

"The scope of the legislation would be confined to the very small amount of information that it is in the whole nation's interest to keep secret."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. 365-71.]

Of course the White Paper proposals will release a huge area of Government information from the absurdities of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. However, in the areas where open and honest government are tested, the same old illiberal rules still apply, some with greater force and fewer safeguards. I believe that that can be demonstrated notwithstanding what the Home Secretary has said today.

The Home Secretary said that there is no blanket rule which requires any group or individual to remain silent on whole ranges of subjects. He based that assertion on a new concept which, as far as I can see, does not appear in the White Paper. That concept is "without authority". If the Home Secretary can tell me where that concept applies and where it is specified in the White Paper, I will gladly give way.

There are passages in the White Paper which, according to any moderate understanding of the English language, convey the opposite impression. There are categories where a blanket rule applies automatically and where the criminal sanction is automatically triggered simply by the giving out of information.

I will help the Home Secretary by quoting from the White Paper. Paragraph 38 states:

"The Government does not now propose that new legislation should make all such disclosures an offence."—

Bravo. It continues:

"It proposes instead that legislation should make a distinction between disclosures by members and former members of the security and intelligence services and disclosures by other persons; and that, in the latter case, the prosecution should have to show that the disclosure was likely to damage the operation of the security or intelligence services."

That does not apply in the former case. In that case, when officers or ex-officers of the security services, disclose information, the rule is absolute. The criminal sanction is automatic. There is no discretion or concept of "without authority". Exactly the same rule applies in paragraph 53. I must explain to the Home Secretary, because this is more important than his strange contextual errors, that even were the concept of "without authority" to apply, it would still make the proposed Bill unacceptable. We are arguing against the notion that the Government can decide by certification or other means what should and should not be published. "Without authority" means that it may be done if the Government agree.

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: In a moment.

The Home Secretary is nodding. If he means that it may be done if the Government agree, he must understand that that is philosophically no different from certification. It is a negative form of certification and there is no philosophical difference between the two systems. I now give way to the Commissioner.

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. Gentleman must accept that he is on to a completely false point in suggesting that the concept of a distinction between authorised and unauthorised disclosure has no previous existence and cannot be found here. It has always existed in the law. If the right hon. Gentleman would care, for example, to consider paragraph 14 of the White Paper, he would see that it states:

"The central concern of any reform of section 2 is to determine in what circumstances the unauthorised disclosure of official information should be criminal."

That makes it absolutely clear that the concept of authorisation as limiting the scope of the operation of the criminal law, even where it would otherwise extend, has been part of the law and will continue to be so.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not follow my point. Perhaps his mind is on other matters. The point is clear. If it is to be said that the security services are allowed to publish information with the Government's authorisation, we cannot rely any

longer on the publicity about juries deciding and the matter not being in the Government's hands. The Government decide on individual cases. They decide yes or no. I do not disagree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman that that has been the habit in the past, but the Home Seceretary claims that there should be a different habit in the future based on something more liberal and rational. Based on the Government's agreement and fiat, that makes it a system of certification by another name. The Government cannot deny that and nor has the Home Secretary done anything to disprove it.

Under paragraph 43, it is a criminal offence for any member of the security or intelligence services, past or present—or, under paragraph 45, anyone or group designated by a Minister as associated or in frequent contact with the security services—to say anything about security no matter how trivial, how true or how necessary in the public interest. If we say, "Don't worry about that because things which are right in the public interest, already known abroad or likely to cause no damage and which should be in the public weal, will be authorised," the Minister who replies had better tell me whether, under the new legislation, the publication of "Spycatcher" or Mr. Clive Ponting's revelation of the truth or what Miss Cathy Massiter said about the operation of the service would be authorised. Of course it would not. We are back in the old system under a liberal guise.

Many media reports, including a programme broadcast by the BBC at 2 pm yesterday, have announced that the new dawn prepared by the Home Secretary will result in the scrutiny by juries of all information published, if there is any dispute about its propriety. They have suggested that juries will decide whether publication has damaged the public interest. That is clearly not the case in the areas where there are likely to be disputes, where the arguments about publication are most important, and where the Government's illiberality is most often demonstrated. It becomes a criminal offence for intelligence and security personnel to say anything about intelligence or security. The power of ministerial designation, about which the Home Secretary did not reassure me this morning, allows the rule of absolute silence to be extended far beyond the bounds of the security services themselves.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I believe that my right hon. Friend was in the House when the former Labour Member for Morpeth was prosecuted. Part of that trial was held in secret and part of it in public. To this day, hon. Members do not know whether he was prosecuted for giving away defence secrets or for disclosing commercial secrets. My suspicion is that his acquittal was due to the fact that there was a commercial issue involved. At that time, we thought that it was a most harsh decision to prosecute him. We never knew, and we still do not know, the facts of the case, which endorses my right hon. Friend's point. There should be more openness in that respect.

Mr. Hattersley: We all agree with that. Another example that has been brought to the attention of the House is one about which the Home Secretary or his junior Minister may care to speculate when replying to the debate. From time to time, we hear allegations—no more —that illegal phone taps are perpetrated by junior members of the security services. That was alleged in "Spycatcher", and it was alleged by Mr. Anthony Cavendish. It was alleged that some phone taps were applied to Members of the House. If an honest and honourable member of the security service discovers that that is happening, he is, as the Home Secretary states, entitled to go to his superior and say, "You shouldn't do that." If his superior is a man about whom he has doubts, he is entitled to go to a designated officer and say, "I am very worried about the illegality, criminality and treason that is being committed by the service". However, if he does not trust even the designated officer——

Mr. Hurd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hattersley: —or whoever it is that the Home Secretary thinks is in that position of trust and responsibility, and who the honourable man may believe is party to the illegality, and if he makes public the fact that the right hon. Mr. A or the hon. Mrs. B has had his or her phone tapped, is he not committing a criminal offence? The Home Secretary seems to be shaking his head.

Mr. Hurd: I must correct the right hon. Gentleman's confusion about the staff counsellor. He is not of course a member of the security service.

Mr. Hattersley: I thought that the Home Secretary wanted to make a serious point. Let me ask him again. If the man about whom I have just hypothesised says, "This right hon. Member is having his phone tapped and I propose making that scandal public," will he not automatically be committing a criminal offence, for which there is no defence on grounds of honesty, decency, openness, justice or public interest? The Home Secretary does not answer the serious question. The answer to the serious question shows that in those areas where it ought to be right and proper for a member of the service to expose what is going on, the so-called liberal proposals that the Home Secretary puts before the House will automatically make that officer, without any qualification, subject to criminal prosecution and a period of imprisonment.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): As a member of the NCU who has worked extensively in telephone exchanges, I can give my right hon. Friend the answer to his question. If an intercept is found, the person finding it will have no knowledge of who put it on. He may take the matter to his superior officer, who if necessary will refer him to the designated officer within the service. That officer is not a staff counsellor in the context given by the Home Secretary. The person finding the tap is not allowed to remove it unless he is instructed to do so. He will have no knowledge of whether a warrant was granted to put that tap on in the first place.

Mr. Hattersley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Although the Home Secretary remains silent—I had put to him what I thought was not a rhetorical question—I hope that when the junior Minister replies, he will address that point directly and explicity. That example seems to be at the heart of all that we are complaining about and of all that is wrong with the White Paper.

Mr. Allen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Just this once, and then I must make some progress.

Mr. Allen: Assuming that an officer has taken to the staff counsellor a complaint or a potential allegation that his colleagues or superiors are subverting the elected

[Mr. Allen]

Government, what will the staff counsellor do? He will surely attempt to check whether there is any substance to it. If there are people in the security services willing to subvert a duly elected Government, the very life of any individual seeking to expose that particular plot would surely be at risk. There must be a longer stop than the staff counsellor in cases of high treason.

Mr. Hattersley: The long stop ought to have the right to publish the information and to defend the right to publish it, and the propriety of doing so, in court.

I move forward as speedily as I can to allow other hon. Members time to enter the debate.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that particular point?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I must go on, I have given way too much for the convenience of the House.

I reiterate that the two rules of automatic criminal sanction against officers nominated by the Government whenever they speak about matters relating to intelligence or security, and against any civil servant who reveals confidential information to a foreign power, are wrong in principle. They give the Government the right to maintain total silence in areas where more frankness is desperately needed. The Home Secretary misunderstands the whole philosophy of the argument if he imagines that he can defend the Government's position by saying, "See how much information of our choice and to our convenience we have chosen to give out." This argument is about whether the people and the courts of this country have the right to decide about disclosure of information that is not to the Government's convenience. That is the real principle, and it is intensely important in the record of this Government—which I thought the Home Secretary was pretty reckless to introduce into the debate.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I have said that I must make progress. I cannot give way even for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Whitney: The right hon. Gentleman means especially for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, but not for the reason that he thinks.

It is particularly necessary to provide the added safeguard and a law that allows for openness to this Government on account of their record of wishing to maintain total secrecy with a determination that amounts to obsession. It is this Government who have unscrupulously used the courts to pursue cases that they knew they could not win, but which they knew that by expending enormous amounts of public money they could keep going for so long that they would damage at least the financial interests of the security officers they wished to pursue.

It is this Government who have prosecuted with mixed success civil servants who acted out of conscience in making public information that they knew was of no benefit to an enemy or potential enemy but they thought should not be kept secret. It is this Government who raided the BBC's Scottish studios, confiscated films, and then returned them without prosecution, explanation or apology. It is this Government who prohibited the publication of Anthony Cavendish's little booklet alleging Security Service treason against the Administration of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). I do not believe that the power to control information that is not likely to damage the national interest should be available to any Government, but certainly it ought not to be available to a Government having that sort of record of suppressing inconvenient information and of suppressing information that is in no way damaging to the national interest, but which the Government or the Prime Minister think ought to be suppressed.

The heart of the matter and the central issue that we are debating is the need, with any new law concerning official secrets, to take a rational and democratic view of the Security Service's operations. At present, the service acts either like a private army or like the private property of the Prime Minister. In other democracies, the activities of the security services come under the general supervision of Parliament. That rule should apply here. Until it does, the whole nexus between the wrong sort of secrecy and the wrong sort of activity will never be properly exposed.

Until that happens, it is intolerable that everything done by the security services—good or bad, legal or illegal, trivial or significant, in or against the public interest—should be cloaked in secrecy according to the fiat of the Government. But that is what the White Paper provides, and that is why the editor of *The Observer*—who knows about such matters, as he has been pursued by the Government—regards the proposed Act as in many ways worse than what it seeks to replace. For it specifically rules out—and what the Home Secretary says does not alter my view for a moment—some of the protections provided by the present law. I have no doubt that the defendant's protection of the public interest defence will be removed.

The Home Secretary says that no such defence exists. The fact is, however, that juries have acted on the belief that it does, or on the conviction that it should. Men and women have been acquitted on the belief that what they did was in the public interest. Let us assume that all that that reveals is that the present law is ambiguous, and that liberal-minded juries have chosen to interpret it in a certain way. What the Home Secretary now proposes is explicitly to remove that protection, so that juries will have no doubt in their minds in future. They will be directed that there is no such thing as a public interest defence; that loophole will be closed.

When I asked the Home Secretary a month ago whether various notorious prosecutions under the present Government—that of Mr. Ponting in particular—would have led under the proposed Act to an acquittal or a conviction, there was a roar of "Conviction" from his hon. Friends. Of course Ponting would have been convicted, because the White Paper rules out the concept of public interest and leaves that option no longer open to the Government.

Nor do I believe that the protection of prior publication will be protection that it is today. Let us again take the "Spycatcher" case. What would be the application of the new law to that? As I understand it, there is virtually no new information in "Spycatcher". There is certainly none of significance, and none that the Soviet Union does not already possess. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister has said from the Dispatch Box, in all our hearing, that whether the information is known does not matter. Prior publication is

not the issue; it is security information. Would "Spycatcher" be released under the new legislation, as it should be, or would we continue to operate the principle that is so objectionable concerning all illiberal views on information? The Government's objection is not to information being made available to enemies or potential enemies of the state, but to its being made available to the people of this country. Much of the new legislation, like that which it is likely to replace, is intended to keep information not from enemies but from the British people.

Let me make it clear that I want to keep secret material that even might be of real benefit to an enemy or potential enemy. The House, I believe, is unanimous in that desire. But the Zircon issue, for instance, was brought to fever pitch and generated ministerial hysteria not because it would reveal anything to the Soviet Union, but because it might lead our friends and allies in the United States to believe that we did not have the grip on the security services that they expected of us. That does not strike me as a justification for an illiberal Official Secrets Act.

The proposed Act contains almost all the unhappy and unacceptable ingredients of the old Act, and the Act that the Home Secretary canvassed before his statement and then—consciously and with dramatic effect—announced that he would not apply: the Act that includes certification. The objection to certification is that it gives Governments and Ministers the right to designate individual pieces of information that can or cannot be published. What the White Paper now proposes is mass certification: the Government have the right to say that a certain category of persons is not allowed to publish. In the White Paper, they specify certain categories of information —information obtained in confidence from a foreign power; information related to defence matters, in some cases; and information concerning intelligence security.

The Home Secretary says—and his predecessor seemed to support him—that the Government would occasionally allow discretion, and that in his grace and favour a Home Secretary will read a book and then say that he does not mind its being published. I do not see how that can logically be separated from the idea of certification. If a Minister is to say, "This will not be tested in the courts: bring it to me and I will tell you whether it can be published", that is certification in all but name.

In all the Home Secretary's pronouncements—in his statement on the White Paper and in his speech today—he has made much of the need to remove from official secrets legislation matters of no danger or strategic significance. He wants us to concede that that has been done. Of course, in a sense I concede it willingly. I recall that in the January debate the Home Secretary scoffed, I thought rather artificially, at the absurdity of prosecuting—I quote his words exactly—

"civil servants who disclose the colour of the carpets in their offices or what was on the menu in the staff canteen."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 581.]

Clearly such information is no longer subject to legal prosecution, and it is no doubt enormously gratifying to newspapers that wish to write about ministerial carpets and staff canteen menus that they can now do so with impunity. But, as he scoffed at the idea of such matters being considered under section 2, the Home Secretary went on to say that they are not subject to prosecution now. Many of the categories that he has said will no longer be subject to prosecution have not been subject to it in any case.

The idea that much sensitive Budget information can be published without any prosecution is one of which I need to be convinced. I was looking at the other legislation surrounding such matters—laws regarding trade statistics, confidentiality of business information and the exchange rate, with which I was once concerned in passing. Are we being told that the matters that the Chancellor discusses in purdah, or semi-purdah—purdah apart from information that it is authorised to leak—are not protected by any law? Or is it simply that the legal obligation to silence has been removed from the Official Secrets Act and applies with equal force elsewhere?

The attitude that has characterised the Opposition throughout the debate is our wish to see a tight, positive and effective control on information which, if published, might damage the interests of the country. But the White Paper goes much further. It suppresses what ought to be in the public domain. That is why we shall vote against the Bill unless it is radically altered. If it were only more like the Bill that the Home Secretary pretended would come about when he introduced the White Paper, and less like the White Paper, we might vote for it.

10.38 am

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): Listening to the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I could not help feeling that the disappointment that he showed when the Home Secretary made his statement had spilled over into this debate—disappointment that the draconian measures that he imagined would be introduced were not in the White Paper. Finding that they are not in the White Paper, he has had to spin a spurious web to try to persuade the House that the White Paper is not as it is. He has been wholly unsuccessful, and has simply brought about a series of misconceived red herrings.

Take, for example, authorisation, of which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has made such heavy weather. He is entirely wrong about that. The object of the exercise, following the recommendations of the Franks committee to reform the official secrets legislation, was to narrow the areas where disclosure would attract the sanctions of the criminal law. Over and above that, any conceivable reform must make it plain that other areas of the law would still be covered by the official secrets legislation and that disclosure would be a criminal offence. The Government must be able to prevent memoirs being published. It is a complete red herring for the right hon. Member to pretend that there is anything novel in that concept. For him to obscure that simple concept with the concept of ministerial certification is, at best, disingenuous and, at worst, something much more serious.

The ministerial certification concept is wholly different from authorisation. It is that, in the case of a prosecution brought before the courts in the ordinary way, where there is a specific issue that the court has to determine, the existence of a ministerial certificate shall be final and conclusive. That is quite different from the authorisation of material that is outside the realm of what is permitted by the criminal law. The right hon. Gentleman should see that distinction. I am surprised that he does not.

The White Paper amounts to a substantial liberalisation of the law. The right hon. Gentleman did less than justice to himself in his concluding remarks about Budget secrets. They were full of dark hints. He suggested that,

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although Budget secrets may not be covered by this legislation, something else, somewhere, is being introduced to cover that loophole. There is no truth in that suggestion. This is about the reform of the official secrets legislation. If the right hon. Gentleman has in mind other legislation that he thinks ought to be changed, he owes it to the House to say exactly what it is. But he has done nothing of the kind.

Mr. Hattersley: I am not talking about new legislation, darkly hinted at, or about Budget secrets that should be made available before the Budget. I am in favour of Budget secrets being kept secret, but I am not in favour of the Home Secretary pretending that they will not be kept secret when I think they will.

Mr. Brittan: It will not do for the right hon. Gentleman to make dark hints about unspecified legislation. If the right hon. Gentleman is making hints about future legislation, the House is entitled to know what those hints are. If it is existing legislation, it should be identified. The right hon. Gentleman has demeaned himself by doing neither.

The legislation envisaged by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary amounts to a substantial liberalisation of the law, but that does not imply that it is perfect, as I shall seek to show. I have criticisms and comments to make.

This legisation is well on the way to securing an objective that has been accepted in principle but that has eluded Governments for many years: effective protection for information, the disclosure of which would damage the national interest, while at the same time removing the cloak of the criminal law from a welter of information that might be embarrassing if disclosed but that is not contrary to the national interest.

Some of those who opposed suggested reforms in the past were genuinely unhappy with the proposals, but others preferred unworkable legislation. They hoped either that it could not be enforced or that a jury would not convict because the legislation had been discredited. Intellectually, that is a shoddy approach to the problem, although it did much to impede previous attempts at reform. This attempt has deservedly received a better reception than its predecessors. It is a better scheme than that put forward in the 1979 Bill, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on it. The proposals are ingenious and constructive, especially the way in which the problem of ministerial certification has been resolved by abolishing it altogether.

The extent of the liberalisation has not been fully appreciated. There has been a reduction in the number of categories covered by the criminal law. Furthermore, the requirement that the specific harm set out in the White Paper has to be proved will not make it at all easy to secure convictions, except in the clearest cases.

Paragraph 49 of the White Paper deals with defence. It proposes that the prosecution should be obliged to prove

"that the disclosure was likely either to prejudice the capability of the armed forces to carry out any of their defence tasks, or to lead to a risk of loss of life, injury to personnel or damage to equipment or installations, or to prejudice dealings between the Government and the government of another state or an international organisation."

It is not difficult to see that an ingenious defence would be able to use those words to show that the prosecution had not made out its case, except in the clearest possible cases of damaging disclosure.

However, there is still scope for considerable discussion of what the definitions of specific harm in the various areas should be and the circumstances in which it is appropriate for no harm test to be required. I have three points to make about that. The first relates to paragraph 49 on defence and paragraph 50 on international relations. The specific harm that the Government have to prove is that disclosure would prejudice dealings between the Government and the Government of another state or an international organisation. The comparable paragraph in the 1979 Bill used language that required proof of serious injury. The difference is important.

Generally, the specific harm that the Government have to prove in this White Paper is meant to be less vague and more specific than the present legislative provisions. The justification of the approach of abandoning specification and setting out, with limited exceptions, the specific harm that has to be proved is to require something more concrete that is fit to come before a jury. I could understand something that was more specific, but to confine the prosecution to having to prove that the material that is disclosed merely prejudices dealings is a test as vague as the requirement of serious harm. It is also more restrictive. It would be easier to prove that the material that is disclosed prejudices something than that it does serious harm. As at present advised, I do not see any justification for what amounts to a tightening up of proposals that were originally put forward in 1979.

The second point to which I should like to draw attention relates to an important ambiguity that needs to be cleared up about paragraphs 41 and 42 of the White Paper, in which it is said that in the case of disclosure by members or former members of the security and intelligence services there will be no need to prove any specific harm. That is the distinction between disclosures by members or former members of the security and intelligence services and disclosures by others. But what about disclosures by newspapers of material emanating from members of the security and intelligence services? If the harm test were required in such a case, the law would undoubtedly be tighter, if enacted on the lines of the White Paper, than might have seemed apparent from a cursory reading of the White Paper. The paragraph refers simply to disclosure of information by members or former members of those services. It does not refer to information derived from disclosure by members or former members of those services. That is an important matter which needs to be clarified.

If no harm test is required, the law is tighter than it might have seemed. If the harm test is required, the total ban on the disclosure by officers of the security and intelligence services is considerably diluted. I have an open mind about what is right, but I think that it should be clarified before the House is invited to consider the matter further.

My third point relates to paragraph 51, which provides the blanket coverage of the criminal law on information obtained in confidence from other Governments or international organisations. In the case of such disclosure, the White Paper proposes that there should be no requirement for any specific harm test to be covered. I should be very surprised if the House were ultimately to be

persuaded of the need for any such category, and certainly of the need for it to be covered by a blanket ban, there being no need to prove any harm.

Some of the information derived from other Governments and international organisations is, frankly, highly trivial. Some of the information derived from other Governments and international organisations in confidence is material which, under the law of those countries, it is not a crime to publish abroad. It seems to me excessively sweeping and unnecessary to contain paragraph 51, particularly when it is read in conjunction with paragraph 50—the paragraph on international relations—which already provides that it shall be a criminal offence if the Government can prove that

"disclosure of information relating to international relations"

will prejudice dealings between the Government and the Government of another state or an international organisation. If the disclosure of information communicated in confidence by such a Government or international organisation does any harm at all, it will not be difficult to prove that prejudice, and it is quite unnecessary to have the category in paragraph 51.

Those seem to be the real questions which must be asked and the potential blemishes which must be considered, rather than the spurious smokescreen which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook erected. As for general public interest defence, I find myself persuaded by what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary says. It seems to me irrelevant, with all due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), to say what the precise state of the law is as to the existence or otherwise of a public interest defence. It is plainly fairly ambiguous and uncertain. The right question to ask is whether such a defence is necessary and desirable.

The question has been circumvented by the Government's approach. They have said that they will require the prosecution to prove a specific harm except in certain other limited cases, and they will define that harm. The nature of the argument about public interest is circumscribed by the definition. The proper question is whether the definition is right or wrong. I have expressed, with regard to the use of the word "prejudice", my reservations about one respect of the definition. That seems to be the proper area for debate, rather than the general question whether public interest defences should apply. That seems to be addressing a question which has been removed by the wholly different intellectual concept of the White Paper.

The Government have made out their case in regard to the prior publication of disclosure. They have argued—in my view rightly—that whereas in many cases the fact that there has already been publication would enable the defence to show that the prosecution has not discharged the burden of establishing specific harm, there may be circumstances in which obscure, partial publication elsewhere does not mean that there is no harm by a more substantial or authoritative disclosure identified as coming from the intelligence services. The balance is right.

The most difficult question is whether there is justification for members of the intelligence and security services being under an absolute and lifelong ban from making disclosures without authority. I have come to the conclusion that that general principle—I stress the words "general principle"—is unexceptionable and correct. People who take on the job of working in the security and intelligence services know exactly what they are doing and the nature of the work they are undertaking. I think that it is reasonable that they should not generally be allowed to publish material without the risk of criminal prosecution.

If we are talking about historical material, there is and always has been provision for authorisation, contrary to the impression given by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. There is, however, something to be said for introducing an independent element in the procedure of vetting material for publication. There is also something to be said for no longer confining that process to the service. That is no reason why there should not be people of responsibility and authority from outside the service who could be involved in vetting material for publication.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Would my right hon. and learned Friend care to comment on whether former or serving intelligence service officers should have the right to plead inequity as a defence?

Mr. Brittan: I was coming to that.

Finally, but most important, is the question what should happen if an intelligence officer discovers, or thinks that he has discovered, serious misconduct. Attention has been drawn to the fact that such a person can go to his superior, but attention has also been drawn to the existence of Sir Philip Woodfield's position as staff counsellor, to whom a person in such circumstances can turn.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has not given sufficient weight to the novelty of this departure from previous practice and the importance of there being someone completely outside the service to whom an officer can turn. It is all very well for the right hon. Gentleman to say that an officer may not have confidence in such a person, but it is possible for an officer to have confidence in nobody. No Government can do more than provide a person of repute and integrity such as all who know him would testify Sir Philip Woodfield to be.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would care to listen for a moment before intervening. I regard the present arrangement for a staff counsellor as something to be built on, not something that is wholly sufficient. It is essential that there should be something rather more substantial than this informal, ad hoc appointment. There should be a formally established and publicly announced—and explained—independent system within the public service for examining allegations of impropriety. Although such a system would have to operate in private, its existence could be announced publicly, as could details about it. That would do more than anything else to persuade Parliament that it is right to impose the sanctions of the criminal law for life on people in the security and intelligence services who are found guilty of unauthorised disclosure of material, whatever their motives and whatever the circumstances.

10.59 am

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am very glad to have the chance of following the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). Many of us must have noted, particularly in view of the rumours published in the newspapers recently, how passionately he opposed the particular part of the Government's proposed

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legislation which might interfere with international communications. I hope that that does not mean that he has accepted the new job. Some of us consider that he was most ill-used during the Westland affair. I do not know whether he will take any advice from me on these matters, but my advice is: stick it out; she will not be there for ever.

One of the most excruciating moments ever reported to the House was when Sir Robert Armstrong allegedly went to the Prime Minister and reported, under the inquiry that he carried out, that someone in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Department had been responsible for the leak. I have always thought that that must have been an amazing moment. The Prime Minister must have said, "No, not our Leon. He would not do anything without consulting me." I have always thought that we should have heard such a response from the Prime Minister at the time.

I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not depart, as we value his contribution to ensuring that we get a better Bill than the White Paper.

It would be a special irony indeed if at the end of this week, when, quite properly in my opinion, we have been asserting the supremacy of Parliament as vindicated and established in the 1688 and 1689 revolution, which I still believe was a glorious revolution, we should support a White Paper which involves the derogation from that supremacy of Parliament, particularly in the light of the large-scale misdemeanours of the secret service which have been revealed in recent years. If anyone claims that I am exaggerating, I commend them to the excellent article by Lord Hailsham, written soon after he left the position of Lord Chancellor. A few months ago, he wrote an article for *The Independent*, entitled

"How the security services are bound by the rule of law."

I think that the headline may have been written by the excellent sub-editors of *The Independent*, but the article was written by the Lord Chancellor himself.

In that article he wrote that one of the reasons why the Bill of Rights had been passed and approved on such a scale—and one of the reasons why I am in favour of celebrating these matters—was the antics of James II, which he described as:

"The ill-advised and illegal attempts by James II to evade the contraints of the doctrine."

In other words, James II was engaged in what might be described in modern times as spycatcher activities. In those days the very proper remedy of 1688 and 1689 was to reassert the power, authority and control of Parliament, in particular the House of Commons. That is what we should be doing this week, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said at the end of his notable speech today. We really need to bring back the influence and the control of Parliament.

I presume that it is not discussed or even mentioned in the White Paper because the Prime Minister always lays down the rule that we cannot discuss the possibilities of parliamentary control, which is the normal way in which this country deals with grave misdemeanors. It cannot be applied here because, as the Prime Minister often says, the secret service must be kept secret, and that is the end of the matter.

I imagine that if any Minister were to dare to go along to any of the discussions on the Bill and say, "What about establishing some parliamentary control over this matter?" the whole question would be ruled out from the beginning. Some may say that it is because of the tradition of this country, although, as I said, Lord Hailsham accepts a different doctrine, announced in the article, that Parliament does have some control, and that when a Minister, an Attorney-General or a Home Secretary comes to the House and speaks from the Dispatch Box about how the secret service is operating, that in itself is an admission of parliamentary control. Even when in the usual circumstances, the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General or the Home Secretary says, "We cannot answer these questions because we do not answer security questions in public", Lord Hailsham's doctrine is different. He says that the fact that the Ministers have to come to the House means that they are answerable to the House, and therefore the House has the right and the duty to press the matter further so that we have some proper parliamentary control.

If it is said in 1988, of all years, that we cannot have proper parliamentary control, we should consider what happens in the United States of America. After the earth-shattering experiences on the other side of the Atlantic, I have not heard that the President of the United States is proposing to give up his secret service or to abandon having a secret service—nothing of the kind. However, in the past year, the affairs of the American secret service have been ransacked by Congress in more detail than almost ever before in history. There have been previous occasions, but on this occasion its investigations went further than ever before on a matter of supreme importance about which the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister ought to be paramountly concerned.

International terrorism is one of the appalling horrors of the modern age and how to deal with it is one of the questions that affects the operation of the secret service. That is one reason why Congress has insisted on all these matters being dragged out in public. They discovered that the secret agents of the American Government were engaged in actions with terrorists and were trying to make deals with terrorists quite contrary to all the professions that they had made to the world and which had been supported strongly by our own Prime Minister. Indeed, no one has been more passionate than she in saying how strongly she agrees with President Reagan when he denounces terrorism. But when the agents of President Reagan engage in activities to sell arms or to assist terrorists or terrorists regimes, and when all that is dragged out in the sight of the world, as it has been during the past few months, the Prime Minister is a little more reticent, and we have not heard exactly what she thinks about it.

I believe, and most sensible people would believe, that whatever it may mean to the American security services —although I think that it is better for them too—for American democracy and for the free world of which we are members, it is a very good thing it has all been brought out and that those infamies have not been tolerated.

I do not know whether other hon. Members feel as strongly as I do, but if it is true that it was absolutely essential for these misdemeanours, horrors, misdeeds and contemplated misdeeds to be brought out into the open by the action of the American Congress, I consider that a British parliamentary committee of some sort should have the power to do something similar. I am not saying that we should mimick or adopt the American methods. We have our own methods of establishing a parliamentary Committee to survey these matters.

In the light of all that has happened and all that has been revealed during the past few months, it is monstrous that today we should be presented with a White Paper which does not contain any proposal whatsoever for extending parliamentary control over such matters.

I now turn to a question about which I have had quite a lot of correspondence with the Prime Minister—the revelations in the book "Spycatcher". I am not saying that "Spycatcher" is a great book or a work of art. In many ways, I consider that it is a work of infamy and I certainly do not believe that many parts of it can be believed unless some corroborative evidence can be produced. I certainly think that the person responsible for writing that book was guilty of a gross breach of faith, not only to his obligations but to many of the people he attacked. It is scandalous that Sir Roger Hollis should be denounced, defamed and held up in history as a man who was a traitor to his country on evidence that has not been sifted at all. I know that we cannot protect the dead, but it is pretty thick that that should have happened. On one occasion the Prime Minister tried to repudiate it, but she should have carried it a bit further. If I had been a relation of Sir Roger Hollis I would have been outraged at what was done. A former prominent Conservative Member was the brother of Sir Roger Hollis and if he had been here he would have raised a storm about what was permitted by the Government.

Under the present arrangements there are listed leakages to particular journalists—to Chapman Pincher in particular. I do not know whether there will be a special Chapman Pincher clause in the Bill. Such a clause may say that as long as material is leaked to Chapman Pincher it will be all right and there will be no prosecution. Would the Chapman Pincher clause include a few other journalists as well because there seems to be some discrimination? I am sorry that none of the Law Officers are present because they are the people who are supposed to pick and choose between the Cavendishes and the Chapman Pinchers and would have to say who was to be prosecuted. This is an important matter.

I shall now come to what has been revealed and about which I had correspondence with the Prime Minister. I wrote to her about the so-called revelations in "Spycatcher" about the attempts to destabilise the Wilson Government, which was obviously the major matter, and asked if they were true or had any basis. But there was another series of revelations. If they are correct they raise questions of first-class importance to the existence and continuance of our democracy. They are questions about the allegations that the British secret service was preparing for the assassination of President Nasser. If it so engaged, that was serious, because if the attempt had succeeded the consequences for our country because of the reactions throughout the whole of the middle east would have been grave. Anybody who knows anything about the middle east knows the reputation that President Nasser had. I took that view about the consequences when I first read this tale about the British secret service having been engaged in these activities.

John Donaldson, now Lord Donaldson of Lymington, was not my favourite judge because I had a few brushes with him in times gone by. However, what he said about this matter is of great importance. He said that the so-called plan to assassinate President Nasser was

"iniquity of a high order—a monstrous thing and a stain on this country's honour."

If somebody discovers that our secret service has engaged in such activities, what would be his obligation to reveal it under the present proposals? If there is a stain on our country's honour is some member of the secret service to say, "I must not take any steps to reveal that because I am bound by the same provision."

In the same discussion on these matters Lord Donaldson went on to speak about the absurdity of the doctrine that if the secret service was engaged in acts of such gross iniquity, that was all the more reason for matters to be suppressed. That is a very strange doctrine. Some of us take a simpler view. To introduce the idea that one must never reveal what would involve a stain on our country's honour is almost to introduce the Nuremburg concept that one must not reveal anything and does not have any obligation apart from a signed obligation to the state. As some hon. Members have said, juries have taken a similar view in previous cases. If Ministers have their way, that loophole will be closed. Juries have a somewhat different view from that of the Government about what is right and proper for the country to do, and this case is a clear example of that.

I wrote to the Prime Minister on two or three occasions asking whether she would be good enough to tell me whether she ever inquired into the accuracy of this case. I did that because she told the House on one occasion that she had had a new inquiry into the so-called destabilisation of the Wilson Government. On many occasions she spoke about the investigation initiated by my right hon. Friend who was the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. He did have an investigation, but I do not know whether it covered all these matters. The Prime Minister said in the letter to me, and told the House, that she had carried out a fresh investigation into these matters. Is that the case? Perhaps the Minister will tell us, but I doubt it because he would have to go and ask the Prime Minister and she would not be in too good a temper if the question were put to her point blank. If an investigation was carried out, did it cover the question which Lord Donaldson said:

"involved iniquity of a high order—a monstrous thing"?

Will we be told by the Prime Minister that it happened a long time ago and we do not need inquiries into such things? Will she say that these are ancient matters, all gone and finished? Will she say that we must restore confidence in the present secret service and that those matters have nothing to do with today's affairs?

Things are very different with this Government. These matters are not out of date and are not ancient questions. They are as up to date, shall we say, as the shootings in Gibraltar. The secret service is involved in that. One of the most extraordinary developments in that connection was the precipitant way in which the Prime Minister told the House that she would not have any special inquiry and certainly no parliamentary inquiry. Right at the beginning my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said that we must have an investigation because that was the best thing for Parliament, democracy and the secret service. The Prime Minister brushed all that aside. She said that she would not have an inquiry. She did not want Parliament interfering in any shape or form. She was landed with the much more difficult situation.

There will be an inquest at which nobody knows exactly who will appear or even how the evidence is to be taken. However the inquest goes, it will be very difficult for it to establish in the eyes of the world a full and proper judgment on the whole affair. That is especially so because

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one of the most scandalous aspects of the Gibraltar affair was what happened a few days later when the news was coming out. What happened a few days later can all be checked from the newspapers. Witnesses were brought forward as if they were witnesses of the event. When matters of that importance were published in the newspapers, a deluge of vilification and defamation was dished out against those witnesses or possible witnesses. Some of that deluge came from No. 10 Downing street.

If the Home Secretary disputes what I say he can look it up in the *Sunday Times* which, I suppose, is the most elevated section of the Murdoch press. The newspaper said that the material came from "higher sources". I do not think that it mentioned the No. 10 Downing street machine in that case, but that certainly came out. I do not know whether libel actions will be taken by those witnesses or about the chances that they would have in such actions.

We have the combination of a Prime Minister who says, "We will not have any investigation whatever on any parliamentary judgment on these events", and a highly suspicious Downing street machine that pours out material suitable to the Prime Minister. If it was poured out a way that was unsuitable to the Prime Minister its author would be unlikely to last very long. I have no hesitation in saying—neither did my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook—that the problems derive from the Government's behaviour.

We know that there are many problems that are not simple to solve. The Home Secretary said that he will settle the problems, but I do not believe that he has a chance of doing so if he does not secure the support of the House. If the right hon. Gentleman had wanted a settlement he should have given a much better welcome to the Protection of Official Information Bill introduced by his hon. Friend the minister for Aldridge—Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and to all the work that he has done since. The House and all those who believe in freedom of information owe the hon. Gentleman a debt of gratitude for the way in which he pursued his campaign. If the Government had any sense, they would have consulted him so as to achieve a Bill that would command the attention of the House. They will not do so by the proposals that they have presented.

I have no doubt that the relationship between the Prime Minister's Office and the nation is—I use the word deliberately—corrupt. I do not mean corrupt in the way that Malcolm Muggeridge used it. His definition of the word "corrupt" was when money passed. Favours pass between the Government machine, the No. 10 Downing street machine and the hugely elaborate Murdoch press, the power of which is far greater than that which a single newspaper proprietor should hold in a democratic society. The relationship between the Prime Minister's Office and those newspapers is evil and corrupt and the many problems will not be solved until the House has the courage to establish its own authority. It would be the best way of celebrating the revolution of 1688, which was important in the history of our country. Even what Lord Hailsham wrote about it was quite correct. It is necessary that the rule of law is established.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Home Secretary or anybody else could not deny that over the past weeks and months we have heard accumulated evidence about how the secret services have defied and broken the rule of law with impunity. The Prime Minister has said, "There will be no parliamentary inquiry and we shall introduce a Bill that takes no account of these questions". If the Home Secretary makes himself a party to that, the Bill should be treated not only with opposition but derision.

11.22 am

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The House holds that there are certain important liberties and rights consonant with democracy. Among them are freedom of speech and of the press. A democracy cannot identify itself as such without them. The protection of certain information in the interests of all our citizens is important. When we consider a change in the law about the protection of official information, we must try to strike a balance between those competing interests. It must be a substantial argument that gainsays freedom of speech or of the press. We need freedom of speech and of the press to identify the activities of Government. That is the only way in which we can hold them accountable. If we do not know what they are doing, how do we hold them accountable? In that spirit, one approaches the White Paper.

I have some sympathy with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who said he found it difficult to reconcile the words of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in his original introduction of the White Paper with some of the words that he used today. I shall give the reasons why I also have difficulty in that regard. If the Home Secretary were saying, "I shall approach the appropriate bull points as I can identify them, but nevertheless, caveat emptor," that would be perfectly reasonable. My right hon. Friend, however, went further than that, and I shall try to diagnose why we should be wary of any salesman—whether it be an insurance salesman or any other—who wants to identify the most marketable aspects of his proposals. It is my job, as the prospective purchaser of the White Paper, to identify omissions, absences or matters that are not in my interest.

The matter is approached by trying to identify two classes of information: those that are absolute—I know that my right hon. Friend backed away from the concept of absolute defences—and those that have a limited damage test, over which the prosecution would merely have to skip. I take to heart the remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) that "prejudice" and "damage" are low-level words that do not pose a serious test to the prosecution when a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment is involved.

The first absolute category is paragraph 51 of the White Paper, which refers to paragraph 28 and makes slight reference to paragraphs 26 and 27. It relates to information obtained in confidence from Governments and international organisations. When the Home Secretary originally introduced this paragraph, he said that he did not expect to carry me with him and that I had raised an important but limited point. How limited or small is this point? There is little argument about why paragraph 51 is necessary.

In that paragraph, the Government say:

"There is a wider damage to the standing of the United Kingdom in relation to all governments and international

organisations. For that reason any unauthorised disclosure is harmful, and the Government sees no purpose in setting a test of harm which is bound to be satisfied in every instance."

The sheer assertiveness of that is breathtaking. It lacks rational justification, or an attempt to discover in what way it should be limited or whether it is compatible with the rights of hon. Members, representing their constituents, to be able to hold the Government to account for proposals, measures or actions that they take in the name of the British people. That is what we are trying to examine.

The introduction of international organisations makes the scope of paragraph 51 enormous. No serious injury or damage test is to be applied. There is a pure assertion that everything nominated in this category is an absolute offence. I cannot understand the need for the comprehensiveness of the paragraph, and if one asks the Foreign Office to list or identify international organisations or activities that might lead to a punishment of up to two years' imprisonment, it grandly replies that it would "not be practicable" to tell the House of Commons.

"Not be practicable" to tell us what is a criminal offence or what may give rise to criminal behaviour? That is irresponsible, and if that is the spirit in which Whitehall approaches the matter—by announcing nostrums of such breathtaking wideness and saying that it cannot identify offences because it is not practicable—it is absurd. I agree entirely with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks that paragraph 51 should be dropped.

What does the paragraph do to journalists. It makes that which is lawful to report today unlawful to report after this measure is passed by the House. That aspect needs careful scrutiny. In a White Paper, I look for a balance between the overriding considerations of the need to protect certain information and the rights of free expression, for people to know information and for the press to print it. There is no balance. Journalists are referred to in paragraphs 54 and 64, and there is almost no way out of the liability of disclosure of provisions. In paragraph 54, the Government assert:

"The Government accordingly proposes that the unauthorised disclosure by any person of information in the specified categories"—

hon. Members should remember that the specified categories contain no damage test—

"in circumstances where harm is likely to be caused should be an offence."

Paragraph 55 says:

"it would not be right to make disclosure criminal except where the discloser knows or can reasonably be expected to know that the disclosure would be likely to cause harm."

That might sound like a let-out, but the press cannot argue that it does not know that it is an absolute category. It is the law of the land and the press must be informed. It says, absolutely, that damage has taken place. Therefore, what argument can there be as to whether it has or has not taken place? It is an absolute assertion in law.

That is why there is some merit in what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, in that one does not need ministerial certificates. We have done away with them. We have instructed the court that any release of information under that category is a crime. I am not legally qualified like the former Home Secretary, but a judge can instruct a jury as to the law. The question can be asked, "Did the offence take place within the category of information given in confidence by a foreign Government?" The answer is yes. The question then is, "What pleadings can be made?" The answer is none. It is yes or no.

Where is the defence? We have ruled out the defence of prior publication, the fact that it has been previously available, and we have ruled out an iniquity defence. We do not need a ministerial certificate, because it has been asserted before a court. One cannot even look at the contention that there is damage, because no damage is required under that category. It has to be treated cautiously because it is closing down information that may be available to us today.

Let us look at the most sensitive type of information that the Government have a duty to protect and about which they are anxious. The Trevi agreement was leaked in *The Independent*. There was nothing outrageous in the document. It seems fairly sensible and contains nothing that one could not second-guess if one were a terrorist. I suppose it was information given in confidence between intergovernmental organisations—a phrase that would cover the Ghana cocoa marketing board. The information may have been leaked by an Italian or German Minister. I am not trying to say that a particular country is prone to such leaks. The information may be reported in *Corriere Della Sera, Il Tempo* or a Belgian newspaper, and a British journalist based in Milan may be asked to provide information on that for his newspaper. As I read the White Paper, he has no defence if he does so. He has committed an offence. It was information improperly disclosed, given in confidence between intergovernmental organisations, not necessarily Governments.

It is an outrageous category and it shows the spirit of those behind it, who did not try to weigh up what is appropriate in the great contest between our right to be able to express ourselves freely and the need to protect what we accept needs to be protected.

The second all-embracing category deals with security and intelligence matters and it is linked to interception. I want to deal with the quality of the arguments. There is an extraordinary argument in paragraph 53. I ask the House to reflect on the nature of people who put together arguments such as that. It makes its assertions, as we have come to expect from the White Paper and it says that no information obtained by means of interception can be disclosed without assisting terrorism or crime, damaging national security or

"seriously breaching the privacy of private citizens."

What happens is that someone says, "My phone has been tapped. I am outraged and I want to tell the world." He would be told, "Oh no, you would commit an absolute offence because you would be invading your own privacy." The argument is contorted. Perhaps I have misread it and I am happy to give way to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary if he will explain how I would breach my own privacy. That is one of the assertions made in the White Paper. That is why I ask the House to look cautiously at everything.

The section dealing with security services affects every Government because they are responsible for them.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): If an individual thinks that his telephone is being tapped and wishes to make use of the Interception of Communications Act 1985, that could not be an offence under any circumstances because it does not involve official information.

Mr. Shepherd: If that is true, why does the White Paper make the assertion that to reveal such a thing would be damaging or would seriously breach the privacy of a private citizen? Perhaps I am misreading the White Paper?

The Government propose to make disclosure by members and former members of the security and intelligence services an absolute offence. That was a contention fought for by Sir Robert Armstrong in the High Court. It is worth remembering the words of Mr. Justice Scott in dealing with it:

"Sir Robert would not accept that any freedom of speech or of publication should be permitted so as to allow any information about the Security Service to be discussed publicly by an insider. No question of balance between the proper requirements of national security, on the one hand, and of freedom of speech or of the press on the other hand, arose. I found myself unable to escape the reflection that the absolute protection of the Security Services that Sir Robert was contending for could not be achieved this side of the Iron Curtain."

That is what the Government propose to legislate to accomplish. We should see it off.

We have to look carefully at the relationship between the duties. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) identified that when dealing with iniquity. The learned judge went on:

"It is not in dispute that Mr. Wright was under a duty of confidence by reason of his employment in MI5; nor is it in dispute that his duty continued after his resignation. The duty, if not contractual, is a duty recognised and imposed by equity, co-extensive with the duty that would have been imposed by implied term had the relationship been contractual. The breadth and duration of the duty that binds ex officers of MI5 depends, in my judgment, as does the breadth and duration of the duty of confidence in any other context, on all the circumstances of the case. The requirements of national security and the need for secrecy about the affairs of personnel of MI5 are of great weight indeed. But the breadth and duration of the duty cannot, nonetheless, be divorced from the circumstances of the particular case. Mr. Alexander"—

counsel representing the Government—

"submitted that there was, where the duty of confidence of an ex-MI5 officer was concerned, no baiance to be struck. The duty of confidence applied, he said, to all information, however apparently trivial and however much, by reason of disclosures made by others, the information might have become publicly known. I am unable to accept that such an extreme, absolute approach is correct."

This is the Government's extreme and absolute approach. Mr. Justice Scott continued:

"The proposition may be tested by a number of examples, some more fanciful than others. Sir Percy Sillitoe's autobiography was published with the permission of the authorities. It contained information about the workings of MI5. Could it be argued that, notwithstanding the publication of the autobiography, other MI5 officers were under a duty not to disclose the information therein contained? I think not."

I accept that those are the personal views of a judge, expressed obiter dicta in court. If the authorities refuse to draw any line, they mistake the nature of the duty of confidence they seek to enforce. That says it all about the Government's approach. They do not try to draw any line, they include everything—the gold watch presented, the high crime of iniquity. What were the challenges of iniquity? They were the destabilisation of a legitimately elected British Government. That concerns every citizen. Every court that it has come before has accepted that that is so primary in a democracy that it could never be suppressed. In the Government's White Paper there is no intention that any such challenge should ever emerge into the public arena. There is also the contention that we tried to assassinate the Head of another state. That was referred to by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. That would be a crime of infamy that would bring great shame upon this country.

Those are matters of major public policy, but the White Paper asserts that they should not be matters for us to discuss. It says that it would be improper and could cause damage. Damage to whom? The White Paper will damage us as a public forum and as a nation that is wedded to democracy. From 1688 to 1889, we required no official secrets Acts in the form we have and we rose to a great empire. In 1889 we introduced a public interest defence that information could be communicated to the authorities. In 1911 that was considerably watered down but still existed. In 1988 we are proposing that the public interest defence should go out of the window. We are proposing that prior publication should not be available.

The courts also had a view about prior publication, but I shall first quote again from Mr. Justice Scott:

"Mr. Alexander submitted that the Government ought not to be exposed to the pressure and embarrassment that mischievous and untrue allegations by insiders might produce. I accept that pressure and embarrassment might follow upon the reporting of allegations of the sort I am considering. But there are two answers, in my view, to Mr. Alexander's point. The first is that the legitimate purpose of the duty of confidence imposed on members and ex-members of MI5 is to preserve the secrecy of MI5's affairs and thereby to enable it to operate efficiently. The purpose is not to save the Government of the day from pressure or embarrassment. Second, and more important, the ability of the press freely to report allegations of scandals in government is one of the bulwarks of our democratic society. It could not happen in totalitarian countries. If the price that has to be paid is the exposure of the government of the day to pressure or embarrassment when mischievous of false allegations are made, then, in my opinion, that price must be paid."

That is my opinion as well. We suffer some loss of confidentiality and of security because we are a democracy, but this is a very small price to pay when one weighs up the great splendour of the fact that we are a democracy.

The White Paper makes no reference to the lawful or proper duties of the security services and the intelligence gatherers at GCHQ. Those were set down in the Maxwell Fyfe declaration, and were clearly identified and big enough topics. The White Paper does not even try to focus an absolute form of protection onto those necessary activities that are lawfully identified by a former Home Secretary. I would have thought that that may have been a starting point, but if the Government's position is that, at the end of the day, there is a class of information, that, through understandable difficulties in proving the damage in court, would expose us to the risk of greater damage, perhaps the answer to that is the contrived one that came from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), a former Solicitor-General for Scotland. It is that, before a prosecution goes forward, where there is any suggestion that there is an abolute area —that is, no defence such as public interest, or prior publication can be raised—that should be looked at by an independent body.

In one respect, I do not go along with the argument of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the former Home Secretary. That body could give the public the confidence that this is not a wilful, capricious or politically motivated or directed prosecution but one that has satisfied people of experience, who are independent of the Executive and

secure, and who are confident, that the case has met what was originally in Franks, the serious injury test—not just no injury or an assumption of injury. This whole measure should be informed with the concept, right through it, that where we are proposing to send fellow citizens to prison, they must have caused a serious injury.

I genuinely believe, along the lines adopted by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that this White Paper is fatally flawed in the absence of the public interest defence. It is counter-productive to argue that information that is freely available around the world could lead to criminal prosecution and the possibility of imprisonment here in our country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Difficult as it may be to limit the time taken by speeches on a subject such as this, I make a strong appeal to hon. Members. There is a great deal of interest, and I hope to be able to call all hon. Members who wish to speak.

11.43 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 deserves no more than a rapid cremation. Instead, we are having a requiem in which we are seeing created, as the section is laid to rest, a new and harsh successor to it. It is one that was falsely trailed by the Home Secretary in his statement, which bears little relation to the White Paper. The grief that we feel is not at the passing of section 2 but that what is offered is, first, so harsh and, secondly, so limited. It is limited in that it plays no part in the creation of a code of freedom of information. If there is one thing that could improve the image of our democracy for the public it would be to see through such a code that the Government are, at last, being made accountable and are being seen to be accountable.

The legislation that will repeal and replace section 2 should be no more than part of a much wider package. The motto of that package should be "Government are accountable". The Government have had nine years in which to produce new legislation. They have produced a reform so limited that they have wasted an opportunity. If Governments are to be accountable, we must accept that the whistle must be blown and it should be heard to be blown when there is a scandal in Government that should be exposed in the public interest. The words of Mr. Justice Scott, quoted by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) at great length, are words that demonstrate that members of the judiciary, at the highest level, believe that there must be room for the whistle to be blown on Government. Mr. Justice Scott would not—it would not be his style—use words such as "whistle-blowing", but he meant the same thing when he said that the press has a legitimate role in disclosing scandals in Government, and that open democratic society requires that that should be so. He said:

"the ability of the press freely to report allegations of scandals in government is one of the bulwarks of our democratic society."

For that bulwark to mean anything, as Mr. Justice Scott pointed out, the press must be free and it must be free sometimes to report what are no more than allegations based upon reasonable suspicion and evidence. In that context, I shall return later to the question whether there should be a public interest defence or what the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills calls an "iniquity defence" which may be more accurate.

Some of the proposals are welcome. I welcome the restriction to six of the categories of protected information. I welcome anything that draws some of the draconian breath of a section 2 that was enacted in a panic and has been repented at great length. It is welcome that ministerial certificates are not to be the determining factor. However, we are presented with a new and insidious alternative to such certificates. It is described as designation. Designation will be a flexible weapon in the hands of a Government. If we are ever unfortunate enough to have a truly unscrupulous Government, it will be an exceedingly flexible weapon. It is clearly open to abuse, as the very fact of designation will be protected, too. Therefore, the designated person will not be able to blow the whistle even to the extent of saying that he has been designated and, therefore, what comes from his category of work is designated. I suspect that the time may well come when every tight corner will be a designated area. The House should not be prepared to accept that when we come to scrutinise and debate the legislation.

With your injunction in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall now deal briefly with a number of the specifics in the White Paper. I agree with the proposition that there ought to be an obligation of absolute secrecy on public servants in the unusual category that has been discussed at great length in recent months. However, we must not simply close the door on public interest by such a categorisation.

As to security and intelligence disclosures by persons who are not members of the security services nor so designated, the White Paper says that the prosecution should have to prove either that disclosure was likely to damage the operation of the security or intelligence services—perhaps that is fair enough—or that the information concerned was of a class or description the disclosure of which would be likely to damage the operation of the services. I invite the Minister and his officials to look carefully at all the difficulties that class immunity has caused in the ordinary civil law, in tort actions, in actions under order 53 of the rules of the supreme court for judicial review—the fastest growing area of law in this country. It seems to me that to create a classification of that type is unduly harsh and will breed uncertainty. It is a classification that may well affect the freedom of the media and of authors such as Chapman Pincher and the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) when the plume of his nom is in his hand.

As regards the disclosure of information relating to defence, it seems to me to be remarkably harsh and restrictive that the Government seek virtually to proscribe information that may prejudice dealings between the Government and Governments of another state or an international organisation. For example, if a British Government official came into possession of evidence in relation to the Iran-Contra scandal, surely it would be in the public interest that he should be able to reveal that information to a responsible journalist. That will not be possible if the proposals are enacted.

As for information obtained in confidence—not relating to security or defence matters—from other Governments or from international organisations, the consequences of that classification are quite absurd. It will be an offence if a Government official discloses anything

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

about, for example, negotiations regarding air routes or international air travel insurance obligations, or even about consumer safety and matters such as the labelling of foodstuffs in Europe. Surely the Government cannot really mean to proscribe the revelation of such information. The White Paper appears to suggest that they do.

It is to be yet another absolute offence to disclose information whose disclosure would be likely to be useful in the commission of offences or to terrorists or in helping a prisoner to escape from custody. That would mean, for example, that the disclosure of certain details of a layout of a prison in the context of criticism of the conditions in hat establishment could be included, as those details might be likely to help an astute observer or reader of what is revealed to assist a prisoner to escape from that prison. Surely the Government cannot really be intending to enact legislation which would close down the legitimate comments of the press on such issues? The provision is absurdly wide. I give the Minister credit, and say no more than that the Government have simply not thought about such issues in the drafting of the White Paper. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills when he refers to the fearsome nature of the proposals relating to the interception of cummunications. They mean that, although the Government chose not to prosecute Cathy Massiter, because they were rightly afraid of the reaction of the jury, she would now be prosecuted by the Government because she was committing an absolute offence. In the case, of an absolute offence, the judge might well be in a position actually to direct the jury to convict. There is an important difference between section 2, which did not enable the judge to direct the jury to convict in the Ponting case, and the proposals in the White Paper which, in my view, would enable the judge to direct and order the jury to convict. That would apply to someone such as Cathy Massiter.

That brings me directly to the public interest or iniquity defence. We have heard a most extraordinary new constitutional doctrine this morning which can be summarised in six words, "A perverse jury is your safeguard." The Government say, "We will not introduce an iniquity or public interest defence because we think it is inappropriate. We think that there is no need for it because of the liberalism of this White Paper", but, at the same time, the Home Secretary says, "We are leaving it to juries to decide." This contradiction is extraordinary.

Let us think for a moment of what happened in the Ponting case. The trial judge gave his directions on the law to the jury. He did not accept the proposition of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) that there was a public interest defence. His directions to the jury were unequivocal. He told it that, in law, Mr. Ponting did not have a defence, but he was not able to go so far as to direct the jury to convict. The jury went out. It considered the judge's directions and what Mr. Ponting had done and said, "Not guilty." It said, "Not guilty" on one ground alone. It believed that it would be a monstrous injustice against the public interest to find Mr. Ponting guilty.

Such matters are to be left in the hands of juries, boasts the Home Secretary, but what will happen now? The judge may well have the power to direct the jury to convict, so it may not even retire to its room. It may sit in the court —I have seen juries directed to convict in much more trivial cases—and the court clerk will stand up and say, "Mr. foreman, on the direction of my Lord, do you find the defendent guilty?" On that occasion, the jury will have to show a new moral robustness and say, "No, we ignore the direction of the judge and we do not convict." What will happen then?

As a matter of jurisprudence and history, the jury's verdict is not binding. It is always accepted as binding, but, as a matter of strict law, it is a recommendation. Under the Government's proposals, what will happen? Will they expect the judge to say, "Thank you very much, members of the jury. I do not accept your verdict. This defendant is found guilty because that is the law." We are entering a new area where the Government are making themselves a hostage of the most extraordinary kind to a fortune upon which no citizen in a free and democratic society should have to rely—the fortune of having a robust and perverse jury.

There will always be a public interest defence, whether the Government like it or not, because the citizens of this country, even if they are vetted jurors, as in the Ponting case, will ensure that there is a public interest defence. It is absurd, stupid, unrealistic and self-demeaning of any Government of the United Kingdom not to recognise in legislation that that is so.

11.57 am

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) who is always robust in his contributions to these debates. I wish to take up the central theme of his speech and of the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot)—the question of accountability.

The right hon. Gentleman said that Parliament must have influence in these matters. He is absolutely right. The question is how that influence may be attained. I am firmly of the opinion that that accountability arises, as it has always done in this Chamber, through the ministerial accountability of the Minister of the Crown to this Chamber and the duty to answer the questions that are put to him or her by the House. That is the accountability in which this country and this Parliament have traditionally believed. Whatever the interesting merits of the United States, or any other Western liberal democracy, the machinery of government in the United States is very different from that in the United Kingdom and the firmness of the accountability to this Chamber is the most desirable route.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Richard Shepherd *rose*——

Mr. Wheeler: Perhaps my hon. Friends will allow me to develop my theme a little further.

In the accountability argument, reference has been made to the possible involvement of a Select Committee of this House or to some special Select Committee procedure which could intervene between the role of the Minister and that of this House. I disagree with that and say so with the authority of having been the Chairman—indeed, I still am —of a Select Committee. I do not believe that the Select Committee procedure is the correct or proper vehicle for dealing with such matters. Accessibility to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who has a particular responsibility in these matters, which is open to every right

hon. and hon. Member, is the preferred route of accountability to that of the imprecise route of a Select Committee seeking to call evidence and examine issues of great complexity which go beyond the responsibility or role of a Select Committee.

Mr. Dykes: How can my hon. Friend refer to the absolute high quality of accountability which reassures all hon. Members, when on 11 July an hon. Member asked an innocent and innocuous question of the Home Secretary,

"whether he will issue a directive to the director general of MI6 setting out the parameters of lawful activity, along the lines of the Maxwell Fyfe directive of 24 September 1952, and if he will make a statement."

I would have thought that that was an innocent and innocuous question, but the standard answer came out:

"It has been the long-established practice of this and previous Governments not to comment on such matters." —[*Official Report*, 11 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 74.]

Is that really the accountability that we are asking for in this tercentenary year of 1988?

Mr. Wheeler: My hon. Friend knows perfectly well that that is not what I meant, nor is it what I said. I said that the form of accountability is through the Minister of the Crown to the Floor of the House. At the risk of taking more time than I should, I repeat that other methods are open to right hon. and hon. Members in the pursuance of their parliamentary duties. There is no finer or better method than that which this House has practised now for many centuries than the method of talking to the Minister who is responsible for those services and their day-to-day activities. We all know that that method is open to all of us. It is a most acceptable form of accountability and a most desirable way of dealing with these issues.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Wheeler: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will allow me, I must press on. Time is pressing and other hon. Members wish to speak and I wish to go on to other aspects of the White Paper.

There is no doubt that the 77-year-old section 2 of the Official Secrets Act has now outlived its time. It is right that the House should have the opportunity to replace it and generally to reform the law relating to official secrets. Had the former Labour Government introduced their proposals in 1978 and had those proposals become law, it is likely that today we would have been saying that the enactments of 1978 had proved totally unacceptable and that we want to repeal those measures. There is no doubt that we have advanced considerably since 1978. I daresay that we have advanced still further than the proposals of 1979 when this Government first began to tackle the nettle of how to reform the Official Secrets Act.

Without any hesitation, I can say that I believe that my right hon. Friend and the Government have produced a most acceptable set of proposals. Indeed, the fact that some of my hon. Friends are critical of them for being too liberal is perhaps an indication of how sucessful my right hon. Friend has been. Even those outside this place, in the media industry, who have the greatest financial and vested interest in seeking these matters viewed somewhat differently, have given the White Paper a generous and positive reception, while reserving some elements of criticism, which I may touch on in a moment. It is right to sweep away the measure that we are discussing. Instead, we want to introduce a tough but tightly defined law and it is that concept of definition that we should seek to achieve.

The White Paper proposals will cover six areas of information which it is in all our interests as a country to keep secret. As we know, those areas include defence, security and intelligence, diplomacy and information given in confidence by other Governments, official information helpful to criminals and the interception of telecommunications. All those areas of information will get legal protection. The White Paper will define those categories as strictly and accurately as possible.

With regard to the disclosures of information given in confidence to the United Kingdom by foreign Governments, I recognise the strength of the case put by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). That very issue goes to the heart of our relationships as a country with other countries, and especially with our allies. It is a difficult concept to get right. I advise my hon. Friend the Minister of State that, as we continue to contemplate the White Paper and prepare the Bill, which I hope will be introduced in the next Session, we should see whether it is possible to define the nature of that relationship a bit further. I suspect that we could do so without in any way damaging the importance of the relationship with our allies and other countries. If we could do so, we would in large measure reach an agreement across the House on a matter which is of great importance to the House.

When a case comes to court, the prosecution will inevitably have to prove to the jury not just that information in one of the special categories has been disclosed, but that that disclosure is actually damaging our national interests. It is important to prove that before a jury. It will be for the courts to decide whether the damage test has been met, not for a Minister. We have dropped the idea which was advocated in previous proposals that a certificate signed by a Minister, thus acting as judge, should be enough to prove that damage has been caused.

The special duty of lifelong confidentiality will continue to apply to members of the security services. People who join those services do so voluntarily. They do not have to seek employment within them. Even those rare and special members of the Civil Service, such as my right hon. Friend's principal private secretary who, by the very nature of the special duties that he has to perform with my right hon. Friend becomes privy to the work of the security and intelligence services, could, if he so wished, say to the establishments division of his Department prior to the appointment, "I would rather not take that office because of the binding obligation which will thus devolve upon me." There is a clear and positive statement of obligation. It is absolutely right that people who volunteer to serve the British Crown, the British state and the British people in those services should understand from the outset precisely what those obligations are. What could be clearer or better than that? I am sure that it makes sense.

It is as well to pay some sort of tribute to the work of those services. We have been debating the content of the White Paper, but we should remember that the work done by the people in those services is of exceptional value and that the very nature of it precludes it from being proclaimed from the front pages of the newspapers or on television programmes. Those services help and protect us daily from terrorism and foreign espionage.

Mr. Allason: Is it not extraordinary that we are unique in the world in that nothing may be written about security and intelligence yet last week Comte Alexandre de Marenches, who ran the French intelligence service for 11 years, published a book, and two CIA chiefs stationed in London have published books? There is a perfectly respectable mechanism in most other countries which allows such books to be written. Is my hon. Friend really saying that it is absolutely forbidden for everyone in this country to write about the security services and intelligence?

Mr. Wheeler: As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already said, the publishers of memoirs or an academic in one of our universities who wants to write a book about the history of a recent international or military event may have access to material through a procedure which is well understood by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and by hon. Members on both sides of the House. That procedure remains in place.

I want to comment briefly on the public interest defence, which has been discussed today. I do not believe that we should try to include the public interest defence in this legislation. That would create confusion rather than certainty in the law. The criminal law defines an offence in terms of an individual's actions, not his motives, for carrying them out. The latter may be taken into account by the judge in his summing up or when passing sentence and that may well affect the decision of the jury, but it should not be included in the law.

I have already dealt with special duties on the part of those who serve in the security and intelligence services. With regard to prior publication and the position of newspapers and the media industry, as I understand the White Paper, no one can be convicted of revealing information relating to security intelligence, defence or international relations unless the prosecution can prove that disclosure was likely to cause a specified harm to the public interest and that he or she who proclaimed it knew that. Nor can someone be convicted for disclosing information useful to criminals unless the prosecution could show that the information was still likely to be useful despite its prior publication. The defence of prior publication is therefore subsumed within the test of harm.

I also commend my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on having the courage in the White Paper to drop the offence of receiving unauthorised information that is contained in the Official Secrets Act 1911. That point alone is a sign of the liberalisation of the proposal and is why the package as a whole, perhaps with that one area to deal with international affairs upon which I have but briefly touched, deserves the support of the House when a Bill is presented perhaps in the next Session of Parliament.

12.13 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The debate has been valuable. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) referred to prior publication. I do not think that the paragraph in the White Paper about that is good enough. It states that the present position would not have existed in the Government's Freedom of Information Bill in 1979. There is no time to develop that argument. I raise the matter simply because I believe that the House needs more time to discuss this White Paper. Of course, Friday is a business day and we all know that hon. Members have engagements on Fridays. I have to attend a public meeting with my constituents on the Housing Bill later this afternoon.

However, so many of the points that I have heard today from the hon. Members for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), and for Westminster, North, and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) need to be taken further if the Minister and the Government, when they produce legislation, want to get it right. Otherwise, they will not get it right.

I believe that the hon. Member for Westminster, North said that if a Labour Government had legislated, there would be complaints now. I am sure that he is right. The White Paper for which I was responsible does not meet all the points about which I am concerned now. To some degree that is inevitable. We should at least have a good shot at it this time and not leave all the bits hanging around in future. We should let more of our colleagues participate.

With regard to parliamentary accountability the time has come to have some way in which the Maxwell Fyfe rules—which are now well out of date—can be assessed. Are those rules, or something like them, the basis on which our security services work now? If there is anything in half the allegations that we hear, that cannot be true. I do not know whether those allegations are right. I have my opinions about Mr. Wright. I have no time for him; a great deal of what he has written is infamy and it was wrong that it should have been published. In that I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). However, parts of what Mr. Wright revealed should have been published.

However, parliamentary accountability on the way in which the security services work is important. The time has come to consider the legalisation of the security services. They have no legal basis. In other countries, the services have such a basis, which I had not realised. That should be considered.

The role of the Attorney-General, and the public interest, should also be considered. There are proposals to cover that in the new legislation. As I understand it, the Attorney-General must decide on prosecution and whether that is in the public interest. There have been excellent Attorneys-General in all Governments over the years. However, the security side of things is not their strength. There is a tendency to believe too easily that it is in the public interest to do something or other.

We need more time to consider these matters. Unlike the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, I am glad that we have not got a freedom of information Bill. Such a Bill would be far too long. We must make clear what will be prosecutable under the criminal law. Once that is clear, freedom of information will fall into place. To break the Official Secrets Act 1911 for a moment, I must state that I had a slight problem when in government. It is quite simple. We might have produced a Bill that was a hundred miles long, and it was not easy to operate with a minority of three, on the Franks committee. It is very important to clarify issues under the Official Secrets Act 1911, and it would help the new procedures.

Mr. Dykes: The right hon. Gentleman asked for clarification about what is prosecutable. Does he not agree that that should be supplemented by the vital urgency of increased accountability by this place? That might lead him to agree that that means putting the specific contents

of the Maxwell Fyfe directive into the new Bill as the parameter for the security services, coupled with the creation of a Select Committee consisting of Privy councillors on the supervision of the security services.

Mr. Rees: I am not sure about the Maxwell Fyfe rules. They do not stand up 30 years on. Something beyond them is necessary. We must discuss what a Select Committee would do and the nature of its report.

I was a member of the Franks committee. It produced a good report largely because of the experience and background of Lord Franks. That does not mean that everything that it said was right. I made changes in a White Paper in 1978 and this Government have made others. There is nothing wrong with the principle of change.

I had doubts about ministerial certificates. After I had held high office, I was absolutely sure that I had doubts about the accuracy and classification of a document. On the Franks committee, we questioned civil servants about the basis of the classification of documents and we were not much the wiser at the end of the day. The White Paper states:

"Classification is still necessary for administrative purposes but is not relevant to any prosecutions."

I doubt that.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My experience in the Civil Service clearly showed me that classification is a function of the length of time since the last time that classifications were reviewed. What happens is that a civil servant thinking that there might be the slightest embarrassment as a result of marking a document "Confidential" will mark it "Highly confidential", and so on. Classification must be reviewed every two years; otherwise, everything is marked "Secret".

Mr. Rees: That is an interesting point, and it leads me to my next remark. If there were to be a jury trial, any perceptive lawyer would raise during the course of the proceedings the documents' classification. Time is of the greatest importance. I have some classified documents of no great importance, although I suppose they break some rule or another. After the lapse of all this time, they are not worth a light to anybody, but they were classified at the time. Anyway, I leave it alone—they are not frightfully important.

Mr. John Patten: Perhaps we ought to see them.

Mr. Rees: I shall show them to the hon. Gentleman, if only to convince him that his comments about classification are incorrect. My documents would be proof of that. The same applies to some of the documents about individuals that the security services have, concerning things that those individuals allegedly did 20 or 30 years ago, which places a question mark over them for the rest of their lives. If there is a case for reclassifying documents, there is a case for going through some of those lists and records of what somebody might have said in 1938.

Mr. Patten: From his reading of the White Paper, does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that the concept of classification plays no part in my right hon. Friend's proposals?

Mr. Rees: I did not say that. I said that I bet that any good lawyer would bring the question of the documents' classification into a trial, and for good reason. Mine was a sideways view, that in any event classification needs to be reviewed because it colours the situation in terms of the groups that the Home Secretary has dreamt up, which may have a lifelong application. If documents are to be classified "UK eyes only", and so on, that will colour the grouping in which they are placed. It is important to get the classification right.

The basis of my support for change is to be found in volume 1, section 119, of the Franks report, which stated:

"We believe that most of those who have given evidence to us, and most reasonable people, would accept as a proper basis for the employment of criminal sanctions the unauthorised disclosure of official information which would be likely to cause serious injury to the security of the nation or the safety of the people."

that was the basis of the Franks report. Nobody—and I am not suggesting that the Government have done aught else—can call in aid the Franks report without having that at the top of the page—

"serious injury to the security of the nation or the safety of the people."

The report goes on:

"If criminal sanctions are justified at all, they are justified for this purpose. If they are to be reserved for what is most important, they should not go any wider. We are therefore adopting this as our touchstone."

We were not interested in anything that caused some injury but only that which was likely to cause "serious injury."

As to authorisation, I hope the Home Secretary will study chapter 2 of the Franks report. It was a very curious time of questioning when we dealt, for example, with self-authorisation by civil servants, which is to continue. Because it was not clear what self-authorisation meant, it was clear to the Franks committee that there was a great deal of power in the hands of senior civil servants as to what they might say.

The question of self-authorisation by politicians must be taken into account in any legislation. Most of the Prime Ministers of the past 30 years have authorised themselves, in writing books, to reveal matters which, if they were revealed by the group of people with whom the White Paper deals, could subject them to criminal proceedings under the new Act. Are Ministers included in that grouping or are they outside it? Will they have to sign a document when they become a Cabinet Minister as opposed to being a junior Minister? Will there be a difference between the two? The doctrine of self-authorisation is not clearly described in the White Paper.

I wanted the heading of authorisation to lead me to another point, and if I make it in a blunt way, it is to save time. No Official Secrets Act will stop me from pursuing the matter of dirty tricks by the secret services against Governments of any persuasion. It cannot be in the public interest, and cannot come under any classification, that one should not talk about such matters. That cannot be a secret that must be protected.

I have brought along one of the documents that I have collected, which is all about Ireland, and at the bottom of which appears my name and "Stan Orme" and "David Owen"—a trio of likely lads to have written such a document. It was put out by people working in the Government service, in league to some degree—not just in Ireland but over here. Here is the document, and hon. Members may by all means take a look at it.

Mr. McWilliam *rose*——

Mr. Rees: I would rather hang on to it for a moment.

[Mr. Rees]

The content of that document, with which my name and "David Owen" are associated, is absolute rubbish. That was done to denigrate members of Her Majesty's Opposition. I have more. The stuff must have been written by people with an honours CSE in politics. It is elemental rubbish, but somebody put it out to denigrate politicians. It was part of the dirty tricks set-up. I have two or three such documents. I have said that I think I know where they emanated from. What will be the situation under the new legislation? If I were to pursue that matter and try to get to the bottom of it, would I be breaking the law? I hope not, because it is not in the public interest to keep quiet about that sort of rubbish.

I may tell the House, in terms of one's own patriotism, that my father died a member of the Labour party as a result of the first world war. He would have been regarded as some kind of radical. I do not know that he read *The Guardian*, but he read things that, in the eyes of some people, were even worse. Yet such rubbish is written about us. I want to be absolutely sure that the new law will not prevent one from pursuing such matters.

Mr. John Patten: The piece of paper that the right hon. Gentleman has been waving around so teasingly, but has not yet given to his hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) or to me, does not on the face of it purport to be official information; it is information that has been circulated by someone who the right hon. Gentleman suspects may have been some kind of forger.

Mr. Rees: No. It is rubbish, but it is not a forgery. It was written and put out by people in the Government service, and it is a serious allegation.

On Saturday night I went on a programme—I did not know when I went that it would go on for half the night, but that is another matter—in which a man told us that he was a private investigator employed by MI5. I have obtained the film from the Library, and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has seen it. What the man said was incredible. He alleged that people in the security services were no longer concerned—as they should be—with spying and terrorism, but were concerned with people who were protesting about the building of atomic power stations.

Would that man, who assured me—I shall pursue the matter—that he was employed by the security services, be breaking the new laws by revealing such information publicly?

Mr. Dykes: Presumably he would have to give it to a parliamentarian, who could read the entire document in the House. It would then be covered by parliamentary privilege—which shows again how nonsensical the position would be.

Mr. Rees: I think that I have raised a good point. It is for the Government to answer. As the man was not a full-time employee, has he the right to go to the staff counsellor? He was paid on a contract basis; he has now been paid off with money in a brown envelope. It had to be money in a brown envelope, did it not?

I hope that we shall have time to discuss the major issues, such as accountability, that have been mentioned today. We need an Official Secrets Act to protect the nation's secrets, but we do not need to protect the secrecy of the Government. We need to replace section 2 on the basis of the principle laid down in the Franks report.

Unless they are careful, the Government will make the mistake that I suspect we were making in government. There needs to be much wider discussion than a White Paper, a Bill and discussions in Cabinet Sub-Committees. I do not believe that the White Paper in its present form will be the end of the story, and I hope that the Government will think again about a number of fundamental issues.

The principle is absolutely right. Far fewer criminal charges will arise than in the existing circumstances, but that of itself is not enough. I want to see the Franks principle in legislation. Serious injury to the nation is all that matters, and if what is revealed leads to a Government being uncomfortable, so be it. Half a dozen points in the White Paper need to be rethought, and I hope that the House can play a part in that.

12.32 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I wholeheartedly agree with the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) that the White Paper should not be the end of the story, and that we should try to get closer to the Franks principle than at least some parts of the White Paper.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary struck a somewhat grandiose note in his opening speech when he described his White Paper as having the effect of an earthquake in Whitehall. The phrase reminded me of the award-winning entry for the world's dullest journalistic headline, "Small earthquake in Chile: not many dead". I think that this is a case of "Small earthquake in Whitehall: not many secrets liberalised".

I say that because many of the liberalisation proposals do no more than cut away the dead wood of catch-all secrets legislation in Government Departments whose secrets presented no threat to security in any event. Although we welcome the degree of liberalisation that has come about—for I do not wish to sound too churlish—it is very much an instance of mandarins yielding to the inevitable after some 20 years of pressures, proposals and counter-proposals.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary no doubt has had a difficult job in corralling all the permanent secretaries and persuading them that they must give up the handcuffs of the criminal law placed on their Departments' areas of so-called secrecy. I give him two cheers for doing a competent job, but at least three should be directed to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), whose pioneering Private Member's Bill made it all possible.

That small earthquake in Whitehall is unsatisfactory. It has left at least two major citadels of unnecessary secrecy not merely standing but strengthened in a completely unacceptable way. The first of these citadels relates to paragraph 51 of the White Paper. It has already been savagely criticised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills and others.

The paragraph proposes an absolute criminal offence for disclosures relating to information obtained in confidence from other Governments or international organisations. I go further in my criticism than anybody

else has yet gone and say that this paragraph of the White Paper is plain daft. Paragraph 51 could have been drawn up only by some old-fashioned, myopic, Carlton-Browne of the Foreign Office-type character who has spent so much of his life overseas that he seriously believes that foreigners' confidences need a higher degree of protection by our criminal law than Britain's own Budget secrets.

That element of Foreign Office farce has been heightened by the risible reply given to the parliamentary question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills. He asked for a list of the international organisations covered by paragraph 51 that creates all these new criminal offences, and he received the amazing answer on 12 July that it was not practicable to provide such a list. The answer did not go on to say whether it was not practicable because the list was too long, or too secret, or too ridiculous. Probably it was all three. It will not do. I urge the Government to drop this paragraph from the White Paper.

To be personal for a moment, if paragraph 51 were to become law it would represent the ultimate futility and failure of nearly 20 years of campaigning for section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to be reformed. The House may remember that when I was a young journalist I spent six weeks in the dock at the Old Bailey alongside the editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*. Our case had nothing to do with national security. It was about information that had been given in confidence to one of our diplomats by members of the then Nigerian military junta, although the most sensitive part of the information given in confidence related to the Nigerian army's inability to shoot straight or to fight battles after 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

According to paragraph 51 as it stands, the editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* and I would have committed an absolute criminal offence against which there would have been no defence, and we would still be languishing in Wormwood Scrubs. As I have criticised my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary so much, there may be moments when he thinks that that might not have been such a bad idea. In all seriousness, however, I hope that this paragraph will be thrown out of the window.

I am also worried about paragraphs 38 to 44 of the White Paper that deal with security and intelligence matters. Like all sensible people, I accept that there are some security and intelligence secrets, such as anti-terrorist operations, that must rightly be stringently protected by these legislative proposals and by section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1911—a tough provision that is to be left completely intact by the new legislation. Certain paragraphs in the White Paper are completely over the top, and I think that I know the reason why.

This is the first ever Government White Paper that might be said to be haunted. The ghost of Peter Wright stalks through several of its pages and paragraphs. It has evidently frightened its authors into a veritable seizure of over-reaction and excessive authoritarianism. Whatever view one might take of the "Spycatcher" saga, we must remember that Parliament passes laws not just to crack hard cases or to take revenge for past events but to be fair to future generations and to the overwhelming majority of loyal and responsible security service employees. Like any other citizens, those who work in the secret world are entitled to some civil rights. Parliament cannot pass a law that effectively suspends Magna Carta for a certain category of Crown servants, just because Peter Wright once caused some embarrassment to Whitehall and Government Ministers.

Let me give some specific examples of how the proposals in paragraphs 38 to 44 of the White Paper make it an absolute offence for Government security officers, past or present, ever to say anything about their work. Let us consider, for example, the position of a current security service employee who is dissatisfied with an administrative ruling that affects his conditions of service, such as his pension, or an allegation of racial discrimination. Having gone through all the approved channels, including the staff counsellor, an employee may still feel that he has been treated unjustly and wants to see his Member of Parliament.

The right of access to a Member of Parliament is important for any citizen, but it is exceptionally important for people such as those who are employed in the security services, who are prohibited from joining a trade union. Under the White Paper, it is a criminal offence for a security service employee to go to his constituency Member of Parliament, because, when discussing his grievance, the officer will have to disclose to some limited information about his security service employment. I argue that the doctrine of absolute confidentiality for life —a new-fangled invention by the Government—does not extinguish all civil rights such as the right to access to parliamentary representatives.

We should reflect for a moment on the extraordinary brouhaha created by the Government about the BBC's series "My Country, Right or Wrong". It is a very good example of how the White Paper would work in practice, although the legal sanctions would be criminal and not civil. The House will recall that the BBC invited several former members of the security services, such as Lord Dacre and Mr. John Day, to contribute to its series of programmes, which they did. They recorded a number of comments, which were so anodyne as to be bordering on the tedious, as it turned out, on matters such as parliamentary accountability, management and how the service works with Ministers.

The Attorney-General took the view, which is repeated in the White Paper, that those contributions, irrespective of their content, were a breach of the life-long obligation of absolute confidentiality and had to be hit with the law. It was a very odd view, bearing in mind the fact that the Director-General of MI5 had known all about his former employees' contributions and had sent round an internal circular to his officers saying that they had nothing to fear from the programmes. The Attorney-General evidently took a different view. He hurled writs and injunctions at the BBC more in the manner of an exuberant wedding guest throwing confetti than a Law Officer of the Crown. When the confetti settled, not a comma was changed in the programmes. Every legal action was withdrawn. Not one word was struck out, and all three programmes went out intact.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The hon. Gentleman is too kind about "My Country, Right or Wrong". He will recall that the Government first tried to insist on seeing transcripts of the programmes before they were broadcast and that only when the BBC properly stood its ground did the Government do the proper thing and go to the courts.

Mr. Aitken: That is a perfectly fair and valid point. Why should responsible former security service personnel have to face criminal prosecution and certain conviction for talking about non-operational, non-secret aspects of their service on a topic which is already a matter of public debate? Retired military officers are able to do that all the time, often it might be said, to the benefit of the subject under discussion.

Why does Britain need to create a stockaded, barricaded leper colony of Crown servants, who have such different rules of secrecy on them that they are silenced from all communications in a far stricter way than are their equivalents in West Germany, France, Israel, Canada, the United States, Australia and all other democracies?

I fear that the combination of moral indignation and legal incompetence in the Peter Wright saga has given birth to an almost totalitarian set of proposals for this narrow group of Crown servants. Some rethinking is needed. It is no use saying that the machinery exists for security service officers to have their memoirs vetted. Peter Wright tried to get his memoirs vetted so that a deal could be struck but the Treasury solicitor refused any such deal. Mr. Anthony Cavendish sent in his memoirs and was told that five chapters had to come out. That is not reasonable machinery for dealing with memoirs or reminiscences.

We should consider what happens in other countries. The former director-general of the Australian secret service has just published his memoirs, the book having been vetted perfectly responsibly. Sir Percy Sillitoe and Sir William Stephenson produced memoirs. Ministers do it all the time in their privileged capacity. I urge the Home Secretary to insert into a Bill some proper machinery for authorising memoirs and responsible communication on radio or in discussion. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) is chairman of a Committee and invited a security services official to talk to the Committee. That had to be cancelled because it was suddenly realised that the absolute doctrine of confidentiality might apply. Therefore, there is a lot of rethinking to be done on that section.

Finally, on the subject of defences, I wish to record my dismay that that is no prior publication defence, no iniquity defence and that the interests of state defence has been removed. Those matters have been covered by other speeches so as time is short I simply place on record that, above all, the section 2(1)(a) defence should be reinserted. We shall return to those matters in Committee—incidentally, I sincerely hope that it will be a Committee of the whole House.

We must remember that we are legislating for succeeding generations. The little local difficulties of Peter Wright are small beer when compared with the need to draw for the future the boundaries between the individual's right to speak and the Government's right to keep secrets. That boundary needs to be drawn in a better and less authoritarian place than the one where the White Paper draws it.

12.46 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): First, I declare an interest as a sponsored member of the National Communications Union, which represents some 200,000 trade unionists in British Telecom and the Post Office, many of whom, past and present, will be badly affected by the Home Secretary's proposals.

Last night, when I was looking at my notes for this debate, it occurred to me, suddenly and shockingly, that it is some 31 years since I signed a document which reminded me that I was subject to all provisions of the Official Secrets Act. Some five years ago I signed another document that said that I was still subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act. On the advice of the then Clerk of the House, I endorsed the document subject to my privileges as a Member of Parliament and signed it. No one said anything to me about it, therefore I am probably entitled to tell the House about it.

In all the time that I have been involved in trying to deal sensibly with the interception of communications and other aspects of the Official Secrets Act, I have determinedly not broken the law save in one respect. I have always accepted prior publication. If something was common knowledge in the public domain and was in circulation, I could see no reason why I should not refer to it in the same way as any other hon. Member if it assisted in our debates.

Perhaps it will assist the House if I put on record my union's general view on the reform of the Official Secrets Act. We accept that certain categories of information in the Post Office and British Telecom ought to be protected by criminal sanctions but that those categories should be as few as possible, compatible with the interests of the security of the nation and individual privacy. We support the Government's broad approach of replacing the catch-all section 2 of the 1911 Act by more specific sanctions. We believe that criminal sanctions should apply only to security and intelligence information if its disclosure would cause serious injury to the interests of the nation. We believe that classification should be determined by the courts, or at least by an independent committee, and that there should be a statutory right of access to official information in all Government Departments on the lines of the American Freedom of Information Act.

Therefore, the Government should not proceed with legislation on the reform of the Official Secrets Act at least until the proposed study of overseas experience of open government has been completed, published and evaluated by the House.

That demonstrates to the House that we take these matters seriously, we do not take lightly our responsibilities, and that we always try to be as sensitive and sensible as possible when dealing with these matters.

I shall now return to the White Paper that exists rather than the one that we should like to see. Ours would be rather more on the lines of the one published by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) who is entitled to be disappointed with what is before the House. Paragraph 53 on interception is gibberish. The Minister should not rely on the Interception of Communications Act 1985 because that introduced an even more oppressive regime than that which existed when it was not clear whether intercepting communications was legal. The paragraph says:

"no information obtained by means of interception can be disclosed without assisting terrorism or crime, damaging national security or seriously breaching the privacy of private citizens."

That is clearly nonsense. What about the many private citizens whose telephones and mail are intercepted and who are entirely innocent? Their privacy has been seriously breached by the state and they have no effective

safeguards. There is no point in the Minister diving for the 1985 Act. I know that it contains safeguards but they are not good enough.

It is pointless for a citizen to say, "I think that my telephone is being illegally tapped." By the time anybody comes to investigate it, the illegal tap will have been lifted and the people who investigate are qualified only to look at the paperwork. They are not qualified to go into the telephone exchange to look at the main frame to determine whether the line contains a connection additional to those that should be there. They have no expertise in doing that and could not do it. In such a case, surely the least to which a citizen should be entitled is the sight of what had been obtained from his telephone line or from his post, and he should also have sight of that information being destroyed. Hon. Members should remember that I am talking about an innocent British citizen, guilty of no crime whatever because the legal intercept has failed to turn one up.

The Minister cannot tell the House that there is not continued abuse by the security services and the police of their powers to intercept, because that abuse continues. There are no fewer intercepts than there were before and a high proportion were not properly authorised. The Minister would not know that. I have discussed the matter with previous Home Secretaries.

Mr. Allason: The hon. Gentleman is making an extraordinary allegation. Is he seriously saying that many illegal intercepts have been conducted by the police and the security services? Has he made that same allegation to the judge who, under the 1985 Act, is responsible for supervision? I presume that the hon. Gentleman has done that.

Mr. McWilliam: Over the years the allegation has been made repeatedly by me and by other hon. Members. It has been made specifically to the bodies responsible and information has been supplied to them, but no effective action has been taken because it is quite convenient to leave the situation as it exists.

Mr. Dykes: Is the hon. Gentleman anxious about the telephone of any hon. Member being tapped either at home or in the office?

Mr. McWilliam: No, I am not. If the hon. Gentleman casts his memory back to 1964 he will recollect that the then Prime Minister, now Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, said that when he assumed office he discovered that intercepts of mail and communications had been in existence for Members of Parliament and that he had had the practice stopped. In response to questions the Prime Minister has repeatedly told the House that that practice no longer continues. I have no proof that since 1964 any hon. Member has been or is being intercepted. That is not to say that it cannot happen because of another matter that I am about to deal with, but it would be accidental rather than deliberate.

I shall now deal with international relations. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills wondered what kind of organisation would be caused problems. A problem occurred five or six years ago when it transpired in evidence before the American congressional armed forces committee that the supreme allied commander in Europe had applied for an upgrade in nuclear shells with screw-on adaptors that would convert them to neutron weapons —there had been discussion about that in NATO—and that that highly confidential, highly classified information had appeared in American papers. We will not be able to discuss that. Paragraph 50 of the White Paper says

"or to endanger the safety of a British citizen."

Were an update to take place, it would endanger the lives of members of the British Army of the Rhine because the only way in which artillery can be used is close up.

I am deeply disappointed with the White Paper. The opportunity to do something constructive has been lost. Many hon. Members had high hopes for the Protection of Official Information Bill. I am not sure how members of my trade union will be affected by the proposed reform. Are those employed by the Post Office covered because they are still public servants but those employed by British Telecom covered differently because they are not, or will an additional section be passed that will again whip us all in? I very much suspect that one will be, but I look forward to finding out.

I draw hon. Members' attention to paragraph 17, which deals with ministerial certificates. It contains a sentence —if I take it out of context, hon. Members will understand —that underlines the Government's thinking behind the White Paper. It says:

"But no other body or individual shares the Minister's responsibility for safeguarding the interest of the nation".

I remind the Minister that a countryman of mine called Charlie Stuart once thought that and lost his head because of it. We also had the deposition of James II and the glorious revolution. The House is not always so supine as to accept ministerial diktat over the rights of individual citizens, and I am afraid that those rights are not being extended by the White Paper.

12.58 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): In his concluding remarks, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that he saw the White Paper as a "significant step towards reform." Section 2 has stood for a long time and, as it has been through a bruising history of disagreement, there is a tendency to regard this reform as the only chance to effect the legislation for many years ahead. My hope and expectation is that when this legislation is passed—I have no doubt that it will be amended—it will create, as experience of it grows, a platform from which we can advance further.

The White Paper explicitly has a limited objective—to make it simpler to enforce section 2 and make it narrow in scope. Perhaps it goes nearer than the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook. (Mr. Hattersley) thinks to his aim of positive, tight and effective control. It is not a freedom of information proposal.

I share the schizophrenia of the public—and, I suspect of hon. Members—about the secret services. Part of me recoils from the spectacle of society being permeated by large numbers of anonymous, perpetual schoolchildren, fascinated for life by dungeons and dragons games played by real people and increasingly persuaded that everything that happens does so because of a malign, conspiratorial intent.

The idea that my telephone might be tapped without the knowledge and consent of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary or of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, that information derived from the tap might be entered into records of whose existence I shall for ever remain ignorant and that it might be seen by people of whom I am ignorant and who will make what use they

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

choose of it, sends a frisson down my spine. I long at such moments for tighter and more open control. That is why we should consider carefully, on another occasion, the suggestions made by many hon. Members and also the suggestion made by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that we should have much tighter parliamentary control of the security service machine to provide an effective recourse for individuals who may be damaged by improper and oppressive activity by the secret services.

However, when I learn that a 1,700lb bomb has been placed in a shopping centre—timed to go off to create the maximum civilian casualties—and has been reached by brave security men less than five minutes before it was set to explode, I realise how much we owe to the security services. I then recoil from measures that might destroy their effectiveness or diminish their protection against injury from our country's enemies. In that sense I am schizophrenic as, I am sure, are many other hon. Members.

The issues raised go wider than today's debate. I have made clear my support for a degree of parliamentary control over the security services, if only over their budget. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) remarked in an earlier debate on the subject, we do not even have that degree of control.

My right hon. Friend the Home Security has advanced the position considerably and should be congratulated on listening so carefully to what was said when the House debated the Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). I welcome the assertion in the White Paper that Cabinet documents as a class are not to be protected under section 2. Policy-making in this country is too secretive, partly because we have so much legislation in each parliamentary Session that speed rather than thoroughness becomes the touchstone of ministerial effectiveness. I welcome the fact that section 2 will no longer cover the majority of Cabinet papers, although, of course, internal discipline will still afford them some protection.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explained that he was determined to reduce the material covered by section 2. He will do so against the background of a massive reduction in the number of subjects to whom section 2 applies. In the teeth of vigorous opposition from Labour Members, who are now so keen to denigrate the White Paper, the Government have hugely reduced the size of the public sector and hence the scope of the Official Secrets Act.

I also welcome the change that removes the offence of receiving information, and I welcome enormously the policy of leaving decisions to juries. It is highly probable that that decision will lead to a progressive narrowing of the categories of case brought by Governments, as juries tend, over time, to be more sensible than Governments. That is what Governments mean when they talk about perverse juries. However, it is more appropriate to handle such matters through juries than to leave it to Ministers to decide matters in their own cause.

The campaign for fewer secrets and less protection for certain categories of secret would be greatly enhanced if we had a higher quality of journalism in this country. There are still too many journalists who find it easier to titilate their readership with scabrous details of the family lives of public servants who are sometimes thrust into the limelight unnecessarily than to collect and painstakingly to distil the mass of public informattion that is available.

If journalists were seriously concerned to press to the limit the information that is already available to them, we would be better placed to argue for the next stage of openness. It is because I have no doubt that we need more openness that I welcome what my right hon. Friend and his colleagues have done to open up the sources of information that we have, and the journalists, use so little.

It is essential to have some mechanism to prevent the treacherous, the unbalanced, the disgruntled or the venal from betraying their colleagues and/or the Government. In the time of the former Conservative Government, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the then Prime Minister, sought the views of editors on what should replace section 2, and the only reply that he received was that section 2 should be wiped out, nothing should be put in its place and everybody should be free to publish everything except information controlled by section 1. That was not acceptable then, and I suspect that it would not be acceptable to any subsequent Prime Minister, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend on advancing the matter since then. Progress will depend on a combination of experience and trust. I am hopeful that experience will show the Government that they can go further towards trusting the people, and I trust my right hon. Friend, who said that these proposals are a "significant step towards reform".

1.6 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I hold a quiet view of my own that far too much of the time of the Chamber in the past three or four years has been spent on official secrecy. The Government, the Opposition and the media have got into a hyperactive state over what is meant by official secrets. We should recognise that, by and large, we are damn lucky that we live in a comparatively open and free country. I wish that the House would spend more time looking at the confidential information about the nation's economy, industry, commerce and business. Grave matters arise in these important sectors, but we do not seem to have got our legislation correct in dealing with those who have done more damage to our economy than ever Peter Wright or any other alleged malefactor has done.

I have spent much of my life in industry or dealing with matters relating to industry. It is sad to think of the vast amount of time that is spent by companies, whether multinational or medium-sized, on protecting their vital interests. It may interest the House to know that for a number of years I have had links with the CIA. I refer, of course, to the Chemical Industries Association. This organisation, which represents virtually every chemical company in the United Kingdom, is disappointed, as I am, that nothing in the White Paper gives any information about the Government's thinking on this important sector.

However, from time to time these companies voluntarily hand over information to the Government, directly or through Government agencies. That information is often requested by the Government. It is often information of an economic or business nature. It might

concern sales, production volumes or trade secrets. Many of the trade secrets in the chemical industry concern chemical formulas.

A great deal of the information that companies hand over to the Government or to Government agencies is often not patentable and is given to the Government on a strict commercial confidential basis. The White Paper does not recognise the commercial value of that information if it should fall into the hands of competitors. It does not take a very bright person to realise that most of the industrial nations with embassies in the United Kingdom employ a person who is soley engaged in what we would call industrial espionage. We have seen the damage that has been done by Third-world countries emerging into industrial states and blatently taking away many of our long-established patents and much of our technology.

I am not suggesting that, because information is given to a civil servant on a commercial basis and that civil servant inadvertently discloses some of the information, he should be subjected to criminal sanctions, but, if companies have to proceed through the present civil system, there are often long and difficult legal delays in providing them with adequate compensation if they win their cases.

It is sad to think that, while legislation is pending, the advantages of technology could be frittered away. That means loss of profit for a company and, in the long run, damage to shareholders. More importantly, from my political stance as a trade unionist, it means a loss of job prospects for employees. I hope that the Minister will pursue the issue of commercial confidentiality and the damage that can be done to this country's interests with the same vigour with which he has pursued matters concerning official secrecy, at his next Cabinet meeting or when he and his colleagues consider the preparation of the Queen's Speech, and bring forward appropriate legislation.

I am sure that the Minister will find much more detailed information by contacting the organisations that represent industry, trade and commerce, and I hope that he will recognise the need to strengthen the law regarding the breach of commercial secrets. In the long run, that is more damaging to the nation and to our industrial base. High technology has been developed in some of our companies with national household names, yet the rewards are not being given to the nation and to those who are employed, either directly or indirectly, by those organisations.

I have listened to the debate with great interest. I am surprised that so many hon. Members are so knowledgeable about matters of secrecy. I am pleased that I am ignorant about them. I have never signed the Official Secrets Act and I do not see any need to do so. The House should not get too hetup about the matter. We should direct our attention to matters of real substance, such as the well-being of the industrial base of our nation.

1.14 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. I waited for five hours to speak during the debate on the Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) but alas, was not called. I am grateful for the opportunity to bring the House back to the subject of official secrets. The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) should be reassured because although he may never have signed the Official Secrets Act, he and everybody else in this country is covered by it, whether they like it or not. Signing the document simply means that in the event of being convicted, one would not have the excuse of saying, "I did not really know what I was doing your lordship." The prosecution would say that the gravity of one's offence had been brought to one's attention.

I am also grateful to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary because he has answered a couple of the points that have caused me considerable concern. If I understood him correctly, he seemed to be saying that although there was not a defence of public interest, a defence of prior publication or a defence of iniquity in the White Paper, juries would take such matters into account. Unfortunately, I did not really appreciate my right hon. Friend's attitude of "We know best" and his statement that there is a mechanism whereby people can publish and former members of the security and intelligence services can write and get authority to publish material.

Because so much depends on the three magic words, "disclosure without authority", we should try to look at the mechanism of "authority". I had some first-hand experience of that in the late 1970s. I approached the then secretary of the D notice committee. I said that I had been commissioned to write a history of the security service and that although I had never been employed by the security service, I wanted to be able to ensure that I was not damaging national security and that I should like to be able to submit my manuscript. I was treated with something close to contempt.

In the following year, when I did submit my manuscript, a look of horror came over the secretary's face. At our third meeting he said that he had been instructed to request the deletion of 194 names, plus two chapters relating to the security service's wartime work in Ireland. We negotiated. Some chapters were deleted and a large number of names removed. Nevertheless, the book got through. The system seemed to be working at that stage.

However, by the following year things had gone badly wrong. I telephoned the D notice secretary and said that I had written another book about the security service called "A Matter of Trust", and that I would like to submit it. He said, "Splendid, send it round." I was never able to send it round because within a day and a half of making that telephone call, I received an injunction preventing me from taking any step towards the further publication of my manuscript. It turned out that the D notice secretary was also covered by that injunction. Things do not seem to have changed very much since those days.

It is extraordinary that just a few years later, with the BBC undergoing exactly the same experience, we do not seem to have learnt a great deal.

Mr. Garrett: Who issued the injunction?

Mr. Allason: The injunction was issued by the Attorney-General and the case was dealt with in 1982.

Is the D notice committee really a sensible mechanism for allowing and studying publication? I do not think that it is. The present secretary of the D notice committee is frank about his views. He says that nothing on this subject should ever be written and that, given the opportunity, he would stop all publications of this kind even if they were historical in nature. He is really a glorified photocopier. He receives a manuscript, photocopies it and sends one copy

[Mr. Allason]

to the relevant department—the security service, the intelligence service or Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham. They then produce comments.

The point is that the department's serving officers look through the manuscripts to decide what should and should not be published or what should be deleted. That is absolutely crazy. For example, I was asked to remove dozens of names from the most recent book that I delivered to the D notice secretary, including names which appear in Kim Philby's book in 1968. In the face of that kind of obstruction, can my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State really claim that the system works well? I do not believe that it does.

Why was my book in 1982 called "A Matter of Trust"? It was so titled because I believed that that was the essence of the relationship between the director-general of the security service and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Even with the Maxwell Fyfe directives, there was no other formal relationship between the two.

A Prime Minister must have confidence in his or her director-general. However, looking back over my experience, what material was deleted from "A Matter of Trust" when it was eventually published? What were the Government so concerned about? The deletions involved examples in which the director-general of the security service had deliberately mislead the Prime Minister of the day. I am not referring to current events or events about which this Government have any reason to be embarrassed. The events date way back to when the director-general of the secretary service deliberately mislead Prime Minister Attlee over whether Klaus Fuchs had already been investigated and whether there had been a recommendation for Fuchs to be subject to an inquiry because of his probable espionage. That was a major mistake. The director-general at the time, Sir Percy Sillitoe, was persuaded, against his better judgment and very reluctantly, to protect his organisation. He was told by three senior members of the security service that if he went to the Prime Minister and told the truth, it would be damaging to the morale of the security service. That happened in 1949, but there have been other cases, including, for example, the Bruno Pontecorvo case and the astonishing Burgess and Maclean White Paper.

I do not want to delve into history. My point is that the Government cannot claim that everything in the garden is rosy. Whatever one's perspective when we look back at these events, the fact is that things have gone very badly wrong. There is no reason to believe that anything has changed.

Very recently the all-party parliamentary war crimes group tried to obtain from the Foreign Office a file which the Foreign Office admits exists on Klaus Barbie. I suggested to the Minister concerned at the Foreign Office that presumably the reluctance to release the file stemmed from the fact that the Foreign Office wanted to ensure that Barbie received a fair trial in France and now that he has been convicted that excuse no longer existed. I was told that because the file, dated 1945-46, contained intelligence information, it might be of use to an enemy and could not be released because there was established precedent. I asked the Minister of State at the time, "Are you aware that the person who was head of the anti-Soviet section within the secret intelligence service in 1945-1946 was Kim Philby, and from whom are we trying to keep that fact secret?" That is the attitude today. More recently, I have tried to obtain access to wartime decrypts of signals that passed between the Japanese naval attaché in Berlin and Tokyo, which are in the Foreign Office's possession, in the Public Record Office. Those same decrypts are available in Tokyo and in the Washington national archives. However, the Foreign Office refuses to allow those files to be available in the Public Record Office and to explain its actions. That is an appalling state of affairs, and it is a direct reflection of Whitehall's attitude to this very sensitive subject.

The Government have not had an easy ride over secrecy. If the House will bear with me, I shall mention a few of the cases we heard about this morning. Some will be familiar to many people and some will not. Since 1979, there has been the Tisdall case; the Ponting case; the Belgrano affair, which was intelligence orientated; the Cathy Massiter case; telephone tapping scandals; the "Spycatcher" fiasco; the BBC programme "My Country, Right or Wrong"; the conviction of Michael Bettaney; the injunction on Anthony Cavendish; the GCHQ union saga; the GCHQ scandal of leakages in Hong Kong; the Zircon satellite affair; the Cyprus signals case; the Rothschild statement; and Geoffrey Prime.

My reason for mentioning them all is to demonstrate that they are not passing issues or banana skins that are special to this Government. They are banana skins that will blight all Governments of all complexions in the future. It is an occupational hazard that there will be leakages of information and security cock-ups, and it is important that we should get these matters right.

I revert to 1979, and to a case that I did not mention but which was probably the most significant—that of Anthony Blunt. It was significant because, as was previously stated, the Prime Minister, to her credit, was very frank about the security service's role and made a candid statement. She was more frank than any previous Prime Minister on the subject. That was in 1979. It is not so much that we should commend her for her frankness, but that we should examine what was the advice of the security service in 1979. I can tell the House what it was.

Sir John Jones, who was then director-general of the security service, said, "You must not expose Sir Anthony Blunt. He must be protected at all costs, because if he is publicly exposed as a spy, we shall all be in trouble. It will mean that we shall never be able to offer credible immunity from prosecution to others of his ilk." The Prime Minister considered that advice, and I imagine that because she is a barrister, she considered also that she might have had to stand by and watch Sir Anthony Blunt perjure himself, as he was going to do by bringing an action for defamation against an author. The Prime Minister decided, rightly in my view, that the security service's advice was wrong and that here was an opportunity for her to be frank. That is exactly what happened.

Alas, circumstances have changed since 1979. How are hon. Members ever to be educated about and to acquaint themselves with the conduct of the security service and related matters unless they are instructed in broad terms, on matters of principle, by people who have experience of them? My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) mentioned the case of John Day, who was injuncted when he wished to discuss not operational details or matters relating to his work in the security service that were definitely secret but broad principles of

accountability. That was banned, and would have been banned under the measures proposed in the White Paper it would also have been banned. He might even be serving the first year of a two-year prison sentence by now. Michael McCaul is another former member of the security service, someone with wide experience whom the nation trusted to work in a most sensitive area for more than 30 years. If he cannot be trusted to come to the House and brief Back Benchers on the principles of accountability and the problems of supervision, on whom are we to rely?

According to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), we are supposed to rely on the present system of accountability, which involves the Secretary of State coming to the House and answering questions. That sounds splendid; the trouble is that it does not happen. When my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills asked a relevant question, he was denied the information that he sought because, by convention, the Secretary of State does not answer questions on this sensitive issue. I do not consider that that is accountability.

I am focusing my remarks particularly on the paragraph relating to the duties of confidentiality of members of the security service. It is important to get this right in the legislation, because it will not go away. During the appeal that was heard in the other place, counsel for the plaintiff—the Government—said that he knew of 10 books that were to be written or had already been embarked upon by former members of the security and intelligence services, some of them recently retired. He was classically misinformed. By my reckoning the number is nearer 15 or 16, and I hope that the Government are rather better informed than I am.

Those proposing to write such books include John Day, Nicholas Elliott, Jock Kane—who has been injuncted—Anthony Cavendish—who has been injuncted but has a contract to write a biography of Maurice Oldfield—the Seymours, the late Jack Morton—whose diaries are to be published—Dick White and Desmond Bristow, who is in Madrid and, like Peter Wright, is out of jurisdiction, as the law that we are discussing will not remotely affect people abroad. Fred Winterbottom is embarking on his fourth volume. Leo Marks has already run into some trouble. Anthony Simpkins has been authorised by the Government, but the historical section of the Cabinet Office has got cold feet and the book does not seem likely to be published in the near future. David Smiley has announced his intention of writing a book. George Blake has published one in the Soviet Union, and another is due out shortly. Even Greville Wynne, God bless him, is writing yet another book from Majorca.

It is all very well to say that there is a mechanism for such people to write their memoirs. There is a mechanism, but it has never worked, it is not working now and there is not the slightest chance of its working in the future. There are possibilities of finding one that would work. Could we, for example, use the Security Commission? Somehow I doubt it. It may have lost a bit of credibility following its recent reports, and no one took any notice of its strong recommendation some years ago for the introduction of polygraphs.

One wonders, too, whether people living abroad will have a duty to submit their manuscripts to the authorities in this country. We know of many cases where they have not bothered. We know also that when they have tried —as did Gordon Welchman, who wrote about his wartime experiences at Bletchley park—they have been threatened with prosecution if ever they returned to this country. GCHQ was so vindictive towards that man that he became an American citizen. He was literally hounded to his death by GCHQ in America. That is no exaggeration. His only job was with the Mitre Corporation in the United States. On GCHQ's recommendation his security clearance was withdrawn. Because he could not work and because he tried to fight that ban in America, he eventually succumbed to a coronary. We do not want that to happen again. We must not create a leper colony.

I am all in favour of confidentiality and of secrets being kept, but I believe that these individuals can be trusted to give us the benefit of their experience without jeopardising national security every time they write or say anything on the subject. We heard about what happened in Australia: the director of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation wrote a book that has been cleared. We heard about the Comte de Marenche in France. There is scarcely a CIA officer in the United States who has not written a book. There are 14,000 volumes on espionage in the CIA library. A considerable number of those volumes were written by members of the CIA who used the publication review board as an effective mechanism for getting clearance and avoiding the problem of jeopardising national security.

I have long advocated not parliamentary control over the supervision of the security service but the introduction of non-executive directors who would have the confidence of the House. They would be inside my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's wall of secrecy. They would be able to supervise and provide a safety valve for members of the Security Service, who would be able to go to the directors and explain in confidence that they believed that there had been some kind of an inequity. Sir Philip Woodfield has been appointed as staff counsellor, not just for the security service but for the Secret Intelligence Service and for GCHQ. Those latter organisations do not really need a staff counsellor, but the security service needs one. He must not, however, be stuck in the Cabinet Office. It would be impossible for him to work efficiently inside the Cabinet Office. Nine buildings in London are used by the security service. Security service officers who are unhappy about their duties have to ring the Cabinet Office to make an appointment to see Sir Philip. That is not the best system. He ought to have an office inside central security service headquarters so that people could slip in to see him and explain their grievances.

I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) for suggesting that we should look again at this matter. The 1911 Act, which was supposed to have been a temporary law, has been with us for 77 years. It was passed by a Liberal Administration. Now is our opportunity to make sure that we get it right for future generations. It is vital that a law that will be on the statute book for many years should be the best that we can devise. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to look again at the possibility of establishing a mechanism whereby members of the so-called leper colony will have an opportunity to publish.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at about 2 pm. Three hon. Members still wish to speak. I hope that they will divide the time between them.

1.39 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason). Before he came to the House, I thought that he was so well informed that he must be a creature of Government. In the past year, to his credit, I have become somewhat disabused of that view. I agree with him about D-notices. My right hon. Friends the Members for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) will remember that ever since Harold Wilson got into a terrible fandango with Sammy Lohan, it has been thought that D-notices should be reformed.

For more than 26 years, I have listened to almost every statement made at the Dispatch Box. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I can recall no occasion on which a senior Minister managed to make a statement about something which, on examination, turned out to be so very different from what it purported to be. To save time, I shall refer the Home Secretary to my question asked on 29 June 1988 at column 374 about paragraph 47 of the White Paper. Also to save time, I shall merely endorse the description of the Ponting trial set out by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). Under the proposed dispensation, Clive Ponting would clearly have been sent to prison.

Paragraph 47 of the White Paper is designed to stymie people who are awkward to the Government and to make jolly sure that there is never a repeat of behaviour towards authority such as that of the Ponting jury. If the Ponting jury was not in the Home Secretary's mind when he made his remark about juries being perverse, what jury did he have in mind?

Paragraph 47 is the precursor of a clause in a Bill which would protect Ministers from being found out if they misbehaved towards Parliament and misled the House of Commons. It is about putting the frighteners on potential deep throats, without whom it is exceedingly difficult for Members of Parliament to call Governments to proper account.

Paragraph 47 makes no distinction between what Sir Frank Cooper has described as genuine security, and political security, but then political embarrassment has always been a far greater spur to action—witness the Zircon case—than the real security interests of our country. The Home Secretary talks about a cornucopia of information coming forward, and a definition of disclosure that is harmful—harmful to whom? The disclosures that seem in the Government's imagination to be harmful are disclosures which embarrass politicians. I thank the Home Secretary for his letter of 21 July. I realise what he is saying about paragraph 47—

> "It is certainly not our view that anyone who might come into contact with members of the services in the course of their duties, still less anyone who might simply see, as part of their work, information emanating from the services, should have the same liability."

I accept that, but designation would be resorted to when Ministers got into a tight corner—when it mattered; when the chips were down.

There are Conservative Members, although they are not present today, who use unparliamentary language about Mr. Ponting. That is their scale of values, but on my scale of values, the most serious crime in public life is direct and calculated lying to the House of Commons to protect a Minister's position. The White Paper protects Ministers from the consequences of lying to the House.

What we now have before us is a charter to help Ministers who need to lie to the House to protect their position and to get away with it. From parliamentary references such as question No. 1 on 23 June 1988 at column 1253, it is widely accepted in the House that the Prime Minister did know about the role of the then Trade Secretary when she set up an inquiry into the leaking of the Law Officer's letter in the Westland affair.

There is a resigned shrug of shoulders and an observation that, after all, "she got away with it". After a quarter of a century in this place, I am not prepared to shrug my shoulders. Deception of the House of Commons is unacceptable behaviour. Would the Prime Minister have dreamed of not designating in the Westland affair Mr. Charles Powell, Mr. Bernard Ingham or Sir Robert Armstrong? If Colette Bowe, John Michell, John Mogg and Sir Brian Hayes had all gone to Sir Philip Woodfield, would they have been designated, and what would have happened to their careers had they done so? We can only speculate on what would have occurred.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent that perhaps the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) is not primarily to blame. However, it is quite wrong that he should go to Brussels while the stigma of blame and deceit and responsibility for the leaking of the Law Officer's letter is attached to him. He should not go if he is not exonerated.

This matter concerns the integrity of our public life. The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said, "I think I know why the White Paper is over the top. I say bluntly that it has an all-pervasive influence—the malign influence of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has got away with something else—gross abuse of the Civil Service and the powers of deceit which led through Westland, her role in the miners' strike, the Libyan bombing and the raid on the BBC in Glasgow referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook. It began with a series of events which culminated in the 11 days at the Old Bailey. The Ponting trial, and the White Paper in its present form, would never have come about had not the Prime Minister, in order to protect her position as Prime Minister, insisted—I choose my words extremely carefully—on sustaining a lie to Parliament and not correcting parliamentary answers. Because a particular Prime Minister is an habitual liar to Parliament——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has used an unparliamentary expression. He knows that it is out of order and he must withdraw it.

Mr. Dalyell: I chose the words to get over this extremely carefully. I believe that it is central to the White Paper. I do not want to take up the time of my hon. Friends, so I willingly withdraw if you say——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not argue with the Chair. He has used an unparliamentary expression and he must withdraw it.

Mr. Dalyell: It is better that I withdraw.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I instruct the hon. Gentleman to withdraw from the Chamber.

1.47 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): In his written evidence to the Franks Committee in 1971, Mr. Justice Caulfield, the judge in the *Daily Telegraph* secrets case said:

"I think the section"—

that is section 2—

"in its present form could be viciously or capriciously used by an embarrassed Executive."

That is the objection to the package in the current White Paper.

When I listened to the Secretary of State earlier, I was struck by what was almost a tone of vainglorious boasting in his speech. He spoke about an earthquake in Whitehall. I looked at the civil servants behind him and they looked distinctly unquaked. He talked about the information that the Government give out. The point is not the information that the Government want to give out but the information that they do not want to give out, and the extent to which the public should have access to that. Above all, he talked about the White Paper not widening the law. It could scarcely do that. Under the present section 2, there are no fewer than 2,314 listed offences. It will not do for the Secretary of State to boast that the package in the White Paper does not widen the law. That would be scarcely possible.

The question of interception has been thoroughly dealt with by some of my hon. Friends. However, it is worth asking why an exception is made for phone tapping and opening people's letters. No other western country needs such a provision. The White Paper talks rather hypocritically about the importance of not breaching the privacy of private citizens. If phones are being tapped by the Government it ill-behoves them to say that they do not want information given out because they are worried about the privacy of private citizens.

The Government justify making a blanket exception of phone tapping and mail opening on the grounds of terrorism, crime and national security. I suggest that the phone tapping and mail opening is done not because they are worried about those things, but because they are worried about exposure of phone tapping that has nothing to do with national security, crime or terrorism.

I shall now turn to the absence of a public interest defence in the White Paper. The Government justify the absence of such a defence by saying that it is not the practice to take motive into account in matters of law. That is a perverse statement because section 1 of the Official Secrets Act, which is not to be abolished, explicitly takes motive into account. It is surely perverse to say that the motive for passing on secrets is admissible if a person will be proved guilty but inadmissible if someone is trying to prove himself innocent.

Conservative Members know perfectly well that there is a long standing common law defence against actions for breach of confidence on the grounds of public interest. In the discredited section 2 of the Official Secrets Act there is even an implicit defence in terms of the public interest. This is what the Government seek explicitly to rule out. Conservative Members talk about civil servants who are worried about what they will be asked to do and say that all they have to do is to refer things up the ladder. That is nonsense. If a hapless higher executive officer or Home Office principal is instructed to do things that are against the public interest, his instructions will have to come down the chain from, perhaps, a permanent secretary or an assistant secretary. It is absurd to say that the matter can be referred back up the chain and to say so shows a lack of understanding of the realities of life for the groundlings in the Civil Service.

Behind the public interest matter is the shadow of what some of us thought was the most serious aspect of the Ponting case—the Government's assumption that there is no distinction between the interest of the state and the interests of the Government. That is what the judgment showed in the Ponting case and it is dangerous. That assumption is the reason for the Government not allowing a public interest defence. That is contrary to traditions of common law and fairness and to the interests of the nation as a whole.

I shall now deal with the blanket exclusion for life of members of the security services who will be deprived of their ordinary civil liberty to speak about things that they know. It is worth reading the White Paper closely on this matter. It says that members of the security services are to lose all their civil rights because any allegations by them carry credibility. What are the Government saying? Are they saying that it is acceptable to leak false secrets but not to talk about things that may be true? They say that they will withdraw civil liberties from members of the security services because otherwise public confidence in the secret services may be reduced.

If the Government are interested in building public confidence in the secret services the way forward for them is not to reduce civil liberties but to recruit and manage properly and, possibly, give members of the security services proper pensions. Far from being worried that disclosures by the security services will reduce public confidence in those services, the Government are worried that past and future disclosures by the security services might reduce public confidence in the Government.

I should like to quote no less an authority than Chapman Pincher whom E. P. Thompson called that conduit into which the establishment leaks. In his evidence to the Franks Committee, he said:

"In my experience, which as I say is a long one, 'politically embarrassing' is always a much higher security classification than 'top secret'."

The Government should spare us the cant of being worried about public confidence in the security services. They are worried about what present or ex-Security Service members might say that would damage confidence in the Government.

The life-long duty of confidentiality that the Government are trying to impose on Security Service members cannot truly be achieved this side of the iron curtain. The Government are trying to impose an iron curtain on past and present members of the security services, and that is what makes their behaviour so deplorable.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) said it was an ingenious White Paper. It is ingenious because the hapless draftsmen have gone through every embarrassing security incident of the past 10 years and tried to draw up a White Paper to ensure that they will never happen again. That is why the White Paper is so incoherent and why it bears no references to the carefully worked out arguments of the 1971 Franks report.

In its opening chapter, the Franks report said:

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

"A government which pursues secret aims, or which operates in greater secrecy than the effective conduct of its proper functions requires or which turns information services into propaganda agencies, will lose the trust of the people."

Nothing in the White Paper will enhance the trust of the people in the Government. It is an ill-argued and incoherent White Paper. Labour Members sincerely hope that when legislation is brought forward the issues that we have raised, especially the public interest defence, will be considered carefully by the Government.

1.56 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I shall be brief because of the pressure of time. I shall not refer to the detail of the White Paper because it has been dealt with excellently by my hon. Friends.

The Secretary of State gave a lyrical presentation about the Government opening doors and unleashing information. In an intervention, I asked what new information would be revealed by the White Paper. His reply was that it was not a Freedom of Information Act. I suspect that means that there are no significant libertarian elements included in it.

The state and its corporate control have grown alarmingly in the past year, as we saw in the measures with which we dealt in the past week. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) mentioned the 1688 tercentenary celebrations, a Bill of Rights and the checks, balances and liberty of the constitution. This week, we have dealt with the final stages of the Education Reform Bill and the poll tax legislation and are now discussing this White Paper. There could be no more sinister combination of elements that reveal the degree of state centralisation that has taken place. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said that there was less state control and less scope for state secrecies because of the privatisation programme. Under the Education Reform Bill, the power of the Secretary of State for Education and Science is considerably expanded. The poll tax legislation contains a sinister set of measures that will affect civil liberties and democratic rights. Local government will finally become a creature of the state and will have little scope to take measures of its own. Civil liberties will be attacked considerably by the poll tax registrar, who will be able to raid all types of sensitive information. Even the right of petition, which the House of Commons enjoys without duress, is under threat because it has been said in the House that petitions about the poll tax could be used against the petitioners because their names could be entered in the poll tax register.

There is also the threat of national identity cards, which was suggested during the debate on the poll tax and a number of Government Members in Committee were adamant that they were in favour of such a card. The poll tax Bill also fixes the franchise by affecting registration and it will affect the fate of local election results. People will have to pay poll tax to qualify to vote. Those measures and the White Paper will give such authority to the state that we shall be in a very sinister position.

This has been a dangerous week. We have been celebrating the events of 1688, but we may not be able to do that in future.

2.2 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It will have been noticed that the previous three speakers have been Opposition Members. On this occasion, the Government have run out of enemies to the White Paper. Congratulations for the debate and for the White Paper rest not with the Government but with the hon. Member —I am tempted to say hon. Friend in this context—for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). He, more than any other Member in the House through his effort and determination, has provoked the Government into publishing the White Paper.

The debate has demonstrated yet again that behind the honeyed words of the Home Secretary and his public relations staff is the reality of a White Paper that, in many senses, is as harsh and illiberal as the Act it seeks to replace. In essence, it proposes to replace a large net with large holes with a smaller net with smaller holes more effectively to catch and silence those who cause the Government embarrassment. The White Paper rejects the idea of a ministerial certificate and says loftily that such matters will be left to the courts.

Would that that were true. The courts will not be allowed to decide whether large areas of information can be made known. The Government are putting a stronger fence around six broad areas of information and will leave the courts to decide simply on the extent of any damage that the release of information may cause, or is likely to cause.

The White Paper is repressive in its denial of any public interest defence. What possible harm to security did Clive Ponting do when he told my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that the Government had misled the House over the sinking of the Belgrano? Did that damage security? He caused embarrassment to the Government and the Prime Minister but that is no reason to deny people who act in good faith a public interest defence. Surely the public as represented by a jury, is a better judge of public interest than any Government. That is what the Home Secretary should have meant when he spoke of leaving it to the courts.

It was a serving officer who leaked secret information about the run-down state of our defences in the 1930s to a Member of Parliament called Winston Churchill. Did not he and the people of this country have a right to know that? That officer did no more than Clive Ponting did 50 years later. That illustrates the need for a better definition of exclusion of defence, security and intelligence information.

Ministers refused to confirm or deny the arrival of American cruise missiles at Greenham Common and Molesworth on security grounds. When Sarah Tisdall bravely made that known, she was convicted for her pains and the Government still refused to give that information or any information about the numbers involved. It took the arrival here this week of 20 inspectors from the Soviet Union, under the terms of an intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty signed between two foreign powers, to let the people of Britain know that the number of operational missiles at Greenham is 96 and at Molesworth 18. Fancy that—the Russians can know how many American missiles are down the road from the House but we cannot, and nothing in the White Paper will assist us in getting such information in the future.

The mind boggles at the blanket cover of information given in confidence by foreign Governments and international organisations. What happens when a draft directive on potato sizes is sent from Brussels? Usually, the Departments concerned with such directives consult the trade and other interests on these matters. Under the terms of the White Paper, that passing round of bits of paper with a still secret draft directive would be illegal. Or would it? At the back of this is a collossal uncertainty, because the Attorney-General stands in the wings and he decides, on behalf of the Government, whether to prosecute. This is not clearing up the catch-all mess of section 2—it is nonsensically compounding it.

Let us take the example of information useful to criminals, dealt with in paragraph 52 of the White Paper. Yesterday, a newspaper rang me to ask me to comment on news that the Bromsgrove and Redditch police force, in the west midlands, was restricting panda patrols to no more than 25 miles a day because it is denied the money that it needs to give the service that it would like to give to the public. Is that information useful to criminals? It could be held to be so. What about the number of police in a division? I expect that the criminals would love to know that. Again, who would be caught? The White Paper gives us no clues about this, because it says in paragraph 71 that it is for the Minister to decide what information is to be revealed.

Another example is interception or phone tapping. What damage to our security did Cathy Massister, a former MI5 agent, do when she revealed that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had had its phones illegally tapped and its offices burgled? That did not damage security—It damaged a Government who are careless of their control over the security services. The matter is even worse, because under the White Paper anyone publishing this information would have no public interest defence, although one clearly exists.

Comedy becomes farce when we get to the denial of the prior publication defence. The world may know, but we cannot. The Home Secretary has forgotten his excitement for the fast-developing wizardry that whisks news and information round this planet in a twinkling. How does he propose to stop that publication by satellite? How is he to decide who published first, second or third, and where? If a news bulletin goes out by a satellite as it spins around aloft, there are time zone differences that will get the Government into trouble. The decision is not just wrong. It is impracticable and that is why, in the end, he will have to drop it and allow for a prior publication defence.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that this is a matter that should be judged by Parliament as the elected voice of the people, because it is we who stand on the side of the people against the Government. At the heart of the debate is a simple issue—the right of free people in a free society to know what an elected Government are doing in their name. That is the essence of democracy. It will not do for the Government to say, as they do, "This is a secret because we say that it is a secret." That is what undemocratic Governments around the world do. We should state and assert that a free people in a democratic society have a right to know what is going on, save only about those specialist matters that touch upon our proper security.

This is where the White Paper fails. There is its coy admission in paragraph 5 that

> "It does not . . . address such matters as the question of access to official information not covered by the Government's proposals."

That is what is missing and that is what is wrong. It is not about widening access to information so that the governed can know more about what those who govern are up to. The Government do not trust the people, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) said.

Information released from the ambit of the criminal law will not become more accessible. There will simply be different penalties for its release, such as the loss of jobs and pension rights for those in the Civil Service who release it. That is not progress. It is simply a change of direction to serve the same prohibitive purposes. When the Bill comes before us, we shall seek to amend the proposals substantially. In Government, we shall review them in the context of a Freedom of Information Act to which we shall give priority and which is the proper setting in which to consider guarding our legitimate secrets.

2.10 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I recall that a previous Labour Administration made such pledges, but did not keep them. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) was extremely generous in foreshortening the time that he had to make his wind-up speech in the interests of letting everyone who wanted to speak in the debate do so. I have done the same regarding the length of time for my wind-up speech. It must have been that extremely short period of time that accounted for the fact that the hon. Member for Erdington did not have the time to compare and contrast the excellent advances made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's White Paper with anything that was put forward by the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979.

I wish to make two quick reflections regarding matters outside this Chamber. First—I exonerate any hon. Member who has spoken today from this—some people outside the Chamber, particularly newspaper commentators, still appear to be breaking their lances on the fears and rumours in print and on television about what the White Paper might have contained, rather than addressing what it says. Today, the proposals have been examined in great detail by all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate. Alas, that is not the case with so many commentators who mould public opinion.

Secondly, many hon. Members are passionately, rightly and deeply concerned about the issue, including the right hon. Members for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and for Morly and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), who has now left to fulfil a constituency engagement, as he courteously told us, and my hon. Friends the Members for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). We in Government are deeply concerned and fascinated by all the ins and outs and nuances. I represent a constituency that contains a university, and it strikes me as extraordinary that neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary or other Ministers have received any letters from people outside. That may also be true of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). We must, therefore, keep our debates in the House in perspective.

I do not think that my speech deserves to be called a peroration. I should like, however, to make immediately

[Mr. John Patten]

the points that I would normally make at about 2.29 pm, because it is important that I should tell the House what will happen next before I respond in detail to as many of the points as possible. Not every dot and comma of the proposals for the Bill has been set in concrete. The debate would have served no purpose if we had taken that view. There is ample scope for discussion of the proposals and my right hon. Friend and I have listened with great care and interest to all the comments and suggestions that have been made today. We have not agreed with them all, but guided by many of them. They will inform the way in which the future legislation is drafted. We shall have to consider a number of ideas. Next Friday, there will be a debate in the other place on exactly this issue. We would then wish to have some time to reflect on what has been said in this House and in the other place and to consider other comments that have been put to us by interested bodies and individuals although, as I have said, the weight of correspondence coming in to the Home Office on this issue is tiny.

We do not intend to let the matter rest. When my right hon. Friend first announced our intention last December to produce the White Paper, he said that it would be followed by early legislation, and his White Paper repeats that undertaking. Once we have had that time—I dare say that it will not be too long—we shall set to work to prepare legislation with the intention of laying it before Parliament as soon as possible. The White Paper contains the Government's proposals, but we must remember—the Government will remember—that it is Parliament which will decide whether these or other proposals flowing from them should be translated into the law of the United Kingdom. We shall certainly not forget that.

The debate has taken us an important step nearer the reform of something that we all agree needs pressing reform. In the remaining 15 minutes, I shall reply to the comments that have been made although inevitably in this short time, I shall be unable to reply to every point. I turn first to the extraordinary speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I shall try to pick up five of the points that he made. I turn first to his point about designation, which was a point which also concerned my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in an early intervention and in his speech——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was ordered to withdraw from the Chamber. That means for the remainder of this day's sitting——

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a matter of great concern to the House. Now that the information has come through about the appointment of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was instructed to withdraw from the Chamber because he refused to withdraw an unparliamentary remark. That means that he must withdraw for the remainder of this day's sitting. I must instruct the hon. Gentleman to withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of this day's sitting.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian. I repeat that I instructed him to withdraw an unparliamentary expression. He refused to do so and he was instructed to withdraw from the Chamber. That means for the remainder of this day's sitting. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw.

Mr. Dalyell: Parliament has been so affronted by the appointment of the right hon. and learned Member——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I give the hon. Gentleman one further chance, otherwise I shall have to take further action.

Mr. Dalyell: In that case, I must withdraw. The affront to Parliament of the appointment of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks who took part in the debate without being exonerated in relation to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.
The hon. Member then withdrew.

Mr. Patten: As it happens, when the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) appeared in the Chamber I was about to mention his name because he, too, was interested in the issue of designation. Perhaps I should take this opportunity to condemn in the strongest words available to me the monstrous attack that was made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. To call my right hon. Friend "a habitual liar" without any signs of protest from those behind him is an utter disgrace. It is an abuse of the House and I am afraid that it is an abuse of the House that is repeated consistently by the hon. Member for Linlithow. Time and again he accuses my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of the things of which he has accused her today and then, under some guise or another, withdraws. It is time that that was stopped.

Mr. Ted Garrett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With respect, you have made a ruling and in my judgment and that of my colleagues, that is the end of that particular episode this morning. You should not allow the Minister to continue in that way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is wise advice I am sure that the Minister is moving on.

Mr. Patten: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The right hon. Member or Sparkbrook was concerned about designation. He was worried about paragraph 47 in the White Paper where he spotted the words "groups" and "list". He thought that that would mean that there would be universal classification of people according to their category of job. However, he did not read on through paragraph 48. I will quote less selectively than the right hon. Gentleman from paragraph 48 which states:

> "But the persons concerned would be notified individually; and criminal liability would attach only after the individual officer concerned had received notification of his liability."

Each individual will be designated individually.

I suppose that from time to time there are expressions for a group of people. I suggest that a group of principal private secretaries might be called a discretion of principal private secretaries. Perhaps we may refer to them as a group, but each of them acts as a conduit of information from the services to their Secretaries of State and they will be designated individually if that is the decision of the Minister as set out in the White Paper.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was also concerned about certain earlier cases. I do not remember them all as I did not write them down, but they will be on the record. He asked whether the revelations would be authorised in the different cases to which he referred. I cannot give a clear answer to that because I cannot speculate on exactly what legislation the White Paper will lead to because the Bill is not drafted. Therefore, I cannot speculate on the decisions that will be taken by the responsible Ministers. However, I can speculate to the extent that I suspect that bits would have been authorised, but other bits would not. *[Interruption.]* The interesting bits.

Mr. Alex Carlile: That exposes the whole fallacy.

Mr. Patten: The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) says from a sedentary position that that somehow exposes matters. It has been the practice for many years for decent people who have been in the services who want to write to seek authority to do so. They have been given authority for some things and denied it for others. That was the only point that I wanted to make.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to the role of the staff counsellor. Sir Philip Woodfield is not a member of the service. His successors will not be members of the service. They are independent and act as a conduit to Ministers.

The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) was concerned about telephone tapping. In his interesting speech based on personal experience he admitted that there is protection in the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook forcefully raised the issue of "Spycatcher". That was also referred to by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and other right hon. and hon. Members that a former member of the services should keep his or her counsel. Members should not break a lifelong duty of confidentiality without authorisation. That is a clear principle which underlies the White Paper.

Finally, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was charmingly concerned about the welfare of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and about what happened when he went into purdah each year to discuss business concerned with the Budget. I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will ever need the protection of criminal law under any circumstances. However, Budget leaks about alleged changes in tax codes, and so on, are not protected by criminal law. The only matters that will be are items of information coming from a source connected with my right hon. Friend and falling within one of the categories covered by the Bill, such as international relations.

Mr. Hattersley: As the Minister and others questioned the rule of confidentiality and its legal back-up in respect of Budget matters, I had inquiries made, and I am advised there are so many laws covering that aspect that, were I to list them all, the Minister would not be able to rise to his feet again before four o'clock. Perhaps the Minister will look at the Taxes Management Act 1970, the Finance Act 1972 and the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 —all of which require certain aspects of Budget policy to be maintained in secrecy. There are many more examples, covering almost every aspect of the Chancellor's day-to-day activities.

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Gentleman has clearly been doing his research, because earlier in the debate he was challenged to name all the laws to which he was referring but failed to do so.

I turn to points raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his extremely distinguished speech—it was exactly the kind of speech one would expect from someone who was such a distinguished Home Secretary. I welcome the warm reception he gave to my right hon. Friend's White Paper, which was reflected by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminister, North. I welcome also the sentiment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks, based on deep experience, that there is no longer any need for a public interest defence because the Government have circumvented that by the White Paper's proposals. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills disagrees, but I much agree with that argument. I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's reaffirmation of the lifelong duty of those in the services, though I differ from him in the need that he sees for expressing decisions on whether a publication should be allowed through a mechanism involving independent persons or an independent body.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks and my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills raised points concerning media reporting of disclosure by members of the services and the question whether the test of harm applies. There may be circumstances—and I choose my words carefully—where, for example, there is collusion between a member or former member of the security and intelligence services and a newspaper, where the newspaper could be an accessory to an offence committed by that member or former security services member—and "could" is the operative word. However, if the newspaper simply reported a disclosure that had been made on a separate occasion, the prosecution would have to prove that it was the newspaper's disclosure, and not that made by the member or former member of the services, that was likely to damage the operation of the security and intelligence services.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: What about television?

Mr. Patten: I am reminded by my hon Friend that I forgot the broadcasting media. There would be a test of harm, and it would be that the journalist—whether he worked in broadcasting or in newspapers—knew or had reasonable cause to believe that his disclosure was likely to cause harm.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills expressed concern that the Government have not yet provided a list of international organisations that require information in confidence. A large number of organisations have an international dimension, and in the past many of them have supplied in confidence certain details to this or previous Governments. I dare say that they include the Ghana cocoa marketing board, which was the particular example given by my hon. Friend.

[Mr. Patten]

It would be difficult at this stage to drag out all the names from files going back many years, and I do not believe that it would serve any useful purpose. We must address the issue when we translate the White Paper concept into legislation. We are debating a White Paper; we are not at the end of a Second Reading debate on a Bill. All will be revealed on its publication, which I hope will be as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills——

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 26th July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Social Security may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall then put successively the Question already proposed from the Chair and the Questions on such of the remaining Motions as may then be made.

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 27th July, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) and Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Building Societies, Education and Immigration, in the name of Mr. Secretary Hurd relating to Police, and in the name of Mr. Secretary Channon relating to Social Legislation relating to Road Transport may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and half hours after each of them has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall, at the expiration of that period, put forthwith the Question thereon.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for intervening at this point, because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has an important Adjournment debate. It seems, however, that we are in some difficulty.

Under the Representation of the People Acts, the acceptance of an office of profit under the Crown means that an hon. Member automatically demits his seat as a Member of the House. According to a report today by the Press Association, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) has informed the Prime Minister in the past few days that he will take on the £95,000 a year post of Vice-President and Commissioner in the European Economic Community. It seems to me that when he said that he would accept that, he had accepted an office of profit under the Crown and was therefore no longer entitled to sit in the House, let alone speak in it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It is not possible for me to adjudicate on the matter now, but due note will be taken of the point that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Cancer Treatment (North Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): My subject is cancer. One in three women in Wales still smoke, despite widespread health warnings. I am told that, according to a survey, one in four new cases of lung cancer now being registered in Wales is a woman. That is almost double the rate of 15 years ago. The survey warns that the incidence of lung cancer among women will continue to increase over the next 30 years, and nearly 500 new cases of lung cancer among women are being diagnosed in the Principality each year.

I believe that the Minister's Department says that the most marked increase is in lung cancer in females. That has been attributed to the increase in cigarette smoking among women since the second world war. The increase is in sharp contrast to the position among males, where the incidence has either remained constant or has fallen very slightly in men under 75.

As long ago as 27 June 1984, the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs considered cancer treatment in north Wales. Evidence was given by the Health and social work department of the Welsh Office, distinguished medical representatives, the DHSS and the Mersey regional health authority. A Welsh Office memo stated:

"access to Radiotherapy is more difficult."

The same memo instanced the

"distance and expense of travelling."

During the examination of witnesses, the chief medical officer pointed to higher mortality ratios for cancers in the Gwynedd area than for Wales as a whole. The evidence stated that patients from north Wales went to Clatterbridge hospital in Mersey and to Christie hospital in Manchester for radiotherapy and subsequent chemotherapy. The waiting time for treatment increased, especially between 1978 and 1982. There is a history of travel for treatment for cancer, and at one period there was concern over the waiting time for treatment. There has also been concern in the past about the shortage of either staff or cash or both to meet the needs of those requiring the excellent treatment that is given.

The Select Committee examined witnesses in 1984 but it was only in the summer of 1988 that a firm of consultants, Deloitte Haskins and Sells, was invited to undertake a study of cancer services in north Wales, including the provision of a radiotherapy centre in north Wales. Four years is too long to set up a consultants' study. Cancer is a terrible affliction. It hurts whole families. I want at least a satellite radiotherapy centre to be established in north Wales, and one is suspicious when progress, admittedly in the right direction, takes four years.

I do not intend to criticise the Clwyd health authority. I pay tribute to the quality of treatment that is given to my constituents and to others. I know that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales is committed to obtaining the best possible deal for my constituents and for others in north Wales. However, I emphasise that progress has been too slow. Even though a study by consultants is now under way, there is no guarantee whatsoever that a satellite radiotherapy centre in north Wales will be established.

I wonder whether bureaucracy is the reason for the slow progress. It took a long time for the Gwynedd, Clwyd, Powys, Shropshire and Wolverhampton health authorities, as well as the Mersey, North-West and West Midlands regional health authorities to seek to co-operate with and agree the terms of reference for the consultancy study. I want to know whether the consultancy study is literally under way and when it is expected to report. What is its status? When it has been completed, will the report go direct to the Secretary of State for Wales or will it go first to the authorities that I have mentioned? If the report goes first to the authorities, I foresee further delays.

Is genuine hostel accommodation provided at Clatterbridge for patients who have travelled from north Wales? Even after having perused the Select Committee's report, I am not sure of the answer to that question. Are there enough radiotherapy staff at Clatterbridge hospital? Is the Minister able to say categorically that the Gwynedd and Clwyd health authorities are collaborating well with their counterparts over the border, especially with the Mersey regional health authority? Has the Welsh Office paid any money to the Mersey regional health authority and to Clatterbridge for the services that it obtains for its north Wales patients? If I cannot be given the answers to those questions now, I should be grateful if the Minister would write to me at length at his convenience during the next few weeks?

The minutes of evidence attached to the Select Committee's 1984 report included a reference by Dr. H. Parry to a wait of six weeks for radiotherapy treatment while patients were in pain. Has that problem been solved? I presume that it has. I hope that nobody now suffers pain because of having to wait for treatment.

Dr. Coe was also examined by the Select Committee in 1984. He said that, wherever the north Wales radiotherapy centre is sited, it must be on the site of a district general hospital. Four anxious years have passed since Dr. Coe said that, with all that that entails for patients and families. I ask the Welsh Office to show a sense of urgency. I am asking for decisive action and a guarantee of meaningful development when the consultants report. I hope that the Minister will use his undoubted influence to ensure that the consultants reply with their study urgently. My request is for a satellite radiotherapy centre if we cannot have an independent centre. I concede that the former is more likely. I would listen to expert advice on that.

I am aware of the problems for patients who receive chemotherapy treatment and have to travel a long way to get it. Patients from Corwen, for example, have to travel to the world-famous Christie hospital in Manchester. That is a long journey. Apart from the upset and trauma caused by the treatment, the people concerned are likely to be sick as a result of the long journey. I know that the Minister will be sensitive to the humanity of the issues that I am raising and I am sure he will respond accordingly. Patients from the Rhyl area have to travel to Clatterbridge. Some radiotherapy patients receive treatment locally, but the majority have to travel to Manchester.

It would be helpful if a consultant from Liverpool or Manchester could hold clinic sessions at say Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, which is the great district hospital at Bodelwyddan near Rhyl, or at Ysbyty Maclor, the district hospital at Wrexham, each week. Better still, a consultant could be appointed for north Wales, holding sessions at Bangor, Wrexham and Rhyl Bodelwyddan. The consultants at Wrexham appreciate the expertise that is to be found at Christie's in Manchester. The Minister knows that it is a world-renowned hospital. The consultants at Wrexham would hate to lose their contacts with it, but it would be helpful to have more local treatment.

How many hospices are there in north Wales for the care of the terminally ill? On Deeside, some devoted people, who are my constituents, are very effectively collecting cash for a hospice outside the constituency at Backford near Chester. When, eventually, the proposed Deeside community hospital is built, does the Minister envisage the existing small community hospital at Mancot becoming a hospice run by Clwyd health authority? Does he know that, in Clwyd, there are fears that financial difficulties facing south Manchester health authority might lead to a reduction of the services provided by clinical staff at Christie's hospital? If that were to happen, it would be a blow to my constituents and the whole of north Wales.

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There is barely a district hospital manager and treasurer who does not have pressing financial problems, but I should like some assurances, if not now perhaps in a letter. My local council—Alyn and Deeside—Connah's Quay town council and others support, the campaign for at least a satellite radiotherapy centre. The Minister is aware of my disappointment and anger about the substantial delay with the building of a community hospital at Aston Deeside. It has been delayed by three years, and it has been scaled down in the number of beds and the proposed services to my constituents. The community that I represent is very upset at this development, but we have had this out previously. I emphasise that my constituents have no district general hospital, despite a huge urban population. That is an injustice to my constituents, who are always travelling to Manchester, to Liverpool, to Rhyl, to Wrexham and to Chester.

It has nothing to do with the Minister or with this Administration, but, historically, Deeside missed out a generation of growth. So be it, but I now want guarantees, not only for the radiotherapy centre, but for more funding for the excellent Clwyd health authority. If that authority had specific extra cash, it would be able to buy more of the time of the superbly experienced consultants at Manchester Christie. My constituents would benefit greatly and speedily. They could be treated at Wrexham by consultants from Manchester more often.

I also want a special cash subvention to provide better back-up services locally concerning cancer. That subvention would be made available for more social work, more health visitors and more Macmillan nurses. I conclude my remarks so that the Minister may respond to me and then get his helicopter back to Wales.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): I thank the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) for his good wishes for my second chance to experience that form of aerial transport.

I congratulate him on his choice of topic for this afternoon's debate and I shall be writing to him in reply to his many detailed questions. He will know from exchanges in the past that my right hon. Friend and I attach a very high priority to the development of specialist services for patients in north Wales, particularly for those suffering from cancer. It is a much feared group of diseases by virtue of its indiscriminate impact on young and old and by the difficulty—and as yet on occasion the impossibility—of successful treatment.

In responding to the hon. Gentleman's speech I hope to reassure the House that the Welsh Office has a coherent strategy for tackling cancer in north Wales. It is a strategy for securing better information, of promoting health education, providing targeted screening facilities and reappraising and developing diagnostic and treatment services. Much of that strategy is already in place and the rest is coming to fruition. There is certainly no lack of commitment either of effort or resources to provide what is required. I am much encouraged that in pursuing our strategy in north Wales we have had strong support not just from the Welsh health authorities but from those in England which are most directly concerned. The hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot speak for those services which lie across the border, but he can be assured that Welsh Office officials maintain close contact with the English health authorities.

The availability of impartial and objective statistical information on the incidence of cancers is of prime importance in tackling the many and complex issues that they present to us. We have been very fortunate for many years in Wales in having a highly regarded unit whose principal function has been to provide the soundest possible data and to publish them in the public interest. I refer to the Welsh Cancer Registry which is responsible for the cancer registration scheme in Wales. It collects information on an entirely confidential basis about cancer patients resident in the Principality and its third report entitled "Cancer Registration in Wales 1974-84" was published earlier this month. The report contains a detailed analysis of the numbers and incidence of cancer for Welsh residents in each of the years 1974-84. It is our intention that the latest report of the registry should be given the most careful consideration, not only within my own Department but by all those involved in dealing with cancers in the Principality.

I shall not attempt to describe all the main features of the registry's latest report. I will say that, if no allowance is made for changes in the age and sex composition of the population, the number of cancer registrations in Wales expressed as a rate per 100,000 has increased by about 30 per cent. between 1974 and 1984. Of course, cancers are naturally prevalent amongst the elderly and more people are living longer in Wales than they were in 1974. Allowing for changes in the composition of the population as a whole, the overall incidence of malignancies over the period 1974-1984 has remained broadly constant for men, although as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside has said, for women the incidence has increased. It is clear that, aside from changes in demography, increased numbers of registrations may also be due to improvements in diagnosis and in the reporting of diagnosed cases to the registry. Naturally, improvements are made to the system of reporting wherever necessary and desirable. It is important to keep that in mind when interpreting the data.

The pattern of distribution for cancers in the Principality varies for each type of malignancy. Speaking very broadly and taking all malignancies together, I can tell the House that in north Wales rates appear to be elevated compared with what one would expect for Wales as a whole. This is not the case for every type of cancer or for every area in north Wales, as the mapped illustrations in the registry document show.

Such evidence as we have suggests that the incidence of cancer in north Wales has been above average over many decades. It is not clear why this should be. It is possibly an effect of the changing demographic profile caused by people retiring to the area but the causes and correlations are extremely difficult to pin down.

Last year we commissioned Emeritus Professor Hubert Campbell to undertake an investigation of the data relating to the incidence of cancer on the north Wales coast for 1974 to 1983. Professor Campbell has provided an analysis of the results of his investigation. He makes it clear that in his view there is nothing new in the reported incidence of cancers in north Wales; he notes that the high incidence has been known for at least 70 years. Professor Campbell's report is very full. I do not propose to describe its contents in detail today, but I hope shortly to be able to make a statement about it.

There can be no question that some cancers are, as the hon. Gentleman said, substantially preventable. One need only reflect on the levels of smoking and the incidence of lung cancer among women in Wales to see the point. It is heartening that through the Welsh Health Promotion Authority we have been able significantly to enlarge the investment in health education for Wales. This is vital to help the public make informed choices about lifestyle. It is crucial for prompting people to set smoking aside and for sponsoring sensible moderation in drinking, sound diet, beneficial exercise and individual responsibility for overall health maintenance. In all this the authority works actively with the voluntary sector, with the network of health education officers in district health authorities, and with many others to carry the message to schools, the workplace, and to people throughout the Principality.

Complementary to these health education initiatives is the Government's commitment to early diagnosis and treatment. That is particularly true of the national screening arrangements for cancer of the cervix and breast.

Discussion of prevention, incidence and causation naturally leads on to the facilities that are currently available to diagnose and treat patients in north Wales. In doing so we must not overlook the considerable advances that have been made in recent years in treating the disease. The Bagshawe report on acute services for cancer reminds us that:

> "Lengthening periods of survival show that even where it is not possible to cure cancer it is increasingly feasible to offer treatment to contain its effects and development."

That is achievable particularly through the development of new drug therapies, more sophisticated radiotherapy and the development of computerised treatment planning.

Our task is to ensure that patients throughout Wales have ready access to these facilities as quickly as doctors believe is clinically necessary. That process begins with

diagnosis. The diagnosis of cancer is undertaken by clinical specialists at district general hospitals on referral from general practitioners and our strategy to make computerised tomography screening more accessible to patients in Wales has done much to enhance diagnosis. About £1 million has been invested by the Department in scanners at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Rhyl and Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor. This investment has clear benefits for early identification of cancer.

The treatment of patients suffering from cancer may take the form of surgery, medical oncology or radiotherapy or a combination of these. Surgical treatment in north Wales, as elsewhere, is provided as a district-based service carried out by surgeons in district general hospitals. As such, it is the responsibility of district health authorities to plan and fund these services within their financial resources and according to the extent of local need.

Medical oncology, which is the treatment of cancer by drugs, is also provided as a district service at district general hospitals. However, medical oncology may be combined with radiotherapy treatment and, if so, is usually then provided at the regional radiotherapy centre which treats the patient. I shall return to the implication that has for district health authorities in Wales.

Radiotherapy treatment is recognised throughout England and Wales as a regional service provided at regional radiotherapy centres. Those centres, which have for many years provided north Wales patients with radiotherapy treatment or radiotherapy combined with medical oncology treatment, are the radiotherapy and oncology centre at Clatterbridge hospital, Wirral; Alderhay hospital, Liverpool; Christie hospital, Manchester; and the Linden-Davies radiotheraphy unit for Shropshire and mid Wales at the Royal Shrewsbury hospital.

As the hon. Gentleman said, consultants based at Clatterbridge and Christie hospitals hold out-patient clinics. A complex network of services already exists to provide patients with a comprehensive service of diagnosis and treatment. This may be available locally or may require the resources of a regional radiotherapy unit with equipment such as linear accelerators, cobalt machines and computerised tomography scanning and treatment-planning facilities. It is a part of medicine that has experienced significant technical advances and expansion of treatment activity. As the hon. Gentleman said, from 1984 to 1986 the Department conducted a review of regional services to north Wales patients, including radiotherapy and oncology services. That review was prompted, in part, by anxiety about the service being provided for north Wales' patients.

The findings of the working party's comprehensive study were the subject of consultation in 1986, in the light of which the then Secretary of State for Wales announced in April 1987 his decision on the action to be taken.

With regard to radiotherapy and oncology the working party review made several recommendations, and I shall refer to the most important.

In respect of the Christie hospital, it proposed that arrangements for the treatment of patients from south Clwyd should continue. We have sought to secure this and have been assured by the general manager of South Manchester health authority that potential restrictions in clinical services provided at Christie hospital, which have been publicised subsequently and which might have implications for radiotherapy treatment for north Wales patients, were not to be introduced. This will ensure the maintenance of the service.

The review team were concerned to ensure provision, through Welsh Office funding, of fast, comfortable transport to and from the regional radiotherapy centre at Clatterbridge for those patients who have to travel very long distances—that is, those from the western parts of Gwynedd. This proposal was willingly accepted. Capital funds of £75,000, together with recurrent funding of nearly £97,000, were made available in 1987 to Gwynedd health authority to acquire fast, comfortable transport, and I am pleased to learn that this has done much to ease the conditions of sick patients who must travel long distances for radiotherapy treatment.

One issue to which the review team gave particular attention was whether north Wales should have its own satellite radiotherapy centre. It concluded that the Welsh Office should undertake a detailed feasibility study, including site options, regarding the provision of a satellite radiotherapy centre linked to the main unit at Clatterbridge, but located within north Wales, and that discussions should take place with Mersey RHA to solicit the co-operation of the regional centre to support the running of this unit, which should be funded by the Welsh Office as part of its regional services.

The consultation process, to which I referred earlier, revealed some disagreement about the appropriateness of a satellite radiotherapy centre located in north Wales. Being concerned that the treatment of cancer patients in north Wales, whether by surgery, radiotherapy or medical oncology, should be developed in a rational and comprehensive manner, the then Secretary of State decided that the most appropriate way forward was a comprehensive examination of the provision of cancer services in north Wales, at district and regional levels. Accordingly, discussions were initiated with the interested English and Welsh health authorities to seek their co-operation in a consultancy study to examine the provision of cancer services in north Wales.

I am pleased to say that we received a strongly supportive response in each case and proceeded to select a company to undertake the study. We were particularly pleased to have the assistance of the district general manager of Clwyd health authority, Dr. Jones. The study is to be started in the next four weeks. It will report to the Secretary of State after consultations with district health authorities. We have set the date of January 1989 for the receipt of its findings. Officials of the Welsh Office met representatives of Deloitte, Haskins and Sells this week at the start of their work.

The consultancy study is expected to be completed early in the coming year. It will entail a detailed exploration of the incidence of cancer, the treatment infrastructure, clinical developments and treatment requirements. Following that, it will be expected to explore how these requirements can most effectively be met and to undertake an appraisal of the options to meet them, including the feasibility of providing a radiotherapy centre in north Wales. That demanding remit will be carried out in close consultation with clinicians and officers of north Wales health authorities and of English regional health authorities, which at present provide the service. It can be expected that those groups representing patients will also be involved. Perhaps I may emphasise the point that we

[Mr. Ian Grist]

have been assured by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells that it and its clinical advisers will be actively seeking the views of local interests, including clinicians.

The hon. Member will understand that, until that study has been carried out and I have had the opportunity to consider it, it would be inappropriate for me to encourage speculation about whether such a unit will be set up, or where.

Turning from the review report and our response to it, I shall refer to the service currently provided by the English health authorities. As I have already mentioned, officials have met their counterparts in north Wales health authorities and neighbouring English regional health authorities to explore arrangements for more effective liaison on regional service issues. A clinical director has recently been appointed by Mersey regional health authority in respect of the regional radiotherapy service and the director has already been involved in discussions with officers of north Wales health authorities and Welsh Office officials regarding the development of radiotherapy services at Clatterbridge hospital. I understand that he has committed himself to improving the service that his hospital offers to Welsh patients—as to others—and I welcome that. Additionally, the West Midlands regional health authority is intending to mount a review of cancer treatment services and officials have sought to ensure that the interests of north Wales patients are fully considered there too.

In conclusion, I can assure the House that the commitment to cancer services for patients in north Wales to which I have referred in my speech will be sustained. I look forward to the results of the Deloitte report: it will be given the most careful consideration in consultation with interested parties in North Wales and England. I believe that the Department has forged a strong relationship with north Wales authorities on this issue and that it will bear fruit in the improved service for patients, for which the hon. Gentleman has called.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 July 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Life Sentences)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners presently serving life sentences have been in prison *(a)* over 20 years, *(b)* over 25 years and *(c)* over 30 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available information is given in the table:

Life sentence prisoners held under their original sentence[1] in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 31 March 1988: by time spent under sentence in such establishments

Years spent under sentence[2]	*Number of prisoners[3]*
Up to 20 years	2,354
Over 20 up to 25 years	30
Over 25 up to 30 years	6
Over 30 years	3
Total	2,393

[1] Excluding 84 prisoners recalled following an earlier release on licence.

[2] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody or in non-Prison Department establishments.

[3] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Television

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in his consideration of proposals for a fifth or sixth terrestrial television channel, it is envisaged that such channels should be capable of being transmitted to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Mr. Renton: It may be technically feasible for additional television services to be provided on UHF in these areas, subject to more detailed assessment of the implications for other broadcasting and non-broadcasting services. Decisions on whether additional television services should be authorised, and, if so, under what conditions, have yet to be taken, and the Government's proposals on this will be included in a White Paper in due course.

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department's circular instruction 3/1987 is currently being implemented at Risley remand centre; who is responsible for ensuring that this instruction is followed at Risley remand centre and who was responsible for implementing this instruction at Risley remand centre during 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Circular instruction 3/1987 on suicide prevention is now being implemented at Risley remand centre. Responsibility for ensuring that circular instructions are implemented in an establishment lies with the governor.

Suspects (Naming)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prevent reports in the media publishing names of individuals held by the police before they have been charged with any offence.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to do so. Disclosure by the police is already prohibited by standing orders.

Aliens (New College, Cardiff)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many aliens are registered as students at New college, Cardiff; and how their educational progress and attendance is monitored.

Mr. Renton: Applications for overseas nationals for leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom as students are considered on an individual basis and normally no record is maintained by the Home Office of the numbers of overseas students at individual educational establishments.

When a student applies for further leave to remain to continue studies, an attendance check may be made. In many cases a student's educational progress is evident from the courses being followed, but where there is cause to doubt a student's progress he may be asked for evidence of examination results.

Armley Prison

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Armley, in Leeds, have been transferred to training establishments in each of the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

	YPs	*Adults*	*Total*
1987			
June	98	201	299
July	123	240	363
August	89	185	274
September	105	187	292
October	122	253	375
November	94	229	323
December	83	87	170
1988			
January	119	212	331
February	132	251	383
March	121	230	351
April	72	151	223
May	94	276	370
	1,252	2,502	3,754

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners have been sent to Her Majesty's prison Armley, in Leeds, for each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information is given in the table:

Prisoners[1] initially received on remand into Leeds prison: by type of initial remand and month of reception, 1 June 1987–31 May 1988

	Type of initial remand		
	Untried	*Convicted unsentenced*	*Total*
1987			
June	253	19	272
July	225	29	254
August	253	17	270
September	257	31	288
October	261	32	293
November	295	23	318
December	242	34	276
1988			
January	257	31	288
February	285	34	319
March	274	21	295
April	280	27	307
May	298	10	308

[1] The figures, which are provisional, are those recorded centrally and are approximate.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners have been transferred from Her Majesty's prison Armley, in Leeds, for each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Such information is not separately recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to meet prison officers at Her Majesty's prison Armley, in Leeds, to discuss the problem of overcrowding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so. He visited the establishment in May last year and had wide-ranging discussions with management and staff.

Abortion (Carlisle)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to whether police interviewed during the course of their inquiry into the death of the Carlisle baby *(a)* the doctors who signed the abortion certificate, *(b)* the doctors who diagnosed Ehlers Danlos syndrome, *(c)* the consultant involved, *(d)* the registrar involved, *(e)* each nurse involved, *(f)* the senior houseman involved, and *(g)* the hospital chaplians; and if each person interviewed made a written statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conduct of this investigation was an operational matter for which the chief constable of Cumbria had full responsibility. Disclosure of information about it is not a matter for the Home Department.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Prime Minister what support Her Majesty's Government are giving to moderate black leaders in South Africa in their opposition to apartheid.

The Prime Minister: Our policy is to encourage all those who are working for a peaceful, negotiated end to apartheid. To this end, we maintain contact with a wide cross-section of South African opinion. We also provide practical assistance to black South Africans through our substantial aid programme.

Iranian Airliner

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what information she had about the route of the Iranian Airbus when she made a statement about its shooting down.

The Prime Minister: We were in touch with the United States throughout 3 July and took full account of the information available at the time and of the statements of President Reagan and the chairman of the American joint chiefs of staff.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the Government's statement on the shooting down of the Iranian airliner by the United States navy.

The Prime Minister: The statement of 3 July is as follows:

"The British Government profoundly regret the loss of life on the Iranian airliner and extend their deep sympathy to the bereaved. This has been a tragedy for all concerned.

We have been in touch with the United States and they have kept us informed of their investigations.

We understand that, in the course of an engagement following an Iranian attack on US forces, warnings were given to an unidentified aircraft apparently closing with a US warship, but these warnings received no response. We fully accept the right of forces engaged in such hostilities to defend themselves.

This tragic accident underlines the urgent need for an early end to the Iran/Iraq conflict including an end to all attacks on shipping."

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what information was passed to Her Majesty's Government, from British naval vessels operating in the straits of Hormuz, concerning the flight path and altitude of the Iranian Airbus at the time it was shot down.

The Prime Minister: There were no Royal Navy ships in the immediate vicinity and they have no direct information as to the Iranian Airbus's flight path.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what contact Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Government concerning the information received by the USS Vincennes before the Iranian airbus was shot down in order to ensure that similar errors cannot be made by Her Majesty's ships operating in the area.

The Prime Minister: We remain in close touch with the United States and await the results of the naval investigation which they have set in hand. We shall consider carefully whether there are any lessons to be learnt with regard to the operations of the Armilla patrol.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make it her policy to dissociate the United Kingdom from the consequences of United States intervention in the war between Iran and Iraq.

The Prime Minister: The United States Government have stated that their policy towards the Iran-Iraq conflict is impartial. The tragic accident in which an Iranian Airbus was brought down on 3 July in no way constitutes intervention in the conflict.

British policy towards the conflict remains impartial. We are working in the United Nations to bring about a negotiated settlement based on UNSC resolution 598, and in the Gulf itself, to help uphold the principle of freedom of navigation.

Aircraft Identification

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if she is satisfied that officers of the Royal Navy are trained to be capable of distinguishing in all circumstances between a large civil aircraft approaching at less than average speed on a scheduled flight, and a fighter aircraft making an attacking run.

The Prime Minister: Royal Navy personnel are fully trained to do any tasks that are likely to be required of them.

US Rules of Engagement (Persian Gulf)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government were consulted by the United States Government before they relaxed their rules of engagement for the United States naval vessels operating in the Persian Gulf; and what representations she made to President Reagan concerning the likely outcome of this change.

The Prime Minister: National rules of engagement are a matter for the countries concerned.

Charities (VAT)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has had from Oxfam in regard to tax threats to charities and, in particular, the effect of the Local Government Finance Bill and the proposal to levy value added tax on the sale of donated goods by charities; what reply she is sending; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I received two letters from Mr. Frank Judd, director of Oxfam, dated 17 and 29 June, to which I replied on 8 July.

Civil Servants

Mr. John: To ask the Prime Minister to what extent the maintenance of political neutrality by civil servants is a matter of internal management by each Department; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The maintenance of political impartiality by civil servants is the responsibility of Ministers, senior Civil Service management, and individual civil servants.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

66. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss progress on the further police inquiries into telephone calls made by Dr. Frank Skuse while giving evidence at the Birmingham pub bombings appeal.

71. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed with the Director of Public Prosecutions the progress of the further inquiries by the City of London police into telephone calls by Dr. Frank Skuse during his appearance as a witness at the Birmingham pub bombings appeal.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the answer that I gave today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

69. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions has yet received a report from the City of London police regarding their further inquiries into telephone calls made by Dr. Frank Skuse in relation to the Birmingham pub bombings case.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has received regular reports of the progress made in those inquiries.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

70. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next expects to meet the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the further police inquiry into telephone calls made by Dr. Frank Skuse during the Birmingham pub bombings appeal.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I gave today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). I do not expect to discuss the matter with the Director again, unless evidence to substantiate the allegations against Dr. Skuse and others should emerge.

Sunday Trading

67. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column 201, when the expects the Association of District Councils to respond to his request for information regarding the enforcement of the Sunday trading provisions of the Shops Act 1950; and what other steps he is taking to ascertain the scale of such enforcement.

The Attorney-General: My Department was informed by the association in mid-June that the association hoped to write to me

"within the next few days".

It has no doubt taken longer than expected to collate the results of the association's survey of its member authorities. I expect that survey to provide the most authoritative information on the scale of the enforcement effort since the association can call upon the resources of all the local authorities concerned.

Director of Public Prosecutions

68. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

The Attorney-General: I last met the Director of Public Prosecutions on Friday, 8 July 1988. We discussed the outcome of the investigation by the City of London police into allegations made against Dr. Frank Skuse and others by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and other matters relating to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Irish Republic (Extradition)

72. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a further statement about the implementation of extradition from the Irish Republic.

The Attorney-General: Section 6 of the Irish Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 provides that the Irish Government shall, as soon as may be after the first day of January in each year beginning with the year 1989, make a report to each House of the Oireachtas on the operation in the preceding year of part III of the Extradition Act 1965. The Irish Minister of Justice has stated that it has been the Irish Government's intention from the start that the review would identify any shortcomings that may exist, and he has reaffirmed the Irish Government's commitment to introduce amending legislation, should that prove necessary. This commitment was stated to extend to all aspects of the extradition arrangements with the United Kingdom.

The Government will continue to address these matters with the Irish Government in the context of that Government's review. For my part I have corresponded with, and spoken to, the Irish Attorney-General on a number of occasions since the McVeigh decision, with a view to securing the important mutual objective of enabling extradition between our two countries to proceed effectively. In addition, Mr. Murray and I have agreed to meet in the near future for further discussion of these matters.

Gloucester United Schools' Charity

73. **Mr. French:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the administration of the Gloucester United Schools' Charity.

The Attorney-General: I have received written representations from my hon. Friend to which I hope to be in a position to reply as soon as possible.

Government Employees (Security)

74. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last reviewed prosecution policy in relation to breaches of security by Government employees; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Prosecution policy in relation to all criminal offences is kept under review by the Director of Public Prosecutions and his senior staff. I reviewed the policy in relation to alleged breaches of security by Government employees in November 1987.

Family Courts

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General when the Lord Chancellor plans to reply to the responses to his consultative document on the introduction of a family court.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor hopes to make an announcement about a family court by the autumn, after having considered the recommendations of the report of the inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland.

Children and Young Persons Act 1986

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will now bring section 2 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1986 into force.

The Attorney-General : Yes. The Lord Chancellor intends to bring both section 2 and section 3 of this Act into force on 1 August 1988.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

78. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following the signing of the Esquipulas peace accord by the Central American nations, he will now urgently consider a substantial rise in bilateral aid to Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have no plans to do so.

Sri Lanka

80. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Sri Lankan Government as to future aid projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My most recent discussions with the Sri Lankan Government took place during my visit in March of this year, when I signed an agreement for the provision of £20 million in reconstruction aid. Last month I met the Sri Lankan Minister of Transport in London to discuss our assistanee to the transport sector.

94. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a further statement on British aid to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chris Patten: I recently signed an agreement to provide £20 million in reconstruction aid to Sri Lanka. Our programme also includes funding for new projects for the rehabilitation of roads and power facilities in Colombo, and a substantial technical co-operation programme.

Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation

81. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation has made in engendering economic and social development in developing Commonwealth countries since its establishment.

Mr. Chris Patten: At their meeting in Vancouver last November Commonwealth Heads of Government expressed their appreciation of the effective way in which the fund was meeting urgent needs for expertise and training in a wide variety of fields.

Aid Donors (OECD)

82. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries' aid budget as a proportion of gross national product exceeds 0·28 per cent.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987, member countries of the OECD's development assistance committee whose net official development assistance as a proportion of gross national product exceeded 0·28 per cent. were: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

Kampuchea

84. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of Vietnam's undertaking of 25 May to withdraw half its troops from Kampuchea by the end of the year, he has arranged a meeting with representatives of the Phnom Penh Government to discuss the resumption of United Kingdom aid to Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: No.

Aid (Priorities)

85. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current priorities for granting aid assistance.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our policy on the allocation of bilateral aid to developing countries is set out in Command Paper 225, "Bilateral Aid: Country Programmes", published in October 1987. As this explains, the fundamental objective of the aid programme is to promote sustainable economic and social progress and alleviate poverty in developing countries. Priorities are decided accordingly.

Afghanistan

86. **Sir Peter Blaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a further statement on British aid to Afghanistan.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am sufficiently encouraged by progress on the co-ordination of arrangements for resettlement to allocate the £10 million which was pledged for Afghan refugees earlier this year. Our assistance will be channelled through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee for the Red Cross, UNICEF and British voluntary agencies including Afghanaid as follows:

	£ million
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	6·75
International Committee for the Red Cross	1·50
UNICEF	0·25
British voluntary agencies	1·50

Our early release of funds will enable these agencies to take action before the onset of bad weather restricts operations.

UNESCO

87. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what would be the cost of United Kingdom membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in the current financial year; and how much of this money has been reallocated to aid projects since the United Kingdom left the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost would depend on the terms on which we rejoined the organisation. In 1985, the last year of our membership, it was £6·4 million. This amount has all been reallocated to educational, scientific and cultural programmes.

Ethiopia

88. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution Her Majesty's Government are making to the international relief effort in Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the beginning of 1987 we have committed more than £45 million of assistance in support of the international relief effort in Ethiopia. This figure includes the cost of some 95,000 tonnes of bilateral food aid, donations totalling £3 million towards the cost of the United Nations airlift operation and our share of the cost of European Community food and emergency assistance. We stand ready to contribute further to the relief effort as the situation develops.

Export Diversification

89. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department has been doing to encourage export diversification in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: Many ACP states are adopting internationally agreed structural adjustment programmes which provide for improved incentives for exports, both traditional and new. We are supporting such programmes with our bilateral aid and our contributions through the International Development Association, the regional development banks and the European development fund. We support the Community's aid for export promotion by ACP and other development countries, and we fund our own agency in Britain (the Developing Countries Trade Agency) to do similar work directly.

Tanzania

90. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government are giving to Tanzania's economic development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last month announced a further £10 million in support of Tanzania's economic recovery programme. This brings to over £80 million the new aid pledged since Tanzania reached agreement with the International Monetary Fund in August 1986.

European Community Aid

91. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to enhance the effectiveness of European Community aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I attach great importance to working with our EC partners and the EC Commission to achieve

this. Notable advances have already been made, not least the reform of Community food aid during our presidency in 1986. But there is scope for further improvement. In particular, the Lomé convention is about to be renegotiated. When I spoke to the Royal Commonwealth Society on 3 May, I outlined ways in which I feel the trade and aid provisions of the Lomé relationship could be made more effective. A copy of my speech has been placed in the Library of the House.

Agricultural Diversification

92. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department has been doing to encourage agricultural diversification in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the Pacific, we are helping the islands diversify away from coconuts, for example, in Vanuatu, with the Commonwealth Development Corporation, by supporting cocoa and coffee projects and livestock and forestry programmes; in the Solomon Islands by supporting forestry and spice development; and in the smaller atoll islands by providing expertise to increase self-sufficiency in meat and vegetables.

In the Caribbean, we are supporting a range of activities to help countries diversify away from sugar and bananas into other tropical fruit, coffee, spices and annual food crops, for example, yams.

Agricultural diversification is less important in Africa than in the Caribbean and Pacific as there are fewer countries dependent on single export crops. Our assistance focuses on developing food crops, agro-industries and commodity exports.

Immunisation

93. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress on the United Nations international children's emergency fund global immunisation programme to eradicate the six preventable diseases, and the United Kingdom contribution thereto.

Mr. Chris Patten: The amount committed to immunisation projects had risen at 4 March—the latest date for which figures are available—to $215 million. The United Kingdom has contributed a further £4·43 million to five UNICEF country projects which include immunisation and mother and child health care.

Poorest Nations

95. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to assist in the improvement of the economic infrastructure of the world's poorest countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the allocation of our bilateral aid resources, most of which go to the poorest countries, we fully recognise the importance of efficient infrastructure. For example, we are involved currently in support for the power, coal and railway sectors in India, roads in Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania, water in Ghana and power generation in the Sudan. The substantial funds we provide through multilateral institutions, particularly the International Development Association, the regional development banks and the European Development Fund are used extensively to improve the economic infrastructure of the poorest countries.

Renewable Natural Resources

96. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what expenditure was allocated in 1987 to renewable natural resources projects; and what was the nature of the projects.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987 financial aid expenditure on renewable natural resources projects totalled £61·6 million. Of this, 61 per cent. was allocated to agriculture and livestock, 20 per cent. to land development and irrigation, 12 per cent. to forestry and the remainder to a range of subject areas, including fisheries and rural development. In addition, some £12·4 million was spent on research and development. There was additional expenditure under technical co-operation programmes which it would be disproportionately expensive to collate.

Lomé Convention

97. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid in total under the third Lomé convention has been allocated so far by the European Community; and what proportion of this amount the United Kingdom's share represents.

Mr. Chris Patten: At 31 March 1988, total commitments under the third Lomé convention were 2·6 billion ecu, about £1·74 billion. The United Kingdom share of this amount is £288 million.

Aid Donors

98. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the average percentage of gross national product given in aid in 1987 by donor nations, excluding the United Kingdom which are members of *(a)* the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations, *(b)* the European Community and *(c)* the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987 net aid as a percentage of GNP, excluding the United Kingdom, averaged 0·32 per cent. for the Group of Seven; 0·5 per cent. for those members of the European Community for which the Development Assistance Committee has published figures; and 0·34 per cent. for all development assistance committee members.

Developing Commonwealth Countries

99. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much bilateral aid has been allocated for this financial year to developing Commonwealth countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: Provision for developing Commonwealth countries from the country programmes and budgetary aid sub-heads of the Supply Estimates 1988-89 amounts to £339,705,000.

Commonwealth Youth Programme

100. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Commonwealth youth programme; and what were the comparable figures in earlier years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Over the past three financial years the figures are:

	£
1987-88	306,000
1986-87	290,000
1985-86	360,000

These amounts represent 30 per cent. of the programme's actual expenditure each year.

Voluntary Agencies

101. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the proportion of the total income of non-governmental organisations provided through Government grants in the most recent years for which figures are available; and what is this proportion for each of Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, Catholic Fund for Overseas Development and Christian Aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department does not hold figures centrally on the total income of the non-governmental organisations involved in overseas aid and development. By no means all of these organisations seek assistance from my Department and many are not solely engaged in work in developing countries but also engage in field work in the United Kingdom.

The proportion of total income provided through grants of all kinds from my Department to the four charities named for the 1986-87 financial year, the latest for which figures are available, are:

	Per cent
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development	[1]13·0
Christian Aid	8·4
Oxfam	9·4
Save the Children Fund	14·7

[1] approximate.

102. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will increase his Department's support for the overseas aid activities of Britain's voluntary agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Decisions on spending under the aid programme for the next financial year have yet to be made. However, this year's budget for the joint funding scheme now stands at £10·5 million which is a 75 per cent. increase on the original allocation for last year. I hope to be able to continue to provide substantial support through the joint funding scheme for the work of British voluntary agencies in the future.

AIDS

103. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress his Department is making in conjunction with international agencies with their action to contain the spread of the AIDS pandemic.

Mr. Chris Patten: International co-operation in efforts to combat AIDS is essential. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is leading the international effort. It has developed a global strategy, and over 75 plans for national AIDS control programmes are now being implemented with WHO assistance. Her Majesty's Government have committed over £12 million so far in direct support of this work. £4·6 million of this is in the form of contributions to WHO-backed national programmes in four African countries. In addition we have provided a grant of £1·6 million over three years to support the work of the International Planned Parenthood Federation which is helping family planning associations overseas to introduce information and counselling services on AIDS. Other international aid agencies to which we contribute in support of their general operations have programmes under way in collaboration with the WHO aimed at containing the spread of HIV. In the case of the European Community, the United Kingdom share of their aid commitments to combat AIDS is about £4·2 million.

Her Majesty's Government take every opportunity to encourage open debate and exchange of information about the AIDS problem and have co-sponsored resolutions on AIDS at world health assemblies and at the United Nations General Assembly. The United Kingdom has played an active role in discussions of the problem in the European Community, the Commonwealth and the Council of Europe and has supported the establishment of a mechanism for Communitywide information exchange.

The Government organised jointly with the WHO a world summit of Ministers of Health on programmes for AIDS prevention in London in January. The 148 countries represented adopted unanimously a declaration which stressed the importance of information and education in national AIDS control programmes.

Third World (Aid)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Nations' current target figure of gross national product to be allocated to Third world aid; and what percentage of gross national product the United Kingdom's contributions represent.

Mr. Chris Patten: The UN target for official development assistance (ODA) as a proportion of gross national product (GNP) is 0·7 per cent. In 1987 Britain's net ODA represented 0·28 per cent. of GNP. The aid programme is now growing in real terms. In the current financial year we plan to spend about £1,307 million, some £97 million more than the likely outturn for last year. The programme is planned to rise by some £70 million in 1989-90 and by a further £45 million in 1990-91.

Somalia

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Somalia to discuss the provision of food aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no such plans at present. While Somalia has some requirement for food aid, there are more acute needs elsewhere in Africa and I believe that these should be given priority in the allocation of our food aid.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from bodies, including community councils, about the implications of the Green Paper, "Financing our Public Library Service"; and what consideration he is giving to the concerns expressed.

Mr. Luce: I have received about 5,300 responses so far, including many from library authorities and other local organisations. The task of categorising, analysing, and considering the responses will begin shortly.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will specify the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half-year ended 30 June of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national scientific, historic or artistic interest have been accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax or capital transfer tax, together with information where applicable as to conditions or wishes expressed by testators or executors in the matter of allocation; whether he will list the works of art or museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective date of their acceptance in satisfaction of inheritance tax or capital transfer tax; and whether the customary press notice will be issued from the Office of Arts and Libraries covering the information given in his reply.

Mr. Luce: The information is as follows:

Items allocated since 1 January 1988

Item	*Conditions or wishes expressed*	*Recipient institution*
Twenty Vignettes by Turner	Conditional	National Galleries of Scotland
"Stratford Mill" by Constable	Wish expressed—to go to National Gallery	National Gallery
Nine drawings by Henry Moore	Conditional	British Museum
Nine portrait miniatures	Wish expressed—to go to Victoria and Albert Museum	Victoria and Albert Museum
Portrait miniature of Mary Sidney		National Portrait Gallery
"Captain Wade" by Gainsborough	Conditional	Bath City Council
Raeburn portrait	Wish expressed—to go to museum or gallery in Scotland	Aberdeen District Council

Items awaiting allocation

Item	*Conditions or wishes expressed*	*Date of acceptance*
Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence	Conditional on its remaining in situ at Sledmere House	9 April 1986
Portrait by Sir William Beechey	Conditional on its remaining at Norton Conyers	23 July 1986
Clark Archive	Wish expressed—to go to Tate Gallery	14 July 1987

A press notice is being issued.

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to put the drawings of the new British Library on public display; and what steps he has taken to ensure that there has been adequate opportunity for consultation as to the architectural merits of the scheme.

Mr. Richard Luce *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* Camden council gave planning permission for the building in June 1978 after architectural plans had been lodged with it since December 1975, and a model of the proposed building had been exhibited in Camden town hall in 1977. The Royal Fine Art Commission gave its approval to the project in January 1978 and made the comment "a brilliant solution to an extremely complex problem". An artist's drawing of the exterior of the new building will shortly be displayed in the entrance hall of the science reference section in Southampton building, Chancery lane. Later this year it will be shown in the British Library galleries at the British museum building, together with a new model of the building. A copy of the artist's drawing showing the exterior of the new building will also be displayed on the Euston road hoarding in front of the new building. Information leaflets due to be published this autumn will show recent progress photographs of the new building and of the artist's impressions of the finished building.

The Property Services Agency, which is managing construction of the project, is proposing to erect a public viewing platform at the south-west corner of the site during the autumn.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Debtor Nations

104. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's progress in implementing the debt initiative for the most debt-ridden countries put forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following the recent Group of Seven meeting in Toronto.

106. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further measures are being taken to ease the situation of Third world indebtedness in the light of the Toronto economic summit and the discussions there relating to the debts of the lesser-developed nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Toronto summit agreed that very poor, heavily indebted countries which are following approved adjustment programmes, should be offered debt relief. Official creditors will choose between offering concessional interest rates, longer repayment periods, partial write-off

or a combination of these options. The Paris Club has been asked to work out the technicalities by the end of the year. Its first meeting began today.

105. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what initiative Her Majesty's Government are taking along with other nations to resolve the debt problem as it affects Latin American debtor nations.

Mr. Lilley: Countries meeting at the Toronto economic summit agreed that the problems of the middle income debtor countries, the majority of which are in Latin America, should continue to be tackled by the growth-led, market-oriented strategy based on the case by case approach. They endorsed recent initiatives at the IMF to provide increased support to medium-term structural adjustment by the middle income debtor countries and the general capital increase at the World Bank. They also supported the increasing use of the "menu" approach in agreements reached with the commercial banks.

Productivity

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average annual increase in the productivity of the whole United Kingdom economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: Since 1980 output per head in the whole economy has grown at an average rate of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. per year, about the same as Japan and faster than any other major industrialised country.

Consumer Credit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had on the availability of consumer credit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

Public Corporations

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the end of each year from 1979 to 1986 the totals for the public corporations which were at the end of 1986 classified as still being within the public sector for *(a)* tangible assets, *(b)* financial assets and *(c)* financial liabilities, as shown in table 11.6 of the "United Kingdom National Accounts" 1987 edition, breaking down the figures for financial assets and liabilities between *(a)* claims on or liabilities to central Government and *(b)* other claims or liabilities.

Mr. Major: The components of each series are not readily available broken down by individual corporation. It would therefore be disproportionately costly to identify totals for 1979 to 1985 covering those corporations still classified as being in the public sector in 1986.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Charities (Payroll-giving)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members have taken up the offer by the Fees Office to arrange payroll-giving to a nominated charity; and how much total revenue will be provided for charities as a result.

Mr. Wakeham: Thirty-nine right hon. and hon. Members have so far availed themselves of the Fees Office facility for payroll giving to charities. The total amount of the gifts to charity from this source in 1988-89 is estimated as £5,220. Members who also hold ministerial office are known to be contributing through their departmental schemes; other Members may be giving through organsations from which they receive regular emoluments.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those sites which he is considering as locations for new nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: None. but the Central Electricity Generating Board has submitted an application, under section 2 of the Electric Lighting Act 1909, seeking consent to construct a pressurised water reactor (PWR) at Hinkley Point.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the value of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 23 November 1987. The accounts for the electricity supply industry for 1987-88 have not yet been published.

WALES

Waste Disposal

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet Llay community council, Wrexham Maelor borough council and Clwyd county council to discuss the impact upon the locality of the tipping of contaminated soils and other poisonous substances from abroad and from within the United Kingdom in the locality of Chapel lane and Dark lane, Rosseth, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will seek to ensure a permanent presence of the inspectorate at the tipping site near Dark lane and Chapel lane, Rosseth, Clwyd; if he will convene a meeting of members of the pollution inspectorate, local residents, the owners of the tipping site and local authority planning officers; and if he will make an official visit to the tipping site.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for the supervision of these sites rests with Wrexham Maelor borough council as the waste disposal authority.

It is for the council to consider whether meetings with the local residents and their representatives are necessary and to seek any advice required from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the sites.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will strengthen the inspectorate of pollution in Wales; and how many of the inspectorate are based in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* north Wales and *(c)* north-west England.

Mr. Grist: The staffing of the inspectorate is kept under continuous review. At present one controlled waste inspector based in Cardiff covers the whole of Wales. The question of cover for the north-west of England is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of times in 1987 and 1988 when the pollution inspectorate visited the Dark lane/Chapel lane tipping site at Rosseth up to and including 1 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Two visits were made during 1987 and there have been two during 1988 the more recent of which took place on 24 June. Additionally the sites have been subject to surveillance on a number of occasions.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will furnish local residents with full documentation instancing their rights concerning the tipping of contaminated soils and other dangerous substances in the Rosseth locality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It is the duty of Wrexham Maelor borough council, as waste disposal authority, to ensure that licensed waste disposal operations in its area do not cause pollution of water, danger to public health of become seriously detrimental to the amenities of the locality.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy on the importation of contaminated soils and dangerous substances into Wales from abroad and from within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Grist: The Government believe that the provision of waste disposal services is a legitimate and proper element of domestic and international trade provided that adequate safeguards are in existence to ensure that there is no danger to public health or the environment.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of the ownerships of the tipping site near Chapel lane, Rosseth, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for licensing these sites rests with the Wrexham Maelor borough council to which I would refer the hon. Gentleman for the information.

SCOTLAND

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* showing, for each year from 1979 until the latest year for which figures are available, the total number of children with special educational needs who *(a)* left education, *(b)* took further education or training, or *(c)* followed other careers, after the age of 16 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. Available data are given in the tables. Table A shows the numbers of leavers from special schools/departments in Scotland for each session from 1978-79 to 1986-87. Information on the post-school destination of such leavers, which has only been collected since 1984-85, is presented in table B.

Table A

Year	
1978-79	1,625
1979-80	1,585
1980-81	1,444
1981-82	1,303
1982-83	1,332
1983-84	1,378
1984-85	1,227
1985-86	1,187
1986-87	1,398

Table B

Destination	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Open employment	58	78	103
MSC provision	188	177	255
Adult training centre	235	199	225
Further education centre	254	313	296
Other work or education	47	44	49
Neither in work nor education	210	162	205
Destination not known	235	214	265
All leavers	1,227	1,187	1,398

Notes:

(1) Data for 1986-87 include 215 leavers from independent special schools; the data for the earlier years cover education authority and grant-aided special schools only.

(2) A small but increasing number of children with special educational needs are taught in mainstream secondary schools. The numbers of leavers of this type are not known.

Wild Birds (Poisoned Bait)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the number of golden eagles killed by poisoned bait in Scotland over the past five years; and how many have been killed on Islay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the period from 1 January 1983 to 30 June 1988 12 golden eagles are known to have been killed by poison in Scotland. Two of these were killed on Islay.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the number of wild birds killed by the use of poisoned bait in Scotland since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comprehensive information on the numbers of wild birds killed in Scotland by poison is not available because precise numbers are not always recorded in the case of multiple deaths involving corvids, gulls and some passerine species. Between 1 January 1979 and 30 June 1988, 546 birds are known to have been killed by the use of poisoned bait.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the death of two sea eagles in Scotland caused by poisoning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is positive evidence of one sea eagle having been killed by the poison mevinphos in

Caithness in April 1981. Another sea eagle found on Skye in November 1981 may have been killed by poison. By the time that the carcase was found it was almost completely decomposed and no analysis for pesticide residues could be undertaken.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many birds of prey have been reported poisoned each year over the past five years; and how many successful prosecutions for poisoning birds of prey there have been each year over the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Over the period from 1 January 1983 to 30 June 1988 the numbers of birds of prey reported as having been poisoned in Scotland were:

	Birds
1983	20
1984	8
1985	13
1986	[2]20
1987	11
[1]1988	12

[1] To 30 June.
[2] Including 6 herons.

No statistics of successful prosecutions by category of offence under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are available centrally.

Hooded Crows

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about a hooded crow destruction scheme being carried out on Islay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Hooded crows are not a protected species. We have no first-hand information about action that may have been taken on Islay to control their numbers.

Scottish Health Service Planning Council

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the will make a statement about the future role of the Scottish Health Service Planning Council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A consultation paper on the future of the Scottish Health Service Planning Council was issued in October 1987 and by the end of March 1988, 80 bodies had submitted replies. The responses are being analysed at present and consideration is being given to the recommendations. A statement will be made in due course.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of places per 10,000 women at women's refuges in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available centrally on the total number of refuges or the number of places provided.

Coastal Waters (Pollution)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he is undertaking or commissioning into the effects of pollution in the Scottish coastal waters; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* The Scottish Office is currently funding research, undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, into the effects of contaminants in waste deposited at sea, the incidence of fish diseases from dumping operations and the possible effects of mariculture on the environment resulting from the addition of nutrients and specific chemicals to water.

Research on local marine pollution matters is normally carried out by the river purification boards which are statutorily responsible for promoting the cleanliness of coastal waters in Scotland.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider amending building regulations to provide for the mandatory installation of smoke detectors in all new domestic homes and in properties that are renovated and improved; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* I recently sought the advice of the building standards advisory committee on this question. The committee drew attention to a number of technical problems which must be resolved for effective regulation to be possible and I have asked for these to be examined as quickly as possible within the context of the current review of the fire-related regulations north and south of the border.

Afforestation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will issue advice to the Forestry Commission to assist it in implementing the Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* My right hon. and learned Friend will issue advice to the commission, if necessary, in the light of experience gained in the implementation of the regulations.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of his departmental budget he intends to spend on advertising in the current year and 1989; and what sums will be spent on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* pamphlets.

Mr. Rifkind: Planned expenditure by my Department on information campaigns, including advertising, in 1988-89 will be approximately 0·03 per cent. of total expenditure shown in the class XVI Scotland Supply Estimates 1988-89. Since the form of the campaigns has not yet been settled, it is not possible to give the breakdown requested.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Students (Finance)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library the terms of reference of his Department's review of student finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The terms of reference of the student support review are:

To review the present arrangements for the financial support of students studying at first degree level or equivalent in Great Britain and to consider the future basis for such support, having regard to:

i. the situation and the maintenance needs of students, and the extent to which it is appropriate that those needs should be supported from public funds;

ii. other actual and possible sources of support which would allow the removal of students from the social security system—including the case for a system involving loans as well as grants, and the contribution of sponsorship to the needs of students on vocationally oriented courses;

iii. the Government's stated policies for higher education and access to it; and

iv. arrangements made in other countries with developed systems for the financial support of students.

Education Reform

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what number of persons was proposed for membership of each of the national curriculum working groups on mathematics, science and English by educational organisations of professional bodies; if he will describe which educational organisations or professional bodies proposed persons for membership; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what number of persons was considered for potential appointment to each of the national curriculum working groups on mathematics, science and English;

(3) if he will publish a table, showing for each of the national curriculum working groups on mathematics, science and English, the number of members appointed who had been proposed for membership by *(a)* an educational organisation or professional body, *(b)* a trade union and *(c)* any other organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Members were appointed to the national curriculum working groups on mathematics, science and English as individuals, for their personal expertise and experience, not as representatives of particular educational organisations and professional bodies. My right hon. Friend considered persons reflecting a wide range of interests and expertise, whose names were suggested by a variety of educational and other relevant organisations. The appointments to these three working groups were made from a shortlist of over 200 such persons.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil of 27 June, *Official Report*, column 7, whether discussions with members or potential members of the English working group were held before or after appointment was offered to the person concerned; what number of persons with whom such discussions were held were not offered appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Discussions were held with potential members of the English working group before appointments were offered. It would not be appropriate to comment further on cases where appointment may not have been offered following discussion.

Information (Leak)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to decide whether any action is necessary in the light of the inquiry into the unauthorised leak of information and briefing in relation to correspondence between the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Paul Gray, and Mr. Tom Jeffrey of his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will take whatever action is considered necessary.

University Technicians (Pay)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether it is now his intention to make any additional funding available to meet the cost of implementation of the comparative standing of university technicians' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: It is for universities to manage their own affairs within the total resources at their disposal. The amount available for the public funding of universities is about to be reviewed in the annual public expenditure survey.

Free School Meals

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by local education authorities, the total number of free school meals served *(a)* January to March inclusive and *(b)* April to June inclusive.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not available. Data on the number of free school meals are collected annually by means of a census taken in October which is published in March the following year. Data for 1987, the latest date for which they are available, are in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications have so far been received under the farm woodland scheme; and what acreage is covered by such applications.

Mr. Gummer: None. This scheme does not come into effect until 1 October 1988.

Cereals

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of wheat in store in the United Kingdom; and what is the anticipated level after the 1988 harvest.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On 1 July 830,000 tonnes of wheat were held in intervention stores in the United Kingdom. At this stage it is not possible to predict the outcome of the 1988 harvest level of cereal intervention stocks in the 1988-89 marketing year.

Beef

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement explaining

the origin of the clauses relating to intervention for beef under which some member states maintained a buying in price 2·5 per cent. above the market price; whether this procedure was followed in the United Kingdom, and what has been the effect on this procedure of the recent farm price review.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The buying-in price for any category or quality of beef fixed by the Commission is the same in all member states in which intervention in that category and quality of beef is open. Prices are fixed in European currency units on the basis of rules agreed by the Council of Agriculture Ministers in December 1986 as part of the package of measures to reform the support regime for beef.

These rules provide for the calculation of buying-in prices on the basis of a weighted average of the market prices prevailing in those member states for which intervention is open, excluding prices above the intervention trigger-point. However, in the discussions which led to the December 1986 agreement, concern was expressed that in gearing intervention prices to market prices at a time when market prices were expected to be weak in the face of cuts in milk quotas, the system might encourage a downward spiral of prices. Two safeguards were therefore introduced. The first of these is a flat-rate additon of 8·6 ecus/100g (£61·11 tonne), equivalent to 2·5 per cent. of the institutional intervention price for beef of R3 quality. The second provides that if the weighted average plus the flat-rate addition is less than any of the market prices which have been taken into account in calculating the average, the highest of those prices shall be the buying-in price applied.

Modifications to the system of calculating buying-in prices were established on the basis of a consensus reached at the Council of Agriculture Ministers at its meeting in Luxembourg on 13-17 June. In the absence of the adoption of the 1988-89 price-fixing regulations by the Council, the Commission, acting under its own powers, has adopted a measure on these lines which allows it to suspend or restrict the application of one or both of the two safeguards in certain market conditions. The exact effect of this measure depends on the level of market prices, as compared with the institutional intervention prices set. For the week beginning 11 July, the new rules have resulted in buying-in prices being fixed about 3 per cent. lower than they would have been under the unmodified system.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what percentage the proposed expenditure on the common agricultural policy, excluding fisheries, in the 1989 preliminary draft budget exceeds the actual outturn of spending in this area in 1987.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure proposed for agriculture in the 1989 preliminary draft budget, excluding exceptional items, is 5 per cent. greater than the underlying level of expenditure for the calendar year 1987.

(mecu)	*1987 underlying expenditure*[1]	*1989 PDB*
Market support	27,482	[2]28,235
Structural and other measures	895	1,547
	28,377	[3]29,782 (+5[4])

[1] Budget provision only cover the first ten months, 23,845 mecu.
[2] Covers expenditure from 16.10.88 to 15.10.89.
[3] In addition the 1989 PDB contains 640 mecu for depreciation of old stocks, 800 mecu for reimbursement of butter disposals in 1987-88, and a monetary reserve of 1,000 mecu.
[4] Percent.

New Zealand (Butter Exports)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if in the light of the Prime Minister's comments in the House on 19 May, *Official Report*, column *1087-8*, in regard to New Zealand's butter exports to the United Kingdom, he will make a statement on the steps he is taking to encourage the European Commission to put forward proposals that are likely to be acceptable to New Zealand.

Mr. MacGregor: I will ensure that the Government's views on this issue are communicated to the European Commission at the appropriate time.

Monomorium Pharaonis

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been adopted by his Department to limit the spread of monomorium pharaonis.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* None, but chargeable advice on the measures available to control this ant can be obtained from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service's Slough laboratory.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when and by what means monomorium pharaonis was introduced into the United Kingdom; and what information he has about its current distribution and habitat.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* The Pharaoh's ant (monomorium pharaonis) was first recorded in Britain in 1828, possibly as a result of accidental introduction on cargoes from tropical regions where the ant is endemic. It is now widely distributed throughout the United Kingdom although infestations are confined to permanently heated premises such as hospitals, bakers and large domestic apartment buildings. Nests are usually located in wall cavities, foundations and underground service ducting.

Quangos and Trading Funds

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all quasi-autonomous non-Government organisations and trading funds reporting to his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Details of all public bodies for which my Department has responsibility are given in "Public Bodies 1987" produced by the Cabinet Office

(OMCS), except in the case of the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales which will be included in the 1988 edition.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Electronics Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many licences have been issued to foreign electrical companies in the last five years allowing them to set up operations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Licences are not required to set up operations in the United Kingdom. The total number of investment projects known to the Invest in Britain Bureau set up in the United Kingdom by overseas "electrical" companies for the years 1984 to 1987 is 359 (112 projects in the office machinery and data processing equipment industries and 247 projects in the electrical and electronic engineering industries). Data for the years prior to 1984 are not available.

Single European Market

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met his counterparts from the other European Community states to discuss the effects of the completion of the single European market on the economy of the less-favoured regions of the Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Other Ministers and I frequently meet our counterparts in other member states to discuss all aspects of the completion of the single market.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the current progress of preparations by British industry for 1992.

Mr. Maude: Business awareness of the 1992 target date has risen dramatically since we launched our Europe open for busines campaign and is now about 80 per cent. The next phase of the campaign will underline the need for action by firms throughout the country to prepare for the challenge of operating in the single market. Only about a quarter are yet doing so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the effects of the completion of the European single market on the regions of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have recently answered questions on this issue from several hon. Members, incuding the hon. Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 13 April at column *159* and 7 June at column *430*, respectively.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what attempts he made to find a manufacturer wholly or mainly engaged in production in the United Kingdom to take part in his advertising campaign to promote 1992.

Mr. Maude: Several of the business figures featured in the single European market advertising campaign are associated with manufacturing in the United Kingdom, including Sir John Egan, the chairman and chief executive of Jaguar.

Cement

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the total United Kingdom cement market was supplied by imports from Greece in 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: The volume of cement imports from Greece in 1987 was 176,661 tonnes. No information is available on the size of the United Kingdom cement market in 1987, but in 1986 it was 13 million tonnes.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* the evidence submitted by his Department to the European Commission, on the subject of the Commission's inquiry into support given by the Greek Government to Heracles General Cement Company.

Mr. Alan Clark: Observations submitted by Her Majesty's Government to the Commission form part of confidential exchanges between member states and the Commission in the course of its investigation.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the level of subsidy paid by the Greek Government on imports of cement to the United Kingdom since 1 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I do not have comprehensive information on the extent of subsidies paid by the Greek Government to Greek cement producers which may have an influence on their exports to the United Kingdom. While export subsidies were planned to decline sharply between 1986 and 1988, other aids to Greek cement producers are being investigated by the European Commission.

Post Office

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will place in the Library copies of all bilateral and multilateral agreements and related documents concerning the new terminal dues agreements signed by the Post Office and foreign postal administrations;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the dates of effectiveness of all bilateral agreements signed in the last two years relating to increased terminal dues;

(3) when he last discussed the new terminal dues agreements with the international bureau of the Universal Postal Union; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what action he has taken under article 116 of the general regulations of the Universal Postal Union relating to terminal dues since 1987;

(5) what information he has on the effect of the new terminal dues agreements signed by the Post Office;

(6) what assessment he has made of the implications of the treaty of Rome for the operation of article 23 of the universal postal union convention; and if he will make a statement;

(7) when he last discussed the subject of international remail with the chairman of the Post Office;

(8) if he will list in the *Official Report* the bilateral agreements signed on behalf of the Post Office relating to increased terminal dues.

Mr. Butcher: Details of the negotiation and implementation of terminal dues agreements between the Post

Office and other postal administrations are an operational matter for the Post Office. I am therefore drawing my hon. Friend's inquiries on this matter to the attention of the chairman. It is, of course, a matter for indiviual postal administrations to decide whether to take action under article 23. My legal advice is that a collective decision by postal administrations to implement article 23 could be contrary to the treaty of Rome. This is also a matter for the Post Office.

Companies Registration Offices

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish the numbers given in the companies registration office staff return of May for staff working at each of the offices at Cardiff, London and Edinburgh.

Mr. Maude: The Registrar of Companies tells me that the numbers of staff employed on 3 May 1988 at Cardiff, London and Edinburgh were 805, 176½ and 49, respectively.

Quangos and Trading Funds

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all quasi-autonomous non-Government organisations and all trading funds reporting to his Department.

Mr. Butcher: Particulars of non-departmental public bodies for which my Department was responsible on 1 April 1987 are shown in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1987", a copy of which is in the Library. None of the Department's activities are managed as trading funds.

Single European Market

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) why he invited the founder of the Sock Shop chain to take part in the Government's advertising campaign on 1992;

(2) why he invited Mr. Alan Sugar to take part in the Government's advertising campaign on 1992;

(3) why he invited Sir John Harvey-Jones to take part in the Government's advertising campaign on 1992.

Mr. Maude: Ms. Sophie Mirman, Mr. Alan Sugar and Sir John Harvey-Jones are among a number of nationally known figures who are supporting the single European market campaign. The extensive experience they bring of a wide range of business activities helps underline how important it is for British firms to understand the importance of the single market and to prepare accordingly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many business men were invited to take part in the Government's advertising campaign on 1992; what was the purpose in issuing the invitations and what criteria were used in selecting those invited; how many of those invited agreed to take part; and if he will explain the purpose of the campaign and its costs to date.

Mr. Maude: A number of nationally known business figures are supporting the single European market campaign. Their message on the single market challenge to firms throughout the country is based on their own experience and plans in a very wide range of business activities. My right hon. and noble Friend and I are delighted that those concerned have so readily agreed to help underline the crucial importance of planning now for 1992.

The campaign has two main objectives: to increase business awareness of the single market and its significance, and to encourage firms to begin preparing now if they are to make the most of it. To date the advertising campaign has cost about £5·8 million.

MVDS/MMDS

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Touche Ross study of MVDS/MMDS has now been concluded and whether the research undertaken indicates that MVDS/MMDS might be an appropriate transmission system for areas such as the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Mr. Butcher: The study of MVDS commissioned from Touche Ross management consultants has been completed, and is currently under consideration by the Government as part of our wider review of broadcasting. The Touche Ross study does not specifically address the suitability of MVDS for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, though it makes clear that MVDS can be configured in a variety of ways to meet a range of requirements.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how he intends to safeguard the commercial-in-confidence information in the possession of the National Engineering Laboratory following the proposed privatisation of the laboratory; and what steps he will take to ensure that the successful bidder does not gain access to information paid for by competitors.

Mr. Butcher: Commercially sensitive information in the possession of the National Engineering Laboratory will be safeguarded through negotiation of appropriate provisions in the agreement with the purchaser.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to receive the Property Services Agency evaluation of the assets of the National Engineering Laboratory; and if he will place the information in the Library.

Mr. Butcher: The Property Services Agency has provided my Department with an evaluation of the assets of NEL. An extract is being placed in the Library covering those aspects being made available to possible bidders for NEL who have expressed an interest in receiving this information.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy that staff employed at the National Engineering Laboratory do not need to transfer to the proposed private company and may continue to remain within the Civil Service if they so choose.

Mr. Butcher: The transfer of staff from the National Engineering Laboratory to the new company is a matter for discussion with the successful bidder. I hope that as many as possible of the existing staff will transfer. If staff

do not transfer to the new company, we shall use our best efforts to find them alternative jobs in the Department or elsewhere in the Civil Service, but I cannot guarantee that this will always be possible.

Research Establishments

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for East Kilbride on 28 June, *Official Report* column *169*, on what date his Department consulted either the British Hydromechanics Research Association or the Production Engineering Research Association in the recent review of Department of Trade and Industry research establishments.

Mr. Butcher: Neither the British Hydromechanics Research Association nor the Production Engineering Research Association was amongst the organisations approached by DTI during the review of research establishments. BHRA and PERA took the initiative in contacting the Department about the review on 1 and 15 March, respectively.

Rover Group

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with Mr. Peter Sutherland concerning British Aerospace's takeover of the Rover Group.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry met Commissioner Sutherland on 5 July; this was the most recent in a series of discussions held since March on the state aid application related to the acquisition by British Aerospace of Her Majesty's Government's shareholding in Rover Group. It could be prejudicial to these discussions—which are at an advanced state—and to the interests of the companies to pre-empt their outcome. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will inform the House when there is something conclusive to report.

Scotch Whisky (Japan)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Japanese duties on Scotch whisky.

Mr. Alan Clark: Japan's recent proposals for liquor tax reform are a positive response to this long-standing problem. When these are implemented, Scotch whisky will be subject to the same tax burden as domestic whisky in its third largest export market.

Professional Liability

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set up a fourth study team into professional liability problems to investigate how the law affects solicitors liable for professional negligence as a result of their failure to have advised correctly on the financial implications of unusual commercial leases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: No. The professions on which three fact-finding studies are under way were selected from a wide range of professions, including solicitors, whose concerns about liability are well known to the Government. The results of the current studies will enable us to make an informed decision as to how serious the problems are and whether further consideration or action is needed, both for the professions now being studied and for others.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much European Economic Community cash the British Steel Corporation has received from 1979 to the latest date; if he will list the steelworks receiving such grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* In the period since 1979 the British Steel Corporation has received approximately £13·5 million from the EEC in respect of grants for research work. It is not possible to break this down by plant as the grants have been applied across the corporation. No other EEC grants have been made to BSC since 1979.

Charges

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* Table 1 shows income from charges for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 for each subprogramme within my Department, excluding capital receipts and privatisation proceeds. The totals differ slightly from those provided by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in his reply of 25 May 1988: first, they take account of the reclassification of certain launch aid levies; second, they have been updated to incorporate provisional outturn and Supply Estimate figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89, respectively. In addition to the charges identified in table 1, my Department receives income from charges related to running costs: these details are set out in table 2.

Table 1

Trade and industry public expenditure: Charges 1982-83 to 1990-91

£ thousands

Sub programme	*Title*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88 Provisional outturn*	*1988-89 Supply estimates*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
		(Outturn)							*(Plan)*	
040109	Selective Assistance to Individual Firms	0	−148	−169	−281	−223	−180	−220	−6,690	−6857
040201	Research Establishments	−3,503	−2,431	−3,777	−2,240	−9,507	−9,049	−9,096	−9,622	−9,863
040202	Industrial Research & Development & Other	−70	−6,302	−13,987	−10,909	−19,622	−35,691	−16,681	−35,168	−36,047

Sub programme	Title	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88 Provisional outturn	1988-89 Supply estimates	1989-90	1990-91
		(Outturn)							(Plan)	
040203	Standards	0	0	−289	−25	−75	−329	−75	−79	−81
040204	Protection of Innovation	−25,117	−27,124	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
040205	Aircraft & Aero-Engine Research & Development	−91	−97	−80	0	+51	0	0	0	0
040206	Miscellenous Support Services	0	0	0	0	+91	−76	−75	−103	−106
040209	Space Technology	0	−406	−251	−57	−569	−624	−600	−109	−112
040301	Concorde	−7,092	−12,386	−548	−494	−143	−237	−120	−110	−100
040302	Assistance to Rolls Royce Ltd.	−13,361	0	0	0	0	+2,911	0	0	0
040306	Assistance to the Shipbuilding Industry	−877	−710	−[illegible]	−837	−134	−390	−602	0	0
040501	Export Promotion	−6,572	−8,046	−9,[illegible]	−11,367	−14,537	−14,816	−16,732	−16,709	−17,127
040602	Registered Trading Practice etc.	−7,209	−7,763	−8,239	−8,928	−11,067	−12,873	−12,782	−10,960	−11,246
040801	Departmental Administration	+381	0	+484	0	0	0	0	0	0
040803	Other Services	−4	+6	+5,283	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Totals	−63,515	−65,407	−31,994	−35,138	−55,735	−71,354	−56,983	−79,550	−81,539

Table 2

Trade and industry public expenditure: Charges related to running costs 1982-83 to 1990-91

£ thousands

Sub programme	Title	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88 Provisional outturn	1988-89 Supply estimates	1989-90	1990-91
		(Outturn)							(Plan)	
040201	Research Establishments	−5,072	−3,114	−4,830	−2,851	−11,949	−12,176	−12,480	−12,848	−13,169
040202	Industrial Research & Development & Other	0	−3	−5	−795	−675	0	0	−6	−6
040204	Protection of Innovation	0	0	−31,342	−33,464	−35,828	−35,994	−39,900	−37,721	−38,664
040502	Trade Co-operation	0	0	0	0	0	−1	−1	−1	−1
040602	Registered Trading Practice etc.	−28,184	−22,863	−16,668	−29,870	−32,812	−35,170	−35,019	−34,451	−35,022
040801	Departmental Administration	−3,081	−3,233	−61	−3,595	−4,323	−10,227	−4,761	−4,995	−5,070
040803	Other Services	0	+3	+5	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	−36,337	−29,210	−52,901	−70,575	−85,587	−93,568	−92,161	−90,022	−91,932

Barlow Clowes

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department will provide special assistance to elderly investors in Barlow Clowes in registering their interests with the liquidators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* I understand that the questionnaire used to register investors' interests by the special managers of Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd. is straightforward. However, if investors find any difficulty in registering their interest, or in making their more formal claims in the liquidation, the special managers or the Official Receiver respectively will be very willing to help.

Electric Plugs

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *562*, when he expects to know the legal position in other member states of the European Community concerning the fitting of electric plugs as standard to household electrical equipment.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* There are variations throughout the Community on the legal requirements for fitting plugs to electrical applicances which rest largely on compliance with technical standards. Information on the detailed technical requirements in other members states of the Community is, or course, available from Technical Help to Exporters, which is part of the British Standards Institution at Milton Keynes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give a county by county breakdown of where the 33 blue-marked sheep were remonitored between 28 September 1987 and 1 June 1988.

Mr. Viggers: The sheep referred to were remonitored in Co. Londonderry.

Portavogie Road, Ballyhalbert (Flooding)

Mr. John. D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will investigate the flooding of the roadway and footways opposite 10 Portavogie road, Ballyhalbert, County Down; and what proposals he has to alleviate this flooding.

Mr. Needham: A road gully and associated drainage pipes will be installed before the end of August 1988, to alleviage the problem at this address.

Moat Road, Ballyhalbert (Animals)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tigers, lions and pumas are being kept at 23 Moat road, Ballyhalbert; whether he is satisfied that there is no public health problem; and if he will make a statement on the controls and licences required for keeping non-domestic animals in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I am informed by Ards borough council that four tigers and one puma are being kept at 23 Moat

road, Ballyhalbert. There are also five panthers but no lions being kept on the premises. In the council's view there is no public health problem. In Northern Ireland the keeping of non-domestic animals is controlled under public health and animal welfare legislation. District councils have powers to take action if an animal is so kept as to be a nuisance or prejudicial to public health. The Department of Agriculture can intervene if an animal is being cruelly treated. Native species of wild animals protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 cannot be kept without a licence from the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Housing Benefit

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have lost housing benefit due to the introduction of a capital rule in April; and how many of these people will now be entitled to benefit as a result of the recent amendment to the legislation.

Mr. Needham: I regret that the information is not available.

Income Support

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland are relying on transitional protection as a result of the transfer from supplementary benefit to income support.

Mr. Needham: I regret that the information is not readily available at present. However, it is being collected as part of the income support annual statistical inquiry and should become available early in 1989.

Cost Limits

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1988-89 running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departments.

Mr. Tom King: The running cost limit for 1988-89 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland departments is being set at £509·48 million. Further details of provision for individual departments are set out in the appropriate Estimates volumes.

Housing Executive

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *304-5*, if he will indicate for each of the eight arbitrations mentioned what was the total sum claimed in respect of each, what was the sum paid to date in respect of each, how many are still to be settled, when he expects final settlement in each case and what was the date of practical completion in each case.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the approximate total sum claimed quoted in column *305* of the *Official Report* of April 29 has been revised to £1,062 million and that the information requested is as follows:

Contract	*Total sum claimed*	*Sum paid to date*	*Practical completion date*
1	244,000	14,872	23 August 1978
2	79,000	17,000	No specific date
3	70,000	12,420	26 April 1982
4	66,000	5,000	20 September 1983
5	197,000	37,000	16 August 1985
6	271,000	nil	3 July 1981
7	147,000	nil	4 April 1986
8	550,000	172,000	1 August 1986

Two contracts (6 and 7) are still to be settled. Final settlement is anticipated during 1988.

Homelessness

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding funding for voluntary organisations providing accommodation for the single homeless, indicating what measures he will take to ensure that the total level of revenue grants to these organisations in 1989-90 will at least equal the financial assistance given to them in 1986-87 by area boards and Government Departments.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* The draft Housing (NI) Order will contain a provision which will enable the Housing Executive to fund voluntary bodies concerned with homelessness. Discussions are currently under way between the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the area health and social services boards, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of the Environment to ensure that the resources which will be made available to the Housing Executive when the order comes into operation will not be less than those currently allocated for funding of voluntary bodies providing accommodation for the homeless.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to adopt the system of measuring unemployment recommended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation *and* Development.

Mr. Lee: In common with most countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), my Department's monthly unemployment figures are based on administrative records. However, my Department also publishes annual estimates of unemployment according to the International Labour Organisation's guidelines as interpreted by the OECD.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each of the last five years, for Great Britain and for the north-west region, the percentage and numerical increase in the size of the labour force, together with the percentage and numerical fall in unemployment.

Mr. Lee: Table A shows the level of the civilian working population (employees in employment, the self-employed and the unemployed) together with the change over the previous year expressed numerically and as a percentage for June of each year from 1983 to 1987 for Great Britain and the north-west region. Table B shows corresponding figures according to the seasonally adjusted series of unemployed claimants.

Table A
Civilian working population in Great Britain—1983-1987

June	*Number (000's)*	*Change over year (000's)*	*Percentage change over year*
1983	25,603	−86	−0·3
1984	26,087	484	1·9
1985	26,613	526	2·0
1986	26,759	146	0·6
1987	26,898	139	0·5
Civilian working population in the North West region—1983-87			
1983	2,950	−33	−1·1
1984	2,973	23	0·8
1985	2,994	21	0·7
1986	2,973	−21	−0·7
1987	2,940	−33	−1·1

Table B
Unemployed claimants in Great Britain—1983-1987 seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, allowing for changes in coverage

June	*Number (000's)*	*Change over year (000's)*	*Percentage change over year*
1983	2,776	270	10·8
1984	2,865	89	3·2
1985	2,992	127	4·4
1986	3,083	91	3·0
1987	2,797	−286	−9·3
Unemployed claimants in the North West region—1983-1987 seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, allowing for changes in coverage			
1983	410	36	9·6
1984	418	9	2·1
1985	430	11	2·7
1986	438	8	1·9
1987	399	−39	−8·8

Higher Education Initiative

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if any institutions of higher education have been asked by the Manpower Services Commission or Government to bid for funding under the Manpower Services Commission enterprise in higher education initiative and refused to do so;

(2) what is the stage of negotiation between the Manpower Services Commission and universities regarding the Manpower Services Commission enterprise in higher education initiative;

(3) if a decision has been made on which bids by universities for funding under the Manpower Services Commission enterprise in higher education initiative have been successful;

(4) if notification has been given to universities as to the likelihood of their bids being successful under the Manpower Services Commission enterprise in higher education initiative.

Mr. Cope: No institution of higher education has refused to bid. The chairman of the Training Commission is writing to 11 institutions, including four universities, inviting them to enter contract negotiations.

Community Programme (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of Liverpool's community programme schemes, in particular the G Force project.

Mr. Nicholls: There will be sufficient places in Liverpool under the new programme employment training for every existing community programme provider who wishes to provide training of acceptable quality. The commission has now received more than enough bids to provide the planned number of places in Liverpool.

However, some community programme providers in Liverpool, particularly those operated by voluntary organisations including G. Force Ltd., may be prevented from participating in employment training by Liverpool city council's irresponsible decision to withdraw grants and the use of council premises from organisations involved in the new programme. The Training Commission will seek to ensure that there is alternative provision using other training providers, but as a result of the council's decision some projects which provide valuable services to disadvantaged groups in the local community may not be able to continue. I understand that G Force CP Ltd. is still considering its position in relation to employment training.

Employment Training (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implementation of the employment training scheme in Merseyside.

Mr. Nicholls: Over 16,000 places under the new programme employment training have been allocated by the Training Commission to help unemployed people in Merseyside. Proposals have now been received from organisations which wish to take part as training managers offering to provide considerably more places than are required. I regret that some trade unions locally seek to misrepresent the objectives and conditions of the new programme. I also deplore the decision of Liverpool city council to withdraw grants and the use of premises from local organisations which become involved in employment training. Some 1,500 places on existing projects in the community may be at risk because of Liverpool city council's short-sighted action. Despite the city council's unwillingness to help long-term unemployed people to improve their chances of a job or self-employment, I am confident that we will be able to launch employment training successfully in September in Merseyside as in the rest of the country. The Government are determined that unemployed people should get the best help we can provide. Our new programme will do just that.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many incidents of fire have been reported, within the Channel tunnel site, during the present period of construction.

Mr. Nicholls: No fires have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) since 1 April 1987. Although I understand the Kent fire brigade has been called to deal with some fire-related incidents on a number of occasions, none was sufficiently serious to report to the HSE.

Retirement Age

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of jobs which could be released if the state retirement age for men were reduced from 65 to 63 years of age.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

Our best estimate is that a reduction in men's state pension age from 65 to 63 would in the short term release about 150,000 vacancies to be filled from either the unemployment register or other sources. Over the longer term, the number of vacancies would fall as both employers and employees responded to changed conditions. The assumptions on which these estimates are based are currently under review.

ENVIRONMENT

Canary Wharf

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the United Kingdom's total construction activity over the next 24 months he estimates will be focused on Canary wharf.

Mr. Trippier: No firm estimate is possible on the basis of information available to the Department.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what date the Canary wharf master building agreement between the London Docklands development corporation and Olympia and York specifies for the completion of the Limehouse link.

Mr. Trippier: The MBA obliges LDDC to use its reasonable endeavours to provide the road by 1992.

EC Water Directives

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what legal sanctions have been taken against water authorities which do not comply with European Economic Community directives.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom has a generally good record in implementing these directives, and to date the Government have not found it necessary to take legal action to enforce their provisions.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken in cases where a water authority has not complied with any European Economic Community directive on water.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department is in frequent contact with water authorities on the implementation of EC directives on water. The authorities make detailed reports on implementation to the Department covering such matters as the quality of drinking water, the authorisation of discharges, the monitoring of the aquatic environment, and methods of frequency of sampling. Where these reports indicate that the obligations of directives are not being complied with, authorities are instructed to take steps to remedy the position and, where necessary, to agree programmes with the Department.

Water Quality

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the monitoring arrangements for water quality will be strengthened and clarified in the forthcoming legislation to privatise the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: Monitoring of the quality of surface and underground waters will be a statutory duty of the National Rivers Authority, which will also be required to give effect to statutory quality objectives and standards for these waters. This will entail the use of more systematic and consistent sampling regimes, which are currently being developed.

In the case of drinking water supplies, regulations will be made fully incorporating into United Kingdom law the provisions of the EC drinking water directive and specifying the frequency of monitoring for individual parameters and the sampling locations.

Waste Tips

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many waste tips in England and Wales have been identified by his pollution inspectorate as posing a potential risk to neighbouring communities; how many of these are already regarded as providing a serious risk; and what is his estimate of cost for introducing equipment to control escaping gas and avoiding danger to life and property.

Mr. Moynihan: The identification of risks to public health from waste disposal activities is a matter for local

authorities. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution currently assessing information provided by the waste disposal authorities. I expect to receive its assessment and recommendations very shortly.

Toxic Waste (Imports)

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his powers to prevent toxic waste from the European Community or other countries overseas being imported for disposal in Great Britain; and if he has any plans to seek further powers to deal with the rising threat to the environment from such waste disposal.

Mr. Moynihan: The Control of Pollution Act 1974 provides powers for the Secretary of State to make regulations to prohibit or restrict the import of any substance if it is appropriate to do so to prevent damage to persons, animals or plants or pollution of air, water or land. Imports of special waste are of course subject to the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 on arrival in this country. I propose to lay regulations to implement the directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous wastes before the summer recess.

Waste Management Papers

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of waste management papers issued by his Department in each of the periods *(a)* 1974 to 1979, *(b)* 1979 to 1984 and *(c)* 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Moynihan: In 1974 to 1979; 15. In 1979 to 1984; 10. In 1984 to 1988; one.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many waste management papers he intends to issue in the remainder of the current year.

Mr. Moynihan: Two.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many waste management papers he intends to issue during the period 1988 to 1991.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no fixed programme for the publication of waste management papers. We are however aiming to issue two papers a year to 1991, as resources permit.

Land Wastes Division (Staff)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the numbers of civil servants employed in the land wastes division of his Department in each of the years from 1974 to 1988.

Mr. Moynihan: The land wastes division of my Department was disbanded on 1 April 1987 with the creation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP). The table shows the number of civil servants employed in the land wastes division as at 1 April for each year between 1980 and 1986. For 1987 and 1988 the table shows the number of civil servants employed on similar work in HMIP and the new noise, nuisance and waste division. The information is not readily available for earlier years.

	Number of Civil Servants
1980	21
1981	22
1982	25
1983	28
1984	30
1985	31
1986	35
1987	34
1988	33

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to publish guidance upon appropriate standards for energy efficiency in existing residential buildings; and if he will make a statement on what he estimates to be the average potential for energy saving within the present stock.

Mrs. Roe: The British Standards Institution has just published a code of practice for the energy efficient refurbishment of housing. This Department and the Department of Energy have contributed to this work and it has had technical support from the Building Research Establishment (BRE). The Government have also published extensive guidance on how to improve the energy efficiency of existing dwellings, including this Department's guide "The Energy Efficient Renovation of Houses", and the Department of Energy's recently published home energy survey for householders. These publications provide comprehensive advice for house owners and landlords.

Considerable progress has been made in improving the energy performance of dwellings (as evident, for example, from the BRE evidence to the Select Committee on Energy). The BRE estimates that the average potential for cost-effective improvements to the energy performance of dwellings is about 20 per cent. of current energy consumption.

Television Monitor Annunciators (Palace of Westminster)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many television monitor annunciators were replaced in the Palace of Westminster in the years 1985 to 1987; and what was the cost at current prices.

Mr. Chope: The maintenance contractor for the annunciator system in both Houses holds a small stock of monitors which are used, when necessary, to replace sets which have to be withdrawn for repair. Information on the number of times this occurred during the three years mentioned is not readily available. The stock of replacement monitors was replenished in 1986 by the purchase of five sets. The cost was approximately £1,300.

Waste (Imports)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for the enforceability through fines of the regulations governing the import of waste of the incidence of companies operating in this field with minimum paid-up share capital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The imposition of fines, or a penalty of imprisonment, is a matter for the courts to decide in the circumstances of each case. Prosecutions under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 may be made against companies, their directors or both.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to increase the staffing levels of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Moynihan: On its formation on 1 April 1987 the staffing levels of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution were at 70 per cent. of full complement. Since then recruitment has increased staffing levels to 90 per cent. of full complement. It remains a priority within the Department to fill the remaining vacancies within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to announce the locations of the housing action trusts; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will consider the following local authority estates for possible declaration as housing action trust areas; North Peckham and Gloucester grove (Southwark), Solander gardens, Shadwell gardens, Berner, Ocean, Boundary and Holland (Tower Hamlets), Loughborough and Argell tower (Lambeth);

(3) what criteria are being adopted by his Department in considering possible estates for declaration as housing action trust areas.

Mrs. Roe: I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to the private notice question asked by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) today.

Local Government Superannuation Scheme

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet received representations from local government employers and unions about the contribution level to be paid by part-time employees wishing to buy added years for pension purposes under the local government superannuation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The two sides of local government have been unable to agree the contribution level to be required for these purposes. My right hon. Friend has decided that all employees eligible to benefit under these proposals should pay the same percentage of their salary if they wish to take advantage of this extension of the scheme. Subject to the resolution of remaining points of detail, draft amending regulations giving effect to that decision will be issued for statutory consultations as soon as possible.

Water Companies (Share Capital)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken, or intend to take, to monitor the proportion of share capital in statutory water companies in the ownership of *(a)* person or bodies not concerned with water purification and *(b)* persons or bodies with a financial interest in water purification, who are, in either case, resident or registered, outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has no special powers to acquire such information on the shareholdings in these private companies. he has only such information as has been placed in the public domain, mainly under the disclosure rules of the stock exchange.

Council Estates

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the council estates submitted to his Department for consideration under the community refurbishment, estate action and priority estate project in the following areas *(a)* Lambeth, *(b)* Southwark, *(c)* Tower Hamlets, *(d)* Newham, *(e)* Leeds, *(f)* Sunderland and *(g)* Wolverhampton.

Mrs. Roe: The local councils have asked my Department to consider the following housing estates for estate action assistance, including community refurbishment schemes and priority estate project status:

(a) *Lambeth*
- Angell Town
- Clapham park East
- Moorlands, Southwyck House
- Stockwell Park

(b) *Southwark*
- Gloucester Grove
- Kinglake
- North Peckham
- Silwood
- St. George's
- Willowbrook

(c) *Tower Hamlets*
- Bancroft, Ryder House
- Barkantine
- Bede
- Brownfields, Balfron Tower/Carradale House
- Berner, Welstead House
- Bethnal Green
- Boundary, Henley, Walton Houses
- Clichy/St. Dunstons
- Cranbrook/Parkview
- Exmouth/Montmorres
- Holland, Brune House
- Lefevre Walk
- Lanfranc/Newport
- Norfolk, Raynham House

Ocean, Bengal House, Channel House
- Ranwell East
- Ranwell West
- Robin Hood Gardens
- Salford, Urmston Houses
- St. Stephens/Rosebank Gardens
- St. Johns
- St. Vincents, Jamaica House
- Tredegar/Usher Road
- Wapping
- West Ferry

(d) Newham
- Avondale
- Barnwood Court
- Beckton Road
- Dell/Rokeby/McEwan
- Ferrier Point
- Folkestone/Eastbourne Road
- Jeyes
- Hameway
- Leather Gardens, David Lee/Brassett Point
- Queens
- Radley Terrace
- Rathbone
- Ravenscroft

Thomas North Terrace
Whitwell Road
Woodlands

(e) Leeds
Belle Isle North
Bronte House, Scott Hall
Chapeltown
Gipton South
Halton Moor

(f) Sunderland
Barclay Court
Cato Square
Downhill
Farringdon
Pennywell, Plawsworth Square
The Squares

(g) Wolverhampton
Bilston
Blakenhall Gardens
Lunt
Mayfield
Rydall Green

London Docklands (Alternative Housing)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sites in the ownership of the London Docklands development corporation will be used to provide alternative housing for the tenants on St. Vincent's estate in Westferry road and the Causeway, the Barleymow estate, Narrow street, dwellings in Ming street and Dingle gardens, and Dolphin house in Poplar high street; what is the timetable for the demolition of the estates; what commitment the London Docklands development corporation has given to keep together the established communities in those estates; whether tenants will be given the opportunity to remain in their dwellings if they are not required for the construction of the road; what is the estimated cost of the rehousing of the 650 tenants to the London Docklands development corporation; and whether the London Docklands development corporation has been allowed to provide a direct subsidy to housing associations to build alternative housing on the lines of a housing association grant.

Mr. Trippier: These are detailed matters primarily for the LDDC and the borough to work out within the agreement they have reached.

Housing Association Rehabilitation Schemes

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the mixed funding of housing association rehabilitation schemes; and what account he has taken of the effects of such a policy on the level of rents.

Mrs. Roe: Housing association rehabilitation schemes are eligible for mixed funding in the same way as other schemes. We expect associations to provide accommodation at rents within the reach of people in low-paid employment, and this should be possible within the financial regime we have established.

Housing Associations (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the mixed funding to be made available to housing associations in Merseyside during the present and next financial year.

Mrs. Roe: The Housing Corporation has made £2·94 million of grant available for use in mixed funding schemes for rent in its Merseyside region in the current financial year. Decisions about the allocation of Housing Corporation funds for 1989-90 have not yet been taken.

Domestic Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing information available to him on typical landfill costs for domestic wastes in each of the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not available.

GLC Heritage Collection

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any arrangements are being made for the public display of an accessibility to the items comprising the Greater London council's heritage collection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The LRB is currently negotiating with the corporation of the City of London, which administers the Greater London record office for the transfer of the majority of the collection to the City on terms that would ensure that the collection will in the future be available for public display.

County Hall Site

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums are expected to be available for distribution to London boroughs from the development of the county hall site.

Mr. Chope: It is too early to say what sums will be available for distribution to London boroughs from the sale of the county hall site.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive document "The Way Forward," about the case for a repository for low to intermediate-level waste in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. friend has recieved a number of representations about Nirex's discussion document "The Way Forward". We have advised all respondents to make their views known to Nirex which will be submitting its proposals to the Government early next year.

Local Government Finance Bill

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Government amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill were tabled during Report stage in the House of Lords.

Mr. Ridley: The Government tabled 268 amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill at Lords Report. This figure includes consequential amendments, and five amendments which were subsequently not moved.

Regional Rivers Advisory Committees

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to water authorities and the National Rivers Authority advisory committee on the intended composition of the proposed regional rivers advisory committees; and whether he intends that voluntary wildlife conservation organisations should be able to nominate representatives to the regional rivers advisory committees.

Mr. Moynihan: The December policy statement on the National Rivers Authority made clear that the regional rivers advisory committees would represent the main interests concerned in both using and conserving the rivers. It will be for the National Rivers Authority, which will have the responsibility for making appointments to these committees, and to ensure that the various interests, including conservation organisations, are appropriately represented.

Water Industry (Conservation Offices)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a conservation officer will be appointed to each National Rivers Authority region following any privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: This will be a matter for the National Rivers Authority advisory committee to consider in advising on the outline schemes of organisation submitted by the water authorities.

Water Industry Reorganisation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a copy of the respective water authorities' outline schemes for reorganisation, as submitted to his Department and the National Rivers Authority advisory committee, in the Library.

Mr. Moynihan: Until the schemes of organisation have been agreed with the water authorities, it would not be appropriate to publish them.

Pharaoh's Ants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the problems of pharaoh's ant infection in high-rise blocks of flats; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* Pharaoh's ants are among a number of common pests that can infest buildings. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service at Slough can offer advice on the action that might need to be taken.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received about the problems of pharaoh's ants in high-rise blocks of flats.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* The only representations received in recent years were from the London borough of Greenwich, concerning problems on its Ferrier estate.

HIP and Council House Sales

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each metropolitan district council *(a)* the total housing investment programme expenditure (outturn) and *(b)* the total capital receipts from both the right to buy and other sales, for each year from 1980-81 to date.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* The available information provided by the metropolitan district authorities is shown in the tables. In table 2 the receipts cover payments of mortgages and sales of land as well as initial receipts from the sale of dwellings.

Table 1: Housing Capital Expenditure (Outturn) £ Million
Metropolitan Districts

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Bolton	13·8	14·8	17·7	19·9	25·1	19·2	17·1
Bury	5·8	5·3	5·9	10·0	5·1	5·1	4·5
Manchester	61·5	51·3	52·5	50·8	70·7	46·6	49·6
Oldham	17·0	11·9	17·5	19·6	15·8	11·1	10·9
Rochdale	13·3	10·8	12·7	21·3	17·7	13·4	16·4
Salford	34·6	26·0	26·4	27·2	20·8	19·6	20·7
Stockport	7·5	4·0	7·1	11·1	6·9	7·9	9·3
Tameside	12·5	14·3	13·3	22·3	19·4	12·2	15·8
Trafford	7·8	7·2	5·8	9·5	8·3	8·4	10·9
Wigan	15·8	10·8	11·5	15·0	9·2	8·2	9·8
Knowsley	3·6	6·0	7·9	13·6	11·1	11·2	8·3
Liverpool	40·3	35·5	55·1	60·7	65·2	83·8	69·3
St. Helens	7·0	6·1	8·7	8·4	8·3	20·2	5·2
Sefton	7·8	6·3	8·7	12·9	14·4	9·8	8·9
Wirral	12·4	10·2	..	21·0	14·3	14·8	12·4
Barnsley	8·0	7·7	9·1	10·8	17·2	11·7	15·6
Doncaster	13·8	9·0	13·5	23·8	12·4	14·1	14·8
Rotherham	13·5	10·6	12·3	14·7	15·8	11·2	8·8
Sheffield	23·5	19·9	29·4	36·7	31·7	55·6	43·1
Gateshead	12·5	7·0	7·5	14·2	21·3	17·8	17·1
Newcastle upon Tyne	19·3	13·9	17·9	25·2	23·3	20·0	19·2
North Tyneside	16·1	6·4	9·5	17·3	12·1	11·0	19·1
South Tyneside	12·6	7·8	13·5	12·9	14·0	9·9	9·6
Sunderland	10·1	4·8	8·6	11·4	14·3	11·9	13·6
Birmingham	61·3	41·8	59·8	107·6	94·3	78·9	80·6
Coventry	9·8	9·2	13·4	10·0	11·1	18·7	14·8
Dudley	9·5	8·9	12·7	16·1	11·9	8·3	9·3

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Sandwell	18·0	14·2	18·0	22·7	22·4	17·6	20·9
Solihull	2·0	3·0	2·8	3·6	3·0	5·2	4·2
Walsall	12·3	13·8	15·0	22·8	18·2	15·1	19·2
Wolverhampton	20·0	13·0	16·6	22·4	25·9	17·8	16·1
Bradford	22·5	21·5	20·4	30·3	21·1	20·0	13·6
Calderdale	6·1	4·3	7·3	15·4	10·3	5·9	5·0
Kirklees	11·6	9·8	16·2	19·9	15·6	12·9	12·1
Leeds	29·2	24·2	41·3	37·0	29·9	26·6	33·5
Wakefield	13·6	11·0	17·4	17·1	15·1	13·7	14·7

Table 2: Housing Capital Receipts £ Million
Metropolitan Districts

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Bolton	..	4·4	5·7	6·9	3·9	3·8	3·9
Bury	4·8	2·3	1·8	1·7	1·7	3·4	1·5
Manchester	11·3	19·7	16·5	16·4	20·8	..	..
Oldham	2·6	3·2	2·6	3·1	3·1	3·0	3·2
Rochdale	2·9	3·3	4·5	4·2	5·0	4·1	4·1
Salford	2·3	2·9	8·9	7·5	4·6	5·5	5·7
Stockport	4·1	4·8	4·2	8·6	3·1	2·8	0·0
Tameside	3·3	1·7	6·2	5·2	3·7	4·2	4·9
Trafford	2·8	5·3	4·1	3·8	2·5	3·3	4·9
Wigan	2·3	4·8	7·7	5·4	7·2	6·5	3·7
Knowsley	1·7	3·3	13·3	13·5	14·4	3·9	4·0
Liverpool	6·7	7·8	12·3	15·7	10·0	41·4	0·4
St. Helens	..	4·1	4·6	3·4	1·5	2·9	2·9
Sefton	5·2	4·6	6·0	7·2	5·4	4·1	3·5
Wirral	4·6	6·5	5·8	6·2	4·2	5·5	4·5
Barnsley	1·6	3·9	13·0	5·1	3·8	3·9	5·2
Doncaster	..	8·7	16·8	6·4	5·4	4·9	5·3
Rotherham	1·2	6·8	13·6	10·0	6·0	6·0	7·2
Sheffield	3·6	6·0	14·1	11·0	8·1	13·9	9·0
Gateshead	2·0	5·8	13·8	7·3	4·5	3·4	2·9
Newcastle upon Tyne	2·5	7·5	11·7	8·9	6·4	5·8	5·5
North Tyneside	1·8	5·3	6·4	7·5	5·2	5·0	5·0
South Tyneside	..	..	3·3	6·0	5·9	3·9	5·0
Sunderland	..	7·6	15·5	10·0	5·8	6·7	6·5
Birmingham	23·4	21·5	40·0	55·2	64·7	10·3	20·9
Coventry	10·6	12·1	10·6	8·6	7·4	5·9	8·1
Dudley	4·3	7·4	9·6	8·2	7·0	7·1	8·3
Sandwell	2·1	4·9	7·1	7·0	6·4	7·2	8·7
Solihull	0·9	2·1	4·1	7·3	5·9	7·9	5·2
Walsall	2·3	4·9	11·7	5·2	5·0	5·1	5·7
Wolverhampton	..	..	14·4	9·2	6·9	6·2	5·5
Bradford	6·7	7·6	5·2	5·3	5·6	6·8	9·7
Calderdale	2·5	3·1	2·6	3·8	3·8	3·2	3·6
Kirklees	4·4	5·1	2·9	3·1	4·6	4·7	5·6
Leeds	8·4	8·5	11·3	12·0	12·3	13·0	13·6
Wakefield	2·6	8·4	10·7	7·0	6·9	5·9	7·1

.. Not available.

London City Airport (Jet Aircraft)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the decision of the London Docklands development corporation to permit test flights of jet aircraft at the London City airport, in the light of paragraph 35 of his Department's letter of 23 May 1985.

Mr. David Trippier: Planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, by the London Docklands development corporation to the London City airport on 5 July allowing the airport to be used on three separate days to allow demonstration landings and take-offs by British Aerospace 146 aeroplanes. The permission expires on 31 July 1989. Once a planning permission has been granted I am not in a position to comment further on the matter.

DEFENCE

INF Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made to facilitate the work of inspection personnel from the Soviet Union in connection with the intermediate nuclear forces treaty; what costs have been incurred to date by this work; what costs are expected in the future; and what proportion of these costs will be borne by the United States of America.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Appropriate arrangements have been made for the reception, accommodation and escort of Soviet inspectors during INF inspections in the United Kingdom. The arrangements for meeting costs incurred as a result of INF inspections are set out in the basing country agreement, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Trawlers (Submarine Damage)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much compensation his Department has paid to trawler owners and crew following damage caused by Royal Navy submarines; and how many claims are currently outstanding.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Over the last 10 years my Department has paid out a total of about £500,000 in compensation to trawler owners and crews following damage caused by Royal Navy submarines. There are no claims currently outstanding.

Gibraltar Shootings

Mr. Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify those matters in relation to which Treasury counsel has indicated to the Gibraltar coroner that any members of Her Majesty's forces called to give evidence in the forthcoming inquest will refuse to answer questions; on what grounds this will be done; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Prior to the preliminary hearing Treasury counsel indicated to the coroner that, if he were to rule that such questions were relevant for the purposes of the inquest, our position would be that unquantifiable damage would be done to the security of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar unless the following categories of information were protected from disclosure:

a. The identities of members of the security forces, all details of any earlier deployment and (as regards individuals to whom such matters apply) the units with which they were serving, their specialist training and equipment, and previous operations;

b. All and any sources of intelligence information which is material, however indirectly, to the shootings; and

c. Any operational fact which might tend to reveal anything in *(a)* or *(b)* above, or any other intelligence which might be useful to the Crown on other occasions.

The two imperatives underlying this are the need to protect the integrity of military and security operations; and the need to protect the safety of security force personnel and their families, and their future usefulness.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation has been paid to Mr. Vic Adams of Station road, Bolton on Dearne, arising from his presence at the scene of the Gibraltar shootings; and on what terms.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I can confirm that my Department considered a claim for compensation for Mr. Victor Adams on the normal basis of legal liability, and that compensation has been paid to Mr. Adams. It is not our practice to discuss details of settlements which are regarded as private between the Department and the individual concerned.

Project Al Yamamah

Sir Antony Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of the project Al Yamamah; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am very pleased to be able to announce that a formal understanding has been signed between the Government of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of the United Kingdom, which will provide for a significant enhancement to the existing defence capabilities of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in a major new phase of project Al Yamamah. The enhancements to the project involve the supply to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia of additional aircraft, a construction programme, and specialised naval vessels; the new agreement also involves a positive and constructive economic offset programme which should be of great benefit to the private sectors of both countries.

The understanding was signed on behalf of the Government of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia by His Royal Highness Prince Sultan bin Abdullah Aziz, second deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Aviation and Inspector General, and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

United States Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for each year since 1979, the total numbers of United States Navy personnel at the military installations at *(a)* Thurso, *(b)* Marmond Hill, *(c)* Edgell, *(d)* Machriharish, *(e)* Holy Loch and *(f)* Glen Douglas.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 July 1988]:* Information on the total number of United States military personnel at these facilities was provided in my reply to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 3 December 1987 at columns *709-12.* For security reasons I am not prepared to provide a more detailed breakdown of these figures.

Plastic Bullets (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many actions were brought against the Ministry of Defence by individuals or the families of individuals injured or killed by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland in each year since 1972;

(2) if for those actions brought against the Ministry of Defence by individuals or the families of individuals injured or killed by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland since 1972, he will list *(a)* the outcome in each case whether compensation was paid, to whom, in what amount and on what date and *(b)* for those cases settled out of court, amounts of compensation paid, to whom and on what date.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the written answer of 30 March 1977 at column *155* and the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) on 4 March 1982 at column *213.* Records show that since January 1987 a total of 12 claims have been made against the Ministry of Defence for injuries allegedly caused by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland. The details are as follows:

	Claims
1987	10
[1]1988	2

[1] To date.

Records for the period before 1987 are not now held centrally and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The amount of compensation paid to individual claimants cannot be disclosed because this information is

held in confidence between the individual concerned and the Department. Two claims from 1987 have been settled by out of court payments of £500 each on 5 July 1988 and the other cases are still under consideration.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Child Abuse

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the training of social workers to deal with the problem of child sex abuse.

Mr. Newton: In my statement to the House on 6 July, at columns 1061-63, I announced a specific training grant of 70 per cent. in support of expenditure of £10 million in the child care field in 1989-90. This recognises the importance of social workers acquiring professional skills in the field of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, during qualifying training and induction processes, through in-service specialist training and external post-qualifying courses. In addition, while responsibility for training social workers lies with employers and academic institutions, we have set up, as announced on 30 October 1986 and 8 April 1987, a centrally funded interdisciplinary training initiative on child sexual abuse. Several of the projects so far established will be of benefit to social workers. Further projects are under consideration.

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the recorded statistics relating to child sex abuse reported to local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Child abuse statistics have not previously been held centrally. The NSPCC, from a sample covering areas including about 9 per cent. of the children in England and Wales, estimates that 7,119 children were added to child protection registers in England and Wales in 1987 because of child sexual abuse.

We announced on 9 July 1987 that arrangements would be made for the annual collection of national statistics on child abuse. The Department is carrying out a survey for the year ending 31 March 1988. It is planned to publish some provisional results from the survey later this year which will include the numbers on the registers recorded as cases of sexual abuse.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy when drafting guidelines on child abuse to require a full medical report with proper medical notes to be submitted before any emergency order removing a child from its parents is made.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion, but am doubtful whether such a requirement would be either practicable or appropriate in all possible emergency situations, for example if there is an immediate risk of physical violence or if the need is to secure medical examination of the child where there is reason to believe that abuse is taking place.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will initiate a national survey into the extent and definition of child sexual abuse and other forms of abuse of children.

Mr. Newton: The Department undertook in April this year a pilot survey of all child abuse registers in England and Wales, identifying various categories of abuse including child sexual abuse. The provisional results of that survey will be available this autumn, and a regular annual return will be introduced from next year.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implementation by local authorities of section 1 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authorities have now established the numbers and needs of people with disabilities under the requirements of section 1 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Scott: Local authorities have a clear duty under section 1 of the Act to inform themselves of the number of disabled people requiring services; to make arrangements for meeting any needs identified; and to provide information about relevant services. It is for local authorities to ensure that they fulfil these statutory duties.

"Look After Your Heart" Campaign

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the achievements of the "Look After Your Heart" campaign.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the "Look After Your Heart" campaign.

Mrs. Currie: Since the launch of "Look After Your Heart"—the first major heart disease prevention campaign in England—in April 1987, it has been continuously evaluated to assess its effect. This evaluation shows that during the first year of the campaign knowledge of the main risk factors for coronary heart disease has grown, particularly amongst lower social class groups, where 41 per cent. now know about the risks of a high-fat diet, 43 per cent. are aware of the risk of heart disease through smoking and 51 per cent. know that exercise can help avoid heart disease.

The campaign has been notably successful in securing the active co-operation of industry and commerce. One way has been through a scheme of "healthy living" contracts, which some 75 companies, employing almost 2 million people, have signed. Many more are waiting to do so.

Community activity has been stimulated and supported in 172 health authorities and 65 local authorities, with "Look After Your Heart" community grants funding some 118 projects to the extent of £260,000. It is planned to continue this scheme into the next phase of the campaign, and we are also looking at ways of supporting longer-term projects.

We are now consulting widely on the campaign's longer-term development, including possible further media campaigns in 1988-89 seeking to convince those most at risk to heart disease that "Look After Your Heart" matters to them.

Pensioner Organisations

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met representatives of pensioners' organisations; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Scott: I met representatives of Pensioners' Voice on 9 May, when we discussed a wide range of matters affecting the elderly.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much extra recognition the current year's nurses' pay award gives to those nurses with extra skills and responsibilities.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on 14 June at columns *159-60*.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he is taking to standardise pay for hospital sisters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The new clinical grading structure for nurses seeks to recognise and reward different levels of skill and responsibility. It provides a range of grades and pay scales for ward sisters, depending on the duties and responsibilities of the post occupied. Comprehensive guidance has been issued to health authorities with a view to ensuring that the grading definitions are consistently applied.

Family Credit

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding arrangements for claims for family credit by self-employed persons.

Mr. Portillo: Several representations have been received about the rules regarding the acceptability of accounts, and some others about the effects of the arrangements in particular cases.

Benefits

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he used in determining the level by which social security benefits are uprated.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to section 63 of the Social Security Act 1986. In common with our predecessors, we choose to measure movements in prices by means of the retail prices index. We shall continue to exercise our discretion over the uprating of benefits for which there is no statutory requirement to uprate.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of disabled people now employed at the Department of Health and Social Security office at Richmond house; and if he will list the grades that disabled people hold at this office.

Mr. Scott: There are four registered disabled people employed in the Department's office at Richmond house: one principal, one administrative officer, one telex operator and one messenger. In addition, there are other disabled people employed there but who prefer not to register as disabled.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that health authorities maintain the provision of commercial hearing aids regardless of the imposition of value added tax.

Mr. Scott: The imposition of VAT on hearing aids will not affect NHS patients since they are issued with their appliances, whether from the NHS range or commercial models, on free loan from health authorities. The health authorities already pay VAT on their purchases; the new ruling therefore makes no difference to their costs.

Restraint Garments (Moss Side Special Hospital)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the recorded number of uses of restraint garments, for *(a)* women and *(b)* men, at Moss Side special hospital, for the periods September to November 1987 and February to April 1988.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

		Number
1 September 1987—30 November 1987	(a)	14
	(b)	375
1 February 1988—30 April 1988	(a)	13
	(b)	350

Pension Age

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to bring forward proposals on the Green Paper on a decade of retirement.

Mr. Scott: Options for changes in pension age are under active consideration, but it is not yet possible to say when work will be completed.

Carers

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to publish any further material on carers gathered from the 1985 general household survey.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans at this stage to publish any further material from the carers data gathered in the 1985 general household survey. The data collected will be made available by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to research organisations which may publish further material at a later date.

Women Doctors

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in the discussions with the General Medical Services Committee concerning implementation of the proposals designed to achieve the entry of more women doctors into the medical profession, contained in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health"; when he expects those discussions to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Discussions with the GMSC about the White Paper encompass a whole range of reforms including changes necessary to increase the number of women doctors in general practice. Because of the integrated nature of the package, we have agreed with the profession's leaders that it would not be right to disclose any of the details until our discussions with them on all the changes identified in the White Paper have been completed and we can announce the full package. In view of the range of changes under consideration that is unlikely to be for some time.

AIDS

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to the provision of clean needles for injecting drug misusers in order to reduce the spread of HIV.

Mr. Newton: Injection drug misusers must be warned of the many risks of drug misuse in general and injecting in particular and discouraged from both. However, it is clearly important that if misusers cannot or will not stop injecting, they should not share injecting equipment.

We are currently evaluating the part which needle and syringe exchange schemes can play in reducing the extent of sharing among injecting drug misusers. A recent report from the researcher evaluating 14 experimental schemes confirms early evidence of some promising features of these schemes. We will shortly issue guidance to health authorities in England based on the evaluation so far, in order that those local agencies which consider it in their interest to establish schemes should operate them as effectively and responsibly as possible.

Additionally, retail pharmacies may sell needles and syringes to drug misusers.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest available figure for the number of patients with AIDS who have acquired listeria.

Mr. Newton: Figures for the number of patients with AIDS who have acquired listeria are not collected.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest available figure for the number of patients with AIDS who have died as a result of listeria.

Mr. Newton: There were no deaths registered in England and Wales for which AIDS or HIV infection was known by OPCS to be the underlying cause of death which also contained a reference on the death certificate to listeria (International Classification of Diseases 9th Revision codes 027·0 and 771·2) in the three years 1985 to 1987.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of the AIDS virus HIV-2 have been identified to date in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the Greater Manchester area; and what tests are being carried out to detect this strain of the virus.

Mr. Newton: To the end of June this year, two cases of infection with HIV-2 have been identified and reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre. Neither case was reported from the Greater Manchester area. Regional transfusion centres identify donors who have recently visited or have lived, after 1977, in certain West African countries where HIV-2 is known to be prevalent and send a sample of their blood to the public health laboratory service to be tested for HIV-2. So far no cases have been identified in this way. Since May 1987 all specimens sent to the central public health laboratory through the routine laboratory reporting system for HIV-1 testing have also been tested for HIV-2.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the approximate average time between the lodging of an appeal to the social security appeals tribunal and the hearing of the appeal in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Orkney and *(d)* Shetland;

(2) how many appeals to the social security appeals tribunals lodged on or after 1 January 1986 were not heard by a tribunal until a date later than 12 months after receipt of the appeal in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Orkney and *(d)* Shetland.

Mr. Portillo: The national administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals, which are the source for average times between the lodging of appeals and hearing, are not disaggregated for areas smaller than a social security region.

For the quarter ending 30 September 1987 (the latest information available) the average time from lodgement of appeal to hearing in Great Britain was 23.2 weeks and in Scotland, including Orkney and Shetland, it was 26·3 weeks.

The information about appeals which are heard more than 12 months after being lodged is not available in the form requested but in Great Britain, for the quarter ended 30 September 1987, 937 appeals were heard and decided which had been lodged at least 12 months previously. The equivalent figure for Scotland, including Orkney and Shetland, was 225.

Friars House (Security)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in regard to the security of his Department's premises, in the light of the repeated acts of entry, theft and vandalism at Friars house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Whilst it would be inappropriate to provide the hon. Member with precise details of security arrangements in each of the Department's buildings I can assure him that the security of the Department's premises is under constant review and, when necessary, action is taken to improve security.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the residents of private residential and nursing homes have received his Department's support towards the costs of their accommodation for each year since 1978.

Mr. Portillo: Accurate information about the percentage of residents in private residential care and nursing homes who are in receipt of income support (formerly supplementary benefit) is not available. Estimated information on the percentage of residents in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes in receipt of supplementary benefit between 1979 and 1986 was

provided for the joint central and local government working party on supplementary benefit and residential care. A copy of the working party's report "Public Support for Residential Care", published July 1987, is held in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department takes to monitor the wage levels and conditions of service of staff employed in private residential and nursing homes.

Mrs. Currie: The pay and conditions of service of the staff employed in these homes are a matter for the employer and the staff.

Consultants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the proportion of consultations undertaken in the private health sector which have resulted in patients seeing the same hospital consultant they would otherwise have seen within the National Health Service, for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Listeria

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence is available to his Department of sources of listeria infection other than food.

Mrs. Currie: Listeria is an organism known to be found widely in the environment. It is present, for example, in silage, sewage sludge, vegetable matter and river water. Listeriosis remains an uncommon cause of human disease.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there have been any deaths in the United Kingdom from listeria in recent years.

Mrs. Currie: Listeria is classified in the International Classification of Disease (ICD), ninth revision, under two separate codes: ICD 027.0 (Listeriosis) and ICD 771.2 (Other congenital infections, which includes congenital listeriosis).

The number of death registrations in the United Kingdom in the years 1979 to 1986 which have had either of these codes assigned as underlying cause of death are shown in the table. The numbers assigned to ICD 771.2 are solely those relating to the congenital listeriosis element of this code.

Number of death registrations with listeriosis (ICD 027.0) or congenital listeriosis (part of ICD 771.2) as underlying cause, United Kingdom, 1979-86

Year	*A*[1]	*B*[2]
1986[3]	11	1
1985	7	5
1984	6	2
1983	14	3
1982	3	4
1981	7	2
1980	5	2
1979	8	2

A[1] = ICD 027.0 Listeriosis.
B[2] = ICD 771.2 (part) congenital listeriosis.
[3] 1986: England and Wales component is from 28 days and over.

New College, Cardiff (National Insurance)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the value of the unpaid class 2 national insurance contributions deemed to have been paid in respect of employees at New college, Cardiff, in respect of *(a)* the period prior to 6 April 1984 and *(b)* since.

Mr. Portillo: No unpaid class 2 contributions were deemed to have been paid in respect of employees at New college school, Cardiff, prior to 6 April 1984 or subsequently. Following discussions on employment status, class 1 contributions due for the period from 6 April 1980 to 5 April 1984 in respect of some part-time employees at the school were waived by the local DHSS office on 3 April 1985. The total sum involved amounted to nearly £16,575.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if in the light of the junior doctors' conference resolution for an application for a judicial review of junior doctors' hours of work, he intends to take further action to reduce the hours worked by junior doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: On 7 June I announced, with the agreement of the profession's representatives, a programme to eliminate, wherever possible, regular rota commitments requiring junior hospital doctors to be on duty, on average, for more than one night and one weekend in three. Health authorities are expected to report to the Department by the end of July on how they proposed to take forward this task.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of places per 10,000 women at women's refuges in the Greater London area.

Mr. Portillo: There are no official statistics kept centrally in this form. However, the Women's Aid Federation (England), (WAF(E)), estimates that the number of refuge groups in the Greater London area is 39, 19 of which are affiliated to WAF(E). The 19 affiliated groups consist of 25 refuges with 349 places.

Laparoscopy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many laparoscopy operations were performed on *(a)* an out-patient basis and *(b)* an hospitalised patient basis in each health authority for each of the past two years.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Well Woman Clinics

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of well woman clinics run by each health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Endometriosis

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has carried out any research into the disease endometriosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Research on medical matters falls within the sphere of the Medical Research Council, which is the main Government body for biomedical and clinical research in this country, and receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to revise or update the guidance given to medical practitioners with respect to the assessment of disablement for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Portillo: We have no immediate plans to do so.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to reduce the length of time taken to process claims for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is constantly seeking ways of improving the delivery of its various benefits, including severe disablement allowance. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps she would write to me about it.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to improve the standard of *(a)* medical and *(b)* non-medical adjudication of claims for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Portillo: The standards of both lay and medical adjudication are kept under continuing review. I am not aware of any specific difficulties, but if the hon. Member has any particular problem in mind I will look into it.

Social Fund

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the model profile of expected expenditure from the social fund, referred to in paragraph 2042 of the social fund manual, showing the planned levels of expenditure month by month.

Mr. Portillo: The information is as follows. The figure for April reflects the fact that it is only a part month for the purposes of the social fund in 1988-89. The model profile is the same for both grants and loans budgets.

Percentage of annual gross budget

	Per cent.
April	2·23
May	8·88
June	8·88
July	8·88
August	8·88
September	8·56
October	9·47
November	9·49
December	8·27
January	7·87
February	9·19
March	9·40
Total	100·00

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the social fund budget forecasts of the Derby London road and Becket street offices for each month up to the end of 1988-89.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested, as a percentage of the annual budget in each case, is as follows:

	Derby Becket Street		*Derby London Road*	
	Grants	*Loans*	*Grants*	*Loans*
July	9·39	9·16	10·29	8·97
August	9·39	9·16	10·29	8·97
September	9·05	8·83	9·92	8·65
October	10·01	9·77	10·98	9·57
November	10·03	9·79	11·00	9·59
December	8·74	8·53	9·59	8·35
January	8·32	8·12	9·12	7·95
February	9·72	9·48	10·65	9·28
March	9·94	9·70	10·90	9·50

There have been technical problems with the social fund microcomputers, affecting the statistics, which are being corrected as quickly as possible. As a result, these figures may be subject to revision.

Local office monthly profiles of forecast expenditure are indicative only and are not a series of monthly budgets. They are automatically adjusted at the end of each month to take account of actual expenditure and may also be adjusted by the local office manager in the course of the year in the light of further information. Actual expenditure may well vary from that forecast.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many social fund inspectors have reviewed more than two cases;

(2) what was the total number of hours worked by social fund inspectors up to 27 June; how much of that time was spent in reviewing the cases received by them; and how the rest of their time was spent.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. I am advised by the social fund commissioner that up to 30 June 1988 the total number of hours worked by social fund inspectors was 7,826. Four social fund inspectors had reviewed more than two cases. When not reviewing cases social fund inspectors have been undergoing training.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers and amounts of budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants made by social fund officers at the Derby London road and Becket street local offices in May analysed by clients groups, within application purpose and within application type.

Mr. Portillo: In view of the volume of information involved, I will write to the hon. Member with the figures.

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the allocation of social fund budgets to the local office at Deeside.

Mr. Portillo: On 23 May a new local office at Deeside assumed responsibility for serving some of the areas

previously served by the local offices at Rhyl and Wrexham. Accordingly, the allocations to Rhyl and Wrexham have been reduced proportionately and the money reallocated to Deeside. The new allocations are as follows:

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget* £	*Period of allocation*
Deeside	53,752	126,939	23 May 1988—31 March 1989
Rhyl	109,152	251,676	1 May 1988—31 March 1989
Wrexham	146,288	340,749	1 May 1988—31 March 1989

Reflex Anal Dilatation Test

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will commission a study into the clinical reliability of the reflex anal dilatation test.

Mr. Newton: As I indicated in my statement to the House last week, the Standing Medical Advisory Committee was asked to consider the whole issue of diagnosing sexual abuse of children, in parallel with the Cleveland inquiry. Its advice was published at the same time as the inquiry report, and states clearly that

"no physical sign can at the present time be regarded as being uniquely diagnostic of child sexual abuse."

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will propose the enactment into law of principles 2, 6 and 7 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959, which relate to parental rights and responsibilities to their children;

(2) whether he will introduce legislation to replace the place of safety order with an emergency order with a return date of less than seven days, and with strict undertakings given by the applying authority to award damages if wrongly given;

(3) if he will bring forward legislation giving every parent an automatic right to a second medical opinion of their choice in any procedure which may result in the removal of their child;

(4) what safeguards for parents he intends to introduce into legislation as a result of the Butler-Sloss report on child abuse in Cleveland;

(5) whether he will introduce legislation making parents parties in all proceedings relating to their children;

(6) whether he will introduce legislation to ensure that all applications relating to the removal of children from their parents will be made to a judge.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement to the House on 6 July at columns 1061-63 about Lord Justice Butler-Sloss's report of her inquiry into the handling of suspected child abuse in Cleveland. This referred specifically to new rights and safeguards for parents. The Government are considering what modifications should be made to their proposals for legislation in the light of the report, and will also consider those of my hon. Friend's points not provided for in the 1987 White Paper.

Supplementary Benefit and Income Support

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to answer the question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead, relating to the answers given to the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 19 May, *Official Report*, columns *550-52*, on supplementary benefit and income support, due for answer on 8 June.

Mr. Portillo: I replied to the hon. Member on 8 July.

Kensington (Expenditure and Benefit)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he plans to answer the question from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East due for answer on 28 June, on expenditure and benefit figures relating to Kensington.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: I hope to reply to the hon. Member tomorrow.

Abortion (Carlisle)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the Carlisle baby was examined immediately after abortion; and at what lengths of time following the abortion examinations were conducted and with what results;

(2) what tests were conducted on the Carlisle baby or her mother to determine that the Carlisle baby suffered from Ehlers Danlos syndrome;

(3) what was the cause of death entered on the neotatal death certificate in the case of the Carlisle baby;

(4) whether existing rules, regulations or contingency plans for the event of a live birth following an abortion were followed in the case of the Carlisle baby;

(5) if resuscitation equipment was available in the same building as that in which the abortion of the Carlisle baby occurred;

(6) how long after the death of the Carlisle baby the hospital authorities, the senior registrar and the consultant concerned were informed of the death;

(7) what information he had received concerning the reasons why the doctor on duty at the abortion of the Carlisle baby did not call the consultant concerned when it was discovered that the baby had been born live;

(8) why the mother of the Carlisle baby was not told that her baby was born alive; and if this is in accordance with common medical practice;

(9) how long after the death of the Carlisle baby the Carlisle health authority informed the police, the regional health authority, the registrar, the coroner, the mother's general practitioner or his Department of the death;

(10) if the fact that the Carlisle baby was born alive following abortion appears on any medical notes or statutory forms written by the doctors or members of the health authority concerned;

(11) which member of the medical staff concerned in the abortion of the Carlisle baby instructed that the body should be incinerated;

(12) what instructions were given by health authority representatives to staff involved concerning the abortion of the Carlisle baby;

(13) how long after the death of the Carlisle baby the body was incinerated.

Mr. Newton: I am asking the chairman of the district health authority to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on which of the grounds given in the Abortion Act 1967 the abortion of the Carlisle baby was performed.

Mr. Newton: Information relating to an individual identifiable termination of pregnancy cannot be released on grounds of confidentiality.

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether his departmental medical advisers consider Ehlers Danlos syndrome to be a serious disability;

(2) if he will list the number of abortions conducted for Ehlers Danlos syndrome since the introduction of the Abortion Act 1967;

(3) if he will list the number of people known to have died or been seriously incapacitated as a result of Ehlers Danlos syndrome.

Mr. Newton: Ehlers Danlos syndrome is a rare condition which can have serious manifestations. I regret that the information in the exact format requested is not available.

Ehlers Danlos syndrome is part of the international classification of diseases (ICD) 9th revision code 756.8

"Other specified anomalies of muscle, tendon, fascia and connective tissue",

which contains a number of other conditions besides Ehlers Danlos syndrome.

Readily available information for the years 1985 and 1986 indicates that in these two years combined, there were fewer than five abortion notifications received which were coded to ICD 756.8.

The table shows the number of deaths registered in England and Wales since 1979 which have had 756.8 assigned as the underlying cause of death. Sufficiently detailed information on serious incapacitation as a result of this syndrome is not available.

Number of death registrations with "other specified anomalies of muscle, tendon, fascia and connective tissue" (ICD 756.8) assigned as underlying cause.
England and Wales, 1979-87

Year	*Persons*
[1]1987	6
1986	3
1985	1
1984	14
1983	3
1982	5
1981	5
1980	2
1979	8

[1] Provisional.

Family Spending Power

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the manner of his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, columns *181-90*, he will publish tables showing the net weekly spending power for each of *(a)* a couple with a child aged 11 years, *(b)* a couple with two children aged eight and 11 years, *(c)* a couple with three children aged eight, 11 and 15 years and *(d)* a couple with four children aged three, eight, 11, and 15 years, with weekly earnings of £60 to £170 (at £10 intervals) under (i) the tax and benefit system before April and (ii) the system in place following the concessions announced on 27 April but prior to the implementation of the 1988 Budget changes; and if he will add a column showing the difference between two systems in every circumstance.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 6 May 1988]:* Hypothetical illustrations showing the effects of the housing benefit transitional protection arrangements announced on 27 April can be set out on the basis requested only if they are expressed in cash terms and compare the tax and benefit systems in April 1987 and April 1988. The results are therefore hypothetical in four quite separate senses. First, average local authority housing charges mask the wide-variety of rents and domestic rates that local authority tenants actually pay. Secondly, they do not reflect the wide variety of families' circumstances and their housing arrangements in the relevant parts of the income distribution. Thirdly, and of particular importance in this context, it is not possible within the confines of the tax-benefit model tables to take account of earnings growth between April 1987 and April 1988. Fourthly, in practice, full-time earners will be benefiting from lower tax rates and higher real tax thresholds arising out of this year's Budget when they begin to receive their transitional protection. In this sense, and because the tables implicitly assume zero earnings growth, the illustrations are more than usually difficult to interpret.

Comparision of old and new benefit systems demonstrating the effect of housing benefit transitional protection
(a) Married couple with a child aged 11

Old system:

Earnings head	*Tax*	*NI*	*FIS*	*CHB*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate rebate*	*Fares to work*	*FSM*	*FWM*	*Net weekly spending power*
60·00	·00	3·00	20·90	7·25	17·10	14·27	7·20	5·60	5·85	2·55	·00	77·42
70·00	·00	4·90	15·90	7·25	17·10	13·02	7·20	5·20	5·85	2·55	·00	78·87
80·00	1·90	5·60	10·90	7·25	17·10	11·77	7·20	4·80	5·85	2·55	·00	79·62
90·00	4·60	6·30	5·90	7·25	17·01	10·52	7·20	4·40	5·85	2·55	·00	79·57
100·00	7·30	9·00	·90	7·25	17·10	8·96	7·20	3·81	5·85	2·55	·00	77·02
110·00	10·00	9·90	·00	7·25	17·10	5·95	7·20	2·62	5·85	·00	·00	75·77
120·00	12·70	10·80	·00	7·25	17·10	2·65	7·20	1·32	5·85	·00	·00	77·57
130·00	15·40	11·70	·00	7·25	17·10	·00	7·20	·00	5·85	·00	·00	80·00
140·00	18·10	12·60	·00	7·25	17·10	·00	7·20	·00	5·85	·00	·00	86·40
150·00	20·80	13·50	·00	7·25	17·10	·00	7·20	·00	5·85	·00	·00	92·80

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
160·00	23·50	14·40	·00	7·25	17·10	·00	7·20	·00	5·85	·00	·00	99·20
170·00	26·20	15·30	·00	7·25	17·10	·00	7·20	·00	5·85	·00	·00	105·60

New System:

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Trans. protection	New NWSP	Difference between systems after TP
60·00	·00	3·00	39·62	7·25	17·82	4·71	7·50	1·97	5·85	79·38	·00	79·38	+1·96
70·00	·00	4·90	33·95	7·25	17·82	3·13	7·50	1·48	5·85	79·74	·00	79·74	+·87
80·00	1·90	5·60	28·76	7·25	17·82	1·69	7·50	1·04	5·85	80·07	·00	80·07	+·45
90·00	4·60	6·30	24·14	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·64	5·85	79·96	·00	79·96	+·39
100·00	7·30	7·00	19·52	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	81·30	·00	81·30	+4·28
110·00	10·00	9·90	16·44	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	82·62	·00	82·62	+6·85
120·00	12·70	10·80	11·96	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	84·54	·00	84·54	+6·97
130·00	15·40	11·70	7·48	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	86·46	·00	86·46	+6·46
140·00	18·10	12·60	3·00	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	88·38	·00	88·38	+1·98
150·00	20·80	13·50	·00	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	91·78	·00	91·78	n/a
160·00	23·50	14·40	·00	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	98·18	·00	98·18	n/a
170·00	26·20	15·30	·00	7·25	17·82	·00	7·50	·00	5·85	104·58	·00	104·58	n/a

Comparison of old and new benefit systems demonstrating the effect of housing benefit transitional protection
(b) Married couple with 2 children aged 8 and 11

Old system:

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
60.00	0·00	3·00	26·90	14·50	18·35	15·40	7·70	6·02	5·85	5·10	0·00	93·02
70·00	0·00	4·90	21·90	14·50	18·35	14·15	7·70	5·62	5·85	5·10	0·00	94·47
80·00	1·90	5·60	16·90	14·50	18·35	12·90	7·70	5·22	5·85	5·10	0·00	95·22
90·00	4·60	6·30	11·90	14·50	18·35	11·65	7·70	4·82	5·85	5·10	0·00	95·17
100·00	7·30	9·00	6·90	14·50	18·35	10·20	7·70	4·30	5·85	5·10	0·00	92·80
110·00	10·00	9·90	1·90	14·50	18·35	8·55	7·70	3·65	5·85	5·10	0·00	91·90
120·00	12·70	10·80	0·00	14·50	18·35	5·88	7·70	2·60	5·85	5·10	0·00	92·68
130·00	15·40	11·70	0·00	14·50	18·35	2·58	7·70	1·30	5·85	2·55	0·00	91·93
140·00	18·10	12·60	0·00	14·50	18·35	0·00	7·70	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	91·90
150·00	20·80	13·50	0·00	14·50	18·35	0·00	7·70	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	98·30
160·00	23·50	14·40	0·00	14·50	18·35	0·00	7·70	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	104·70
170·00	26·20	15·30	0·00	14·50	18·35	0·00	7·70	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	111·10

New System:

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Trans. protection	New NWSP	Difference between systems after TP
60·00	·00	3·00	45·67	14·50	19·12	4·36	8·02	1·87	5·85	90·41	·00	90·41	−2·61
70·00	·00	4·90	40·00	14·50	19·12	2·78	8·02	1·39	5·85	90·78	·10	90·88	−3·59
80·00	1·90	5·60	34·81	14·50	19·12	1·33	8·02	·94	5·85	91·09	·54	91·63	−3·59
90·00	4·60	6·30	30·19	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·55	5·85	91·35	·23	91·58	−3·59
100·00	7·30	7·00	25·57	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	92·78	·00	92·78	−·02
110·00	10·00	9·90	22·49	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	94·10	·00	94·10	+2·20
120·00	12·70	10·80	18·01	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	96·02	·00	96·02	+3·34
130·00	15·40	11·70	13·53	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	97·94	·00	97·94	+6·01
140·00	18·10	12·60	9·05	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	99·86	·00	99·86	+7·96
150·00	20·80	13·50	4·57	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	101·78	·00	101·78	+3·48
160·00	23·50	14·40	·00	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	103·61	·00	103·61	n/a
170·00	26·20	15·30	·00	14·50	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	110·01	·00	110·01	n/a

Comparison of Old and New Benefit Systems demonstrating the effect of Housing Benefit Transitional Protection (c) Married couple with 3 children aged 8, 11 and 15

Old System:

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
60·00	·00	3·00	32·15	21·75	18·35	15·96	7·70	6·20	5·85	7·65	·00	108·81
70·00	·00	4·90	28·30	21·75	18·35	14·42	7·70	5·71	5·85	7·65	·00	111·03
80·00	1·90	5·60	23·30	21·75	18·35	13·17	7·70	5·31	5·85	7·65	·00	111·78
90·00	4·60	6·30	18·30	21·75	18·35	11·92	7·70	4·91	5·85	7·65	·00	111·73
100·00	7·30	9·00	13·30	21·75	18·35	10·56	7·70	4·44	5·85	7·65	·00	109·50
110·00	10·00	9·90	8·30	21·75	18·35	8·91	7·70	3·79	5·85	7·65	·00	108·60
120·00	12·70	10·80	3·30	21·75	18·35	7·26	7·70	3·14	5·85	7·65	·00	107·70
130·00	15·40	11·70	·00	21·75	18·35	5·05	7·70	2·27	5·85	7·65	·00	107·72
140·00	18·10	12·60	·00	21·75	18·35	1·75	7·70	·97	5·85	7·65	·00	109·52
150·00	20·80	13·50	·00	21·75	18·35	·00	7·70	·00	5·85	5·10	·00	110·65
160·00	23·50	14·40	·00	21·75	18·35	·00	7·70	·00	5·85	·00	·00	111·95
170·00	26·20	15·30	·00	21·75	18·35	·00	7·70	·00	5·85	·00	·00	118·35

New System:

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Trans. protection	New NWSP	Difference between systems after TP
60·00	·00	3·00	57·07	21·75	19·12	2·70	8·02	1·36	5·85	106·89	·00	106·89	−1·92
70·00	·00	4·90	51·40	21·75	19·12	1·12	8·02	·88	5·85	107·26	·18	107·44	−3·59
80·00	1·90	5·60	46·21	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	107·47	·72	108·19	−3·59
90·00	4·60	6·30	41·59	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	109·45	·00	109·45	−2·28
100·00	7·30	7·00	36·97	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	111·43	·00	111·43	+1·93
110·00	10·00	9·90	33·89	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	112·75	·00	112·75	+4·15
120·00	12·70	10·80	29·41	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	114·67	·00	114·67	+6·97
130·00	15·40	11·70	24·93	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	116·59	·00	116·59	+8·87
140·00	18·10	12·60	20·45	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	118·51	·00	118·51	+8·99
150·00	20·80	13·50	15·97	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	120·43	·00	120·43	+9·78
160·00	23·50	14·40	11·49	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	122·35	·00	122·35	+10·40
170·00	26·20	15·30	7·01	21·75	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	124·27	·00	124·27	+5·92

Comparison of Old and New Benefit Systems demonstrating the effect of Housing Benefit Transitional Protection (d) Married couple with 4 children aged 3, 8, 11 and 15

Old System:

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
60·00	·00	3·00	34·75	29·00	18·35	17·19	7·70	6·60	5·85	7·65	1·83	122·12
70·00	·00	4·90	34·30	29·00	18·35	14·80	7·70	5·83	5·85	7·65	1·83	126·61
80·00	1·90	5·60	29·30	29·00	18·35	13·55	7·70	5·43	5·85	7·65	1·83	127·36
90·00	4·60	6·30	24·30	29·00	18·35	12·30	7·70	5·03	5·85	7·65	1·83	127·31
100·00	7·30	9·00	19·30	29·00	18·35	11·05	7·70	4·63	5·85	7·65	1·83	125·26
110·00	10·00	9·90	14·30	29·00	18·35	9·41	7·70	3·99	5·85	7·65	1·83	124·38
120·00	12·70	10·80	9·30	29·00	18·35	7·76	7·70	3·34	5·85	7·65	1·83	123·48
130·00	15·40	11·70	4·30	29·00	18·35	6·11	7·70	2·69	5·85	7·65	1·83	122·58
140·00	18·10	12·60	·00	29·00	18·35	4·23	7·70	1·95	5·85	7·65	1·83	122·06
150·00	20·80	13·50	·00	29·00	18·35	·93	7·70	·65	5·85	7·65	·00	122·03
160·00	23·50	14·40	·00	29·00	18·35	·00	7·70	·00	5·85	7·65	·00	126·85
170·00	26·20	15·30	·00	29·00	18·35	·00	7·70	·00	5·85	2·55	·00	128·15

New system

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Trans. protection	New NWSP	Difference between systems after TP
60·00	·00	3·00	63·12	29·00	19·12	1·04	8·02	·85	5·85	118·02	·79	118·81	−3·31
70·00	·00	4·90	57·45	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	118·56	5·18	123·74	−2·87
80·00	1·90	5·60	52·26	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	120·77	3·72	124·49	−2·87
90·00	4·60	6·30	47·64	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	122·75	1·69	124·44	−2·87
100·00	7·30	7·00	43·02	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	124·73	·00	124·73	−·53

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Trans. protection	New NWSP	Difference between systems after TP
110·00	10·00	9·90	39·94	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	126·05	·00	126·05	+1·67
120·00	12·70	10·80	35·46	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	127·97	·00	127·97	+4·49
130·00	15·40	11·70	30·98	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	129·89	·00	129·89	+7·31
140·00	18·10	12·60	26·50	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	131·81	·00	131·81	+9·75
150·00	20·80	13·50	22·02	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	133·73	·00	133·73	+11·70
160·00	23·50	14·40	17·54	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	135·65	·00	135·65	+8·80
170·00	26·20	15·30	13·06	29·00	19·12	·00	8·02	·00	5·85	137·57	·00	137·57	+9·42

Notes:
1. Old scheme as at April 1987 benefit, NI and tax rates.
2. New scheme as at April 1988 benefit and NI rates, and April 1987 tax rates.
3. FIS transitional protection is assumed not to be payable in any case.
4. Other assumptions used are those set out in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits," October 1987.
5. Cash differences to benefits in kind have been neutralised because conversion of free school meals and welfare milk to cash is compensated at April 1988 prices within Family Credit. Cash differences to fares to work are also neutralised since these do not come within the scope of the tax and benefit systems. Water charges have been neutralised by removing them from both the pre and post reform tables (£1·70 and £1·78 per week, respectively). Under income support, water service charges are treated like any other part of household expenditure.
6. The tables are designed to illustrate transitional protection assuming zero cash earnings growth. Cash differences outside the range of the benefit system are therefore irrelevant to the impact of transitional protection.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will consider revising the 1974 circular on local authorities' duties in relation to the mentally ill in order to clarify these duties;

(2) if he will outline the progress which has been made on the implementation of the proposals for the care of the mentally ill contained in the Social Services Select Committee report of 1984-85 on community care.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 23 May 1988]:* The question of revision of the 1974 circular on the duties of local authorities in relation to mentally ill people was one of three recommendations concerning mental illness (Nos. 47, 48 and 51) which the Social Services Committee in its report of 1984-85 specifically addressed to the Department. An interim response to these recommendations was given in Cm. 9674 and the present position is as follows:

Recommendation 47: The revision of departmental planning guidance on hospital accommodation for mentally ill people is now virtually complete and publication of a health building note is expected shortly.

Recommendation 48: The duties of local authorities in relation to non-medical services for mentally ill people (circular 19/74) are being considered in the light of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care, on which Government proposals will be presented in due course.

Recommendation 51: £269,000 of the £5,584,000 available in 1988-89 under the Department's "Opportunities for Volunteering" scheme has been allocated to MIND for projects relating to unemployed people recovering from mental illness.

Ear, Nose and Throat Patients

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes there have been in the numbers on ear, nose and throat in-patient waiting lists for regional health authorities between 1982 and 1987.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list in each regional health authority at 30 September 1982 and 1987[1] for the specialty Ear, Nose and Throat

Regional health authority	September 1982	September 1987[1]	Change between 1987 and 1982	Per cent. change between 1987 and 1982
Northern	7,931	4,438	−3,493	−44·0
Yorkshire	10,077	8,616	−1,461	−14·5
Trent	8,750	7,578	−1,172	−13·4
East Anglian	4,885	3,775	−1,110	−22·7
North West Thames	5,619	7,127	1,508	26·8
North East Thames	10,730	13,822	3,092	28·8
South East Thames	5,813	8,754	2,941	50·6
South West Thames	5,278	4,665	−613	−11·6
Wessex	6,324	4,607	−1,717	−27·2
Oxford	4,781	4,305	−476	−10·0
South Western	5,565	4,939	−626	−11·2
West Midlands	14,247	14,431	184	1·3
Mersey	6,075	3,384	−2,691	−44·3
North Western	10,763	11,590	827	7·7
SHA's	700	454	−246	−35·1
England	107,538	102,485	−5,053	−4·7

[1] Figures exclude self-deferred cases to provide comparability with 1982.

Sole Traders (Accounts)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances, and for what reason, the unaudited accounts of a sole trader which would be accepted as evidence of profits for tax purposes are not so accepted for the purposes of a claim for family credit; and whether the additional accountants' fees payable in connection with the claim are taken into account in assessing entitlement to family credit.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* There is no requirement for self-employed persons to provide any accounts in support of a claim for family credit. Net profit for family credit purposes is arrived at on a basis different from that for tax purposes, by reference to gross receipts and only those expenses allowable under family credit legislation. The necessary information may be provided by completing a form supplied by the Department or by submitting accounts, as the person wishes. If the person

chooses to submit accounts, the Family Credit (General) Regulations specify the type of accounts which are acceptable and the period which they must cover. Since there is no requirement to provide such accounts additional accountants' fees should not be entailed in connection with a claim to family credit. Nevertheless, accountants' fees in general would usually be regarded as an allowable business expense in calculating net profit for family credit purposes.

Several representations have been received about the rules governing the acceptability of accounts, and we are considering whether any changes are called for.

Single Payments

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average amount of grant and loan sums paid out by local officers of his Department in single payments between 11 April and 11 July in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow; and what was the average amount of single payment in each of those years.

Mr. Portillo: Single payments of supplementary benefit were made in the form of grants and not loans. Information is not available for the exact dates requested and records for 1983-84 are no longer held. The figures given in the table represent the average value of each single payment made in three of the Department's four-week statistical periods in each year running from May to July.

	Scotland £	*Strathclyde* £	[1]*Greenock* £	[1]*Port Glasgow* £
9 May 1984 to 31 July 1984	86	86	100	67
8 May 1985 to 30 July 1985	89	89	84	78
7 May 1986 to 29 July 1986	86	94	84	86
6 May 1987 to 28 July 1987	80	77	87	60

[1] The boundaries of the local offices at Greenock and Port Glasgow are not conterminous with those of the hon. Member's constituency.

The average single payment for the whole statistical years (April to April) for Scotland was as follows:

	£
1984-85	85
1985-86	88
1986-87	85
1987-88	77

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Conventional Force Reductions and Human Rights

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on linking progress in conventional force reductions in Europe with progress on human rights issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy was set out in paragraphs 8-12 of the statement on "Conventional Arms Control: The Way Ahead" issued under the authority of the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, 2-3 March 1988, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House.

Disarmament

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to decide its mandate for the conventional arms reduction talks; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have made to their North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts on the contents of the mandate.

Mr. Mellor: The NATO allies tabled a mandate for the conventional stability talks in Vienna on 27 July last year.

Iran-Pakistan (Nuclear Co-operation)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for nuclear non-proliferation of nuclear co-operation between Iran and Pakistan.

Mr. Mellor: As a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty Iran is bound to accept full scope safeguards on all her nuclear facilities. We have no conclusive evidence of any nuclear co-operation between Iran and Pakistan.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the proposals made by Mr. Shevardnadze to the United Nations general assembly session on disarmament in June for *(a)* an exchange of data on levels of troops and equipment, *(b)* cutbacks by each side of half a million troops and *(c)* the reformation of remaining forces to give them a purely defensive character; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In so far as the remarks in Mr. Shevardnadze's speech recognise the need for on-site verification to accompany data exchanges and for asymmetries to be eliminated as a precondition for mutual force reductions, they are welcome. They represent a movement towards the approach to conventional arms control of allied countries, whose forces are already configured for purely defensive purposes. But they need to be translated into appropriate action by Soviet arms control negotiators.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken, in view of his support for the ballistic missile treaty, to urge upon both the United States and the Soviet Governments the desirability of holding the anti-ballistic missile review conference within the due period, and of using the occasion to renew their mutual commitment to the treaty.

Mr. Mellor: The 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty is a bilateral agreement between the United States and the

Soviet Union. It is for the parties to the treaty to determine their rights and obligations under it, including the timing and content of review conferences.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the other arrangements for the third review conference on the anti-ballistic missile treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is for the parties to the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty to decide on arrangements for the third review conference and to make them public when appropriate. The Government will follow developments with keen interest.

Fiji

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to whether all political prisoners held during the two military coups in 1987, and in connection with the recent arms smuggling allegations, have now been released by the Fijian Government.

Mr. Eggar: We are not aware of any political prisoners being held in Fiji. We understand, however, that there have been a small number of detentions in the last few days in connection with arms smuggling.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what consultations have taken place with Her Majesty's Government concerning the establishment of a new constitution of the Republic of Fiji;

(2) whether advice on a new constitution will be given in future by Her Majesty's Goverment to the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the Prime Minister of Fiji, when he was in London on 29 March, that Britain was ready to offer advice to Fiji in working out a new constitution.

Israel

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from Her Majesty's consul general in Jerusalem on invitations to Israeli school children to beat Palestinian prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: We have received no independent corroboration of press reports about this matter.

Security Services

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will issue a directive to the director general of MI6 setting out the parameters of lawful activity, along the lines of the Maxwell Fyfe directive of 24 September 1952; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It has been the long-established practice of this and previous Governments not to comment on such matters.

El Salvador

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the report of the United Kingdom observers sent to the 20 March elections in El Salvador to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A copy of the report by Dr. David Browning has now been laid on the table of the House. The report has now been published, and copies have been placed in the Library.

The report's findings are that, despite the difficult conditions imposed by the continuing civil war, the conduct of the elections was reasonably free, fair and secure; that voters were presented with a real, albeit limited choice; and that the election provided a genuine opportunity for voters to express an opinion about the record of previously elected representatives.

The report is a balanced and objective assessment of the way in which the legislative and municipal elections were conducted, and I commend it to those who have an interest in El Salvador.

Helsinki Final Act

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress on implementation by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries of the provision of the Helsinki Final Act during the last six months.

Mr. Mellor: During the last six months to 30 June 1988, Soviet and East European implementation of their Helsinki commitments has been closely monitored, particularly in the light of the third CSCE follow-up meeting which continues in Vienna. One of the main features of the period under review is a widening of disparities in eastern implementation reflecting differing attitudes on political and social reform. In some countries overall developments continued to be favourable; in some limited progress was noted; in some there has been no improvement at all; while in one case there was an apparent deterioration in the human rights situation.

SECURITY IN EUROPE: PRINCIPLES REGARDING RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPATING STATES; CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES AND CERTAIN ASPECTS OF SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT (BASKET I)

Widespread violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms covered by principle VII, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief continued.

With the progressive evolution of Mr. Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and democratisation, however, there have been continued improvements in the implementation of basic rights in the Soviet Union. The Communist party has proclaimed that the state bears responsibility to its citizens, as well as vice versa. However, key legal guarantees which would serve to institutionalise these developments are still evidently at the drafting stage.

The "unofficial" Public Commission for International Co-operation on Humanitarian Issues and Human Rights set up last year has not so far had any clear positive influence on human rights abuses, although its chairman, Professor Fedor Burlatsky, has in recent months met representatives of prominent Western human rights organisations (for example, Amnesty International). New legislation governing procedures for appeal against official and administrative abuses came into force on 1 January 1988 but it is widely recognised to be flawed by a proviso

that only individual officials can be sued. Many of the decisions to which Soviet citizens object are taken collectively, thus depriving them of legal redress. Very few cases have so far been initiated under the new law.

There has been much greater tolerance of public criticism and debate by the Soviet authorities, particularly in the case of past policies and personalities, but also of current events. Dr. Andrei Sakharov's press conference of 3 June, held under official auspices, was unprecedented, even though the Soviet press failed to report his more critical comments. Some unofficial meetings of political activists have been allowed to take place in Moscow and other cities with close surveillance but little or no harassment. But other meetings of groups such as the "Democratic Union", which is seeking the introduction of a multi-party system, have been disrupted. Prominent activists such as Sergie Grigoryants (editor of the magazine "Glasnost") have been subjected to short-term detention and official criticism. Very few arrests of political activists on criminal charges have taken place although some 300 political prisoners, including several Helsinki monitors, are still serving sentences in camps and internal exile or are detained in mental hospitals.

Nationalist unrest in various parts of the Soviet union has become an increasing challenge to the authorities as ethnic minorities increasingly demand fair political treatment and protection of their linguistic and cultural rights. Some minor concessions have been made. For example, Crimean Tatars are now permitted to return to their homeland in a strictly controlled manner, but other major grievances and demands have not been fully addressed.

Emigration by Jews, Armenians and ethnic Germans continues to increase steadily. Jewish emigration has doubled as against the same period last year. The steady flow of long-standing Jewish refuseniks granted permission to emigrate has continued, for example, Natasha Khassina, the Rosensteins, Lev Furman, Vladimir Tufeld and, following the Moscow summit, the Zieman family. However, many others remain. The secrecy provision continues to be applied in an apparently arbitrary fashion.

Reform of the rules of criminal procedure has been announced but not yet introduced. However, the authorities have modified the rules governing confinement in psychiatric institutions, with effect from 1 January 1988. In addition, it is now a crime knowingly to commit a sane individual for psychiatric treatment. Responsibility for special psychiatric hospitals has been transferred from the Interior to the Health Ministry.

Changes are expected shortly to legislation concerning religion. Relations between the state and the Orthodox Church have improved, partly as a result of the celebrations of the millenium of the introduction of Christianity. Mr. Gorbachev met the Orthodox patriarch on 29 April and Papal representative Cardinal Casaroli at the millenium celebrations in June. In his address of 28 June to the 19th party conference he spoke of the need to respect believers. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian (Uniate) Catholic Church remains banned and official comments about it offer little hope for the future. Members of other unregistered religious denominations are still subject to harassment.

In Bulgaria human rights and amendments to legislation on citizenship, foreign travel and residence abroad were discussed at a session of the National Assembly Foreign Policy Commission in February. It appears that changes are envisaged to bring Bulgarian legislation more into line with international human rights obligations and CSCE commitments. In June an "independent" human rights commission was set up, but it is likely to remain under official control. Some human rights activists and religious believers have received permission to travel to the West but, on the whole, dissidents continue to be imprisoned or penalised for their views. Religious communities, other than the Orthodox Church, still have difficulties with the state. Bulgaria's treatment of the ethnic Turkish minority in particular flouts all aspects of principle VII. The practice of the Muslim religion is repressed, the use of the Turkish language banned, and contacts of westerners with ethnic Turks are heavily discouraged. It remains to be seen whether the bilateral Bulgarian-Turkish protocol signed on 23 February will lead to improved treatment of the Turkish minority.

In Czechoslovakia religious activists are still subject to harassment and arrest. The authorities have recently given permission for the appointment of three bishops to vacant sees but others remain unfilled. Several dissidents were arrested by the Czechoslovak police when trying to attend a British embassy dinner in March to meet a visiting senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office official. This was probably due to the coincidence of a religious festival scheduled for the same weekend. A demonstration for religious rights in Bratislava on 25 March was broken up by force by the police. A Charter 77 peace conference in June, attended by other East Europeans and westerners including British members of European Nuclear Disarmament (END), was broken up and all foreign participants ordered to leave the country. Charter 77 members have been harassed less than in the past, but the authorities continue to resort to imprisonment on political grounds. The dissident Pavel Wonka died in custody after his re-arrest (although an independent autopsy cleared the Czechoslovak authorities of foul play). Ivan Polansky was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for possessing samizdat literature (on wartime Fascist Slovakia). Another dissident Jiri Wolf remains in prison, despite appeals by us and other Western Governments for his release. On a more positive note, Karel Srp, chairman of the banned Jazz Section, was released, as was Ervin Motl of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted.

By comparison with its neighbours, Hungary's human rights record remains good, but not faultless. An estimated 150 to 200 Hungarians are serving sentences for refusing military service but legislation on alternative service is planned for later this year. In March eight people were detained by the police, one being physically assaulted, before a mass march to mark the anniversary of the 1848 uprising. All were later released. On 16 June about 20 people were arrested at a demonstration to mark the 30th anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy. Some were beaten up, but all were released the same day. On 27 June about 40,000 people held a march, unhindered by the authorities, to protest against the destruction of villages in Romania.

Implementation of the Final Act by the German Democratic Republic remained unsatisfactory. Open signs of discontent among human rights activists increased markedly. In January, a number of unofficial demonstrators who had joined an official march were arrested. There were further detentions in February, mainly of

people who had applied to emigrate to the West. As a result of the Church's mediatory efforts, strong protests and wide international media coverage, all those detained were later freed, though some opposition figures were pressured into emigrating immediately to the West. State/Church relations have shown signs of deterioration as a result of these incidents, for example, state censorship of Church publications has tightened. In June, the GDR police clashed with young people gathering near the Berlin wall to hear pop concerts in West Berlin and harassed Western journalists who were present.

Implementation by Poland of the human rights provisions of the Final Act remained patchy. A high degree of religious tolerance continued to be observed, but Church publications were still subject to state censorship. The Roman Catholic church is currently constructing a large number of new churches. Trade union pluralism is still banned. During industrial unrest in May (including a major strike in Gdansk) the authorities resorted to old-fashioned methods of dealing with political protest. But most of those arrested have since been released.

There has been no improvement over the last six months in Romania's appallingly bad implementation of its CSCE human rights commitments, and a marked deterioration in one respect. Romania is currently the biggest obstacle to progress in the Vienna CSCE negotiations.

Several prominent dissidents and critics of Government policy have been arrested or confined to their homes at times of high international media interest in Romania, for example, following the spontaneous demonstrations in Brasov by factory workers in November 1987 and during the party conference, to prevent contact between them and visiting Western journalists. Though released subsequently, their movements remain closely monitored.

Romania's policy of "systemisation" (the destruction of villages and the concentration of the population in urban-type settlements), which is to be speeded up, appears to involve forcible relocation and the loss of homes and lands. The cultural and linguistic rights of, and facilities for, ethnic minorities continue to be gradually eroded.

CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY BUILDING MEASURES

Warsaw pact states have been careful to fulfil their obligations under the 1986 Stockholm document and have generally complied with its spirit. In the last six months eleven notifiable Warsaw pact exercises have taken place. United Kingdom observers attended each of the three Warsaw pact exercises to which they were invited and we inspected a Soviet airborne exercise in the Odessa region in April, where there were no indications of any lack of compliance with the provisions of the Stockholm document. In April, the United States inspected a non-ratified Soviet military activity in the GDR, under relevant paragraphs (65 and 66) of the Stockholm document.

CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS, OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the Warsaw pact there has been little progress in the field of economics co-operation. However, Soviet statistical publications have reinstated sections long omitted. The radical debate on economic reform in the Soviet Union has continued, but few concrete results have emerged from the reform measures so far introduced. Mr. Gorbachev, in his 28 June speech, called for accelerated transition to wholesale trading and emphasised the urgency of price and credit reform. He said that priority in foreign trade would continue to be given to Socialist countries but that he envisaged a fully convertible rouble at some stage. The continued move towards market principles and decentralisation in the Soviet economy, together with the present emphasis on light industry and the consumer, should increase opportunities for co-operation with Western countries. Approximately 40 joint ventures between foreign countries and the USSR have so far been established. Soviet shortages of hard currency will, however, remain a significant constraint.

Poland and Hungary remain the countries of most interest to Western businesses. Some 600 Polish businesses are expected to be given licences to deal directly with foreign companies. Recently introduced economic reforms have run into trouble, but the authorities seem determined to press ahead. Hungary's economic performance remains disappointing, although there have been signs of modest improvement. New legislation has been introduced enabling manufacturing enterprises to engage in hard currency trade activities. The number of joint ventures with Western companies increased to 120. In the other Warsaw pact states facilities for business men remained poor, with sparse commercial information, and hotels, accommodation and office space available only at charges well above normal rates.

There was little progress on environmental issues in the Warsaw pact states, but both Poland and Czechoslovakia have signed environmental agreements with non-pact countries. The Soviet Union created a State Committee for Environmental Protection, but it is too early to predict its effectiveness. There have been several demonstrations against gross atmospheric and water pollution. The Soviet press itself has indicated that the situation is alarming. Bulgaria hosted a Balkan environmental conference at the end of 1987 and plans a second one this year.

CO-OPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN AND OTHER FIELDS (BASKET III)

Restrictions on human contacts and freedom of movement are still in place in most countries. Contacts between Romanians and foreigners are not permitted without prior official authorisation and Western visitors' movements are carefully controlled. Despite increased emigration from the Soviet Union, refusals of permission to emigrate are still based too often and for far too long on grounds of access to state secrets. The requirement for parental consent or financial waiver has been maintained. Of equal concern is the apparent introduction of a policy whereby youths nearing conscription age must undertake military service before applying to emigrate (whereupon they become subject to the secrecy provision).

Nevertheless, some positive developments have been noted. New provisions for issue of multiple entry visas and faster issuing of ordinary visas for business men have been adopted in the Soviet Union. In Czechoslavakia more flexible regulations on travel to the West are in operation. Hungary has adopted new legislation on foreign travel entitling everyone (except those with a criminal record or for reasons of state security) to a passport and removing the requirement for exit visas. Exceptionally in Eastern Europe, Hungarians may now settle abroad without losing their citizenship and retaining the right to return at a later date. There has been a continued increase in private visits

abroad from Poland, the GDR and the Soviet Union, though exit procedures are cumbersome and non-convertibility of currency remains a major practical barrier.

Family reunification cases involving United Kingdom citizens are outstanding in the Soviet Union (1), Czechoslovakia (5), GDR (9) and Romania (17). In Bulgaria family reunification cases involving ethnic Turks are a particular problem; of 163 children for whom exit visa applications were submitted, only 43 have been able to join their families in Turkey.

Actively encouraged by the Soviet Union, the information networks in most Eastern countries have had to adjust in some measure to glasnost. In the Soviet Union unprecedented public views have been expressed on a range of topics, especially the Stalinist past and the Soviet political structure. However, high level warnings have clearly indicated that even glasnost has its limits. The treatment of foreign correspondents is improving, with notable exceptions on political grounds, for example, news management because of nationalist unrest (in the Soviet Union). In most countries there is a more open attitude to controversial, social issues such as drugs, AIDS, alcohol abuse and environmental problems. With the exception of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle, Israel Radio, the Voice of Turkey and Vatican Radio (the latter two in Bulgaria), jamming of radio broadcasts has continued to decrease. The possibility of access to foreign films and programmes has grown in some countries but the availability of Western journals is still strictly limited.

CO-OPERATION AND EXCHANGES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Cultural exchanges and contacts, educational agreements and more genuine contacts between scientists and technicians have increased in all East European countries except Romania. However, East European insistence on enforced reciprocity continues to affect certain areas of exchanges. Bulgaria is showing increased interest in English language teaching. But systematic attempts by Romania and Bulgaria to erode or suppress ethnic cultures continue to be matters of grave concern.

We are continuing our efforts to persuade the Soviet authorities to allow cultural contacts outside the established Ministry of Culture and Goskoncert channels, which are overloaded and often excessively slow and inefficient. By contrast, there is easy access in the United Kingdom to a wide range of non-Government entrepreneurs, local authorities, cultural organisations, etc for Soviet cultural events.

The National Theatre conducted a Soviet tour in May/June. While successful in artistic terms, this was severely inconvenienced by mismanagement and breaches of contract by the Soviet organisers. The BBC Wales symphony orchestra visited the Soviet Union in May. Successful meetings between film-makers, journalists, writers and lawyers took place in the period under review. A senior delegation of Soviet university pro-rectors visited the United Kingdom in February and direct exchanges between schoolchildren are under way. Soviet events in the United Kingdom in the period under review have included tours by the choir of the Moscow military district, the Moscow state circus and classical ballet, and the Maly theatre of Leningrad.

TRANSPORT

British Rail (Privatisation)

5. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he is considering for the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Channon: I am considering all long-term options for the future of British Rail, and privatisation is one of the possibilities.

Speed Limits

10. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Institute of Advanced Motorists proposing *(a)* a minimum speed limit and *(b)* an increase in the present maximum limit to 80 mph on motorways; what assessment he has made of the implications of such proposals for the safety of road transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: We keep closely in touch with the Institute of Advanced Motorists, whose advanced driving courses make a valuable contribution to road safety. I am therefore familiar with its views on motorway speed limits, but I have no plans to change our current policy.

"Reviving the Railways"

11. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to review his policy towards the funding of British Rail in the light of the report "Reviving the Railways" by the Centre for Policy Studies, a copy of which has been sent to him.

37. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take in the light of the Centre for Policy Studies document "Reviving the Railways" a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend is considering the long-term options for British Rail, including privatisation. Publications like the Centre for Policy Studies report are a useful contribution to the public debate.

Waterstock-Wendlebury Motorway

12. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received concerning the proposals to construct a two-lane motorway between Waterstock and Wendlebury.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since the public inquiry ended in January, 43 letters from hon. Members and others.

Singapore (Air Services)

16. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to liberalise the current United Kingdom-Singapore air service agreement.

Mr. Channon: When United Kingdom and Singapore officials met late last month, it was agreed that possibilities for liberalising arrangements for United Kingdom-Singapore routes should be worked up and discussed at a further meeting later this year.

30. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department next plans to

meet civil aviation officials from the Republic of Singapore to discuss air services between there and the United Kingdom.

38. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the results of the recent talks between officials in his Department and the Ministry of Communications in Singapore to discuss the provision of additional air services between London and Singapore.

39. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the results of the recent talks between officials in his Department and their counterparts in Singapore to discuss the provision of air services between Manchester and Singapore.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: United Kingdom and Singapore Civil Aviation officials met late last month when the Singapore authorities tabled proposals for liberalising arrangements for air services on the London-Singapore and Manchester-Singapore routes. These proposals are being examined and will be discussed at a further meeting with the Singapore authorities later this year.

41. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the shortage of capacity on air routes between the United Kingdom and Singapore.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received a number of representations about the level of capacity on the London-Singapore and Manchester-Singapore routes.

Ferry Safety

19. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to bring forward regulations affecting ferry safety.

Mr. Channon: I have already made six sets of regulations on loading door warning lights, TV monitoring equipment, emergency lighting, logging of door closures, listing of operating berths, and boarding cards. Regulations are being prepared on further ferry safety matters, and these will be brought forward once statutory consultation is complete.

Cross-Channel Ferries

22. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about staffing levels on cross-Channel ferries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have received a number of representations on staffing levels on cross-Channel ferries.

Freight Facility Grants

23. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the results achieved since 1983 by the provision of freight facility grants.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since 1983 62 grants have been awarded for rail schemes, of which 47 have been in England, and there have been four inland waterway grants.

M1

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the rate of progress of current road repairs to the M1 between Bedfordshire and London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The major maintenance work being carried out is between junctions four and five in the London borough of Barnet. It involves the strengthening of the existing carriageway and the provision of a crawler lane on the southbound carriageway for heavy goods vehicles. Work is progressing well and will be completed in August, two months ahead of schedule.

Bridges

25. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many local authority-maintained road bridges are in need of repair.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The bridge census and sample survey of January 1987 identified some 50,000 bridges in Great Britain on local authority roads which were covered by the bridge assessment code for older short-span highway bridges (1984). The estimated number of these not meeting the standards of that code was about 11,000.

33. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of repairing all of his Department's maintained bridges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We estimate that about £50 million a year is needed for ongoing maintenance required to keep pace with deterioration. In addition we announced in November 1987 a programme of assessment and strengthening of some older bridges, and of upgrading certain bridges to higher standards.

42. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of repairing all local authority-maintained bridges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The bridge census and sample survey estimated that the cost of strengthening to the 1984 standard the 11,000 older short span highway bridges in Great Britain on roads which are the responsibility of local highway authorities could be some £700 million.

Commuter Services

26. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect on the provision of commuter services by British Rail of his decision to make InterCity ineligible for public service obligation grant from 1 April.

Mr. David Mitchell: There is no good reason why commuters using InterCity's fast long-distance services should be subsidised. Service provision of InterCity trains at peak hours will continue to match demand as closely as possible.

Most commuter services into London, including all services on the Chiltern lines, are operated by Network SouthEast and are unaffected by the change.

Children (Car Safety)

27. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further proposals he is considering to improve the safety of children in cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No responsible parent would wait for the law before fitting and using child restraints. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) is to be congratulated on bringing on to the statute book legislation providing for the compulsory restraint of children travelling in the rear of cars. We shall begin drawing up regulations and consult widely in doing so.

Channel Tunnel (Customs Clearance)

28. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has made a financial assessment of the impact on British Rail of disallowing the use of non-train Customs clearance for trains using the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: Section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act requires on-train controls to be provided on services to and from destinations to the north of London, on condition that British Rail provides acceptable facilities. Discussions are in progress between British Rail and the frontier control authorities. It is for British Rail to make any necessary financial assessments of the impact on it.

Heathrow (Access Routes)

29. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report on new access routes between Heathrow and central London.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am now considering the report and hope to make an announcement shortly.

Motorway Speed Limits

31. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the proportion of cars which exceed the 70 mph speed limit on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A national speed survey carried out in 1987 showed that 36 per cent. of cars exceeded the 70 mph limit. In 1983 the figure was 40 per cent.

The average speed over the same period has dropped from 68 mph to 65 mph.

North Report

32. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received following the publication of the North report on road traffic law.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on Tuesday 5 July 1988 at columns *583-84*.

Roads (Devon)

34. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the north Devon link road between Tiverton and South Molton to be open for use; and if he will make a statement on progress of the link road, Barnstaple bypass and Barnstaple relief road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contractor is making excellent progress and hopes to complete this autumn although it is to soon to forecast a date. The contract for the section of the south Devon link road between Tiverton and South Molton is due for completion in the middle of next year.

The remaining section of the link road, between south Molton and Barnstaple, and the Barnstaple bypass remain on target for completion in the middle of 1989.

The Barnstaple urban relief road is a Devon county council scheme. We understand it expects to complete stage 3, currently under construction, early in the new year.

Traffic Flows

35. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to improve the flow of traffic both on motorways and in city centres.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our road programme includes 28 improvement schemes designed to improve the flow of traffic on motorways. The majority of these are junction improvements and widening schemes on existing motorways.

There are over 160 bypasses in the road programme some of which are designed to relieve traffic in city centres. Many other schemes also have a bypassing effect.

Roads in city centres are usually the responsibility of local highway authorities. We continue researching into improved methods of traffic management and driver guidance.

British Rail (Customs Clearance)

36. **Mr. George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss on-train Customs clearance.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 28 March.

Integrated Ticketing

40. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate discussions between the various relevant groups in the Greater London area including the operators and the consultative bodies representing passengers, on the future development of integrated ticketing covering various transport modes.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport has recently conducted a wide-ranging consultative exercise on its future strategy, including ticketing. The outcome was reflected in its new statement of strategy published on 23 June. The Department has no plans to mount a separate consultative exercise at this stage.

London Regional Transport

43. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, he will discuss the safety and comfort of passengers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: These matters are the responsibility of the board of LRT although the chairman keeps my right hon. Friend and me informed of major developments. In particular, we receive regular bulletins on service quality and I have asked the chairman to put forward proposals for service quality objectives comparable to those already established for British Rail.

53. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to meet the chairman of the London Regional Transport authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I expect to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport at a meeting of the London Passenger Transport Group on 12 July.

56. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has recently met the senior management of London Regional Transport to discuss safety standards.

Mr. David Mitchell: The board of London Regional Transport is statutorily responsible for safety; but it keeps my right hon. Friend informed.

58. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the senior management of London Regional Transport; and what subjects where discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I met the board of London Regional Transport on 5 May to discuss issues of current concern.

King's Cross Inquiry

44. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of Mr. Desmond Fennell, QC chairman of the King's Cross inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Mr. Fennell has said that he hopes his report will be completed in the autumn.

British Rail Engineering Ltd

45. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress towards denationalisation of British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: The railways board is proceeding with preparations for the sale of BREL. I understand that the board aims to invite offers for the company within the next few weeks.

Bus Fares

46. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the average percentage increase in the fares of urban and rural bus services in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales, for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department does not collect separate data for urban and rural bus services. Relative to an index of 100 in 1980, local bus fares in England, Scotland and Wales were:

Year	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*
1980	100·0	100·0	100·0
1981	112·0	115·1	118·8
1982	127·1	129·2	132·4
1983	133·5	137·3	144·7
1984	135·8	142·5	155·7
1985	142·6	144·7	160·6
1986	156·2	148·2	166·6
1987	164·7	151·9	171·1

Data by type of operator are published in table 2.35 of the Department of Transport's "Statistics Bulletin 88(29)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

47. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received against closure of the Settle-Carlisle section of British Rail since his announcement of 16 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I have received over 500 representations. My right hon. Friend's view remains as announced to the House on 16 May.

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is yet in a position to give the name and address to use for the British Rail official whom the board is to appoint as project officer for its disposal of the Settle to Carlisle railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am pleased to say that the British Railways board has now appointed Mr. Chris Lewin as its project manager to co-ordinate private sector proposals for the line. He is being assisted by Mr. Michael Roberts of Lazard Brothers & Co. Ltd., of 21 Moorfields, London EC2 (Tel. 01 588 2721).

All private firms and individuals who may be interested in bidding for the line should contact Mr. Roberts in the first instance. He will arrange for them to receive a brochure setting out key information about the line. The brochure is expected to be available at the end of July.

Violent Crime (London)

48. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions for violence against the person and robbery were initiated by *(a)* London Transport and *(b)* London Underground in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Transport police are responsible for initiating prosecutions against offenders on the London Underground. Figures for the number of prosecutions for violence against the person and robbery are not available, but details of reported cases and clear-up rates for these crimes over the last five years are as follows:

	Cases	*Clear-ups*	*Per cent. clear-up rate*
Violence against the person			
1983	599	237	39·6
1984	608	160	26·3
1985	686	213	31·9
1986	878	266	30·3
1987	929	293	31·5
Robbery			
1983	361	27	7·5
1984	606	20	3·3
1985	714	51	7·1
1986	685	148	21·6
1987	883	88	9·9

Air Travel

49. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to seek to achieve true competition in air travel within the European Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The EC liberalisation package, agreed by the Council last December as a first step for aviation towards completion of the single market measure in 1992, is based largely on a United Kingdom Presidency initiative and contains measures fully applying the competition rules of the treaty of Rome to air transport.

The package commits the Council to agreement on the contents of a second step by June 1990. In the meantime, our aim is to seek to persuade those member states who have not already done so to agree more liberal arrangements with us bilaterally.

Ro-ro Ferries

50. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with International Maritime Organisation members concerning ro-ro ferry stability.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend addressed the fifteenth session of the assembly of the International Maritime Organisation on 9 November last year when he impressed on representatives the United Kingdom Government's concern to secure early international agreement on measures to ensure the highest safety standards for roll-on roll-off ferries. The maritime safety committee at its April meeting considered and endorsed new damage stability requirements for passenger ships, as explained in the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 19 May, *Official Report*, columns *524-25*.

M5

51. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement with respect to access to the M5 motorway at junction 12.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to be able to make a decision on the proposed additional slip roads during the course of the summer.

Oxford-London Train Services

54. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received from British Rail for investment to improve train services between Oxford and London.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, as yet but I understand that British Rail has long-term plans to introduce new rolling stock on this line.

British Rail (Service Quality)

55. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects British Rail to achieve its quality of service standards.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have asked the board to work towards the achievement of the agreed quality objectives as soon as is practicable. Many individual routes are already meeting the objectives.

London Underground (Pest Control)

57. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on pest control in the London Underground system.

Mr. Mitchell: No. Pest control is an operational matter for the boards and managements of London Regional Transport and London Underground Limited.

Motorway Driving

59. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is being taken to improve driving skills and behaviour on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 19 April at column *407*.

Road Haulage

60. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when full liberalisation of European road haulage will be achieved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Quotas and permits will be abolished from 1 January 1993 within the Community. Agreement on this at the June Council of Ministers was a significant achievement. The conditions under which road haulage cabotage will take place are under discussion.

We aim to extend liberalisation to other countries with which we have road haulage agreements.

Driving Licences

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the male-female distribution of driving licences currently issued by the driver and vehicle licensing centre, by age category.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The male/female distribution of driving licences issued by the driver and vehicle licensing centre by age category are:

Age	*Males*	*Percent.*	*Females*	*Percent.*	*Total*
16–20	1,490,517	56	1,185.709	44	2,676,226
21–25	2,139,296	54	1,815,941	46	3,955,237
26–30	2,029,371	55	1,673,119	45	3,702,490
31–40	3,749,589	55	3,024,668	45	6,774,257
41–50	3,312,196	58	2,390,646	42	5,702,842
51–60	2,676,315	64	1,527,942	36	4,204,257
61–70	2,274,498	70	966,740	30	3,241,238
71+	1,068,383	74	378,599	26	1,446,982
Total	18,740,165	59	12,963,364	41	31,703,529

Of the 4,449,705 provisional licences, 1,818,009 are issued to males, 2,631,696 to females.

Road Accidents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's assessment of the link

between the incidence and severity of road accidents and the speed at which the vehicles involved have been travelling.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The severity of road accidents, particularly those involving pedestrians, is related to the speed of impact—which is not necessarily the speed of travel. The table indicates that fatality rates are higher on high speed roads.

Accidents and casualties: by severity, major and minor roads and speed limit: 1986

	Number of accidents				Number of casualties			
	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*All severities*	*Fatal*	*Seriously injured*	*Slightly injured*	*All severities*
Major roads[1]								
Speed limit								
30 mph	959	14,475	56,338	71,772	993	15,881	70,067	86,941
40 mph	436	3,419	10,377	14,232	466	4,048	14,746	19,260
50 mph	79	453	1,530	2,062	90	602	2,348	3,040
60 mph	1,110	7,685	16,086	24,881	1,306	10,993	28,063	40,362
70 mph	584	2,894	8,131	11,609	695	4,026	13,826	18,547
All limits[2]	3,168	28,926	92,467	124,561	3,550	35,550	129,055	168,155
Minor roads[3]								
Speed limit								
30 mph	1,063	21,456	75,139	97,658	1,096	23,354	91,719	116,169
40 mph	102	1,140	2,991	4,233	108	1,314	4,208	5,630
50 mph	5	83	239	327	6	106	329	441
60 mph	550	6,507	13,697	20,754	613	8,328	21,665	30,606
70 mph	7	74	231	312	9	99	332	440
All limits[2]	1,727	29,261	92,302	123,290	1,832	33,202	118,259	153,293
All roads, all limits[2,4]	4,895	58,187	184,772	247,854	5,382	68,752	247,317	321,451

[1] Motorways and A roads.
[2] Includes unknown speed limits.
[3] B, C and unclassified roads.
[4] Includes unknown road class.

The relationship between speed and the number of accidents is unclear. Other aspects of driver behaviour may be of greater significance.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the regions involved in section 40 discussions concerning the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from British Rail that its discussions embrace every region of the United Kingdom.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost to public funds, for each of the last five years, of motor accidents where excess alcohol consumption was the principal cause.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available in the specified format. Estimates are made of costs of road accidents under five headings, and are given in the table. These are total costs, for all accidents, including damage-only accidents, in Great Britain.

Estimated costs of road accidents: Great Britain: 1986

	£ million
Lost output	860
Medical and ambulance costs	150
Police and insurance administration	160
Damage to property	1,170
Pain, grief and suffering	1,470
Total	3,800

The costs per accident, by severity, are also estimated, as follows.

Average cost per accident by severity: Great Britain: 1986

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*
Lost output	151,203	1,1982	28
Medical and ambulance costs	1,174	2,069	105
Police and insurance administration	347	277	208
Damage to property	1,982	1,568	1,116
Pain, grief and suffering	145,134	12,287	229
Total	299,840	18,182	1,686

Reverse in Safety Campaign

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the reverse in safety campaign; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are aware of the campaign. I have received a request for a meeting with the organisers. Regulations leave operators free to choose whether to fit reversing alarms to their vehicles or not. When the regulations were formulated we believe we struck a good balance between the possible safety benefits and the potential noise nuisance.

Reversing alarms are an aid to safety. It would be misleading and dangerous to place complete reliance on them. When a driver reverses, it is his sole responsibility to ensure that it is safe to do so and that there are no obstructions and no people, who might be deaf or disabled, in the way. That is the advice given in the *Highway Code*. The vast majority of drivers of all classes

of vehicle follow it. As a result the number of fatalities and serious injuries caused by vehicles being driven in reverse gear is very small.

The current regulations were made in 1985 following wide consultation about the draft. There is no evidence of a serious problem. I do not think a meeting is necessary at the moment.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the Woolwich ferry will now be able to provide a regular and reliable service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The ferry has been operating normally since 11 April. We hope that new working arrangements arising from the management review of the ferry can be fully implemented in the near future. A reliable and cost-effective service should then be maintained.

Cycle Routes

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration is being given by his Department to the provision of strategic cycle routes in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Most cycling in London is done on roads for which the boroughs are highway authorities. It is primarily for them to decide what facilities to provide for cyclists, in the light of local circumstances.

The Department encourages local highway authorities in London and elsewhere to give consideration to the needs of cyclists, both in the design of new road schemes and on existing roads.

Proposals for cycle routes that cross London borough boundaries can be considered either by the individual boroughs concerned, or in the London cycling forum, which contains representatives from all the London boroughs.

A27 (Arundel Bypass)

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the economic implications of building the Crossbush section of the A27 Arundel bypass in advance of the rest of the scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The net present value of building the Crossbush section in advance is:

	£ million
Low growth	1·58
High growth	6·24

London Underground (Fires)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to change the criteria by which fires on the London Underground are considered to be serious enough to warrant recording.

Mr. David Mitchell: At this time there are no proposals to change the criteria for the reporting of fires on London Underground. Careful consideration will, of course, be given to any recommendations made by the King's Cross accident inquiry.

A27

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, given no decision has been taken on any future route for the A27, leaflets regarding compensation for the purchase of property affected by any development of the A27 have been sent to householders on all possible routes described in the consultant's report or only to those living on the route recommended by the consultant.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Booklets about compensation are sent out by the Department in response to individual requests from the public. Copies were available at the exhibitions held by the consultants to explain their report.

Motorways (Capacity)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the maximum capacity of an existing three-lane motorway without delays in the overtaking lane under *(a)* present driving patterns, *(b)* an enforced 70 mph speed limit and *(c)* an enforced 70 mph speed limit with gaps between vehicles, as recommended in dry conditions, being observed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The maximum capacity of any road will vary with the vehicle mix, road layout, time of day, time of year and driving conditions.

The Department produces guidelines on carriageway standards in relation to traffic flows only for the purpose of establishing which options should be appraised. As a starting point for assessment, dual three-lane standard will be considered for a rural motorway if the forecast average annual daily traffic flow in the design year, 15 years after the road opens, is in the range 50,000–79,000 vehicles. The design flow for any road is less than its maximum capacity.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 July 1988

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Legislation

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list those Government Bills which did not receive the Royal Assent for each Session since 1958.

Mr. Wakeham: The following Government Bills introduced in the Commons or brought from the Lords from Session 1958-59 to Session 1986-87 did not receive the Royal Assent:

1958-59
Occupiers Liability (Scotland) *[Lords]*

1960-61
Road Traffic *[Lords]*
Weights and Measures *[Lords]*
Weights and Measures (No. 2)

1962-63
Law Reform (Succession etc.) (Scotland)

1963-64
Countryside and Tourist Amenities (Scotland)

1964-65
Patents (Employees' Inventions) *[Lords]*

1965-66
Agriculture
Armed Forces
Building Control
Companies
Criminal Law
Family Provision
Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland)
Housing Subsidies
Land Commission
Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) *[Lords]*
Misrepresentation
Parliamentary Commissioner
Post Office (Subway)
Prices and Incomes
Road Safety

1967-68
Revenue
Trade Descriptions *[Lords]*

1968-69
House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) (No. 2)
Merchant Shipping
Parliament (No. 2)

1969-70
Animals *[Lords]*
Atomic Energy Authority *[Lords]*
Coal Industry
Commission for Industry and Manpower
Construction Industry Contracts
Diplomatic Privileges and International Organisations
Education
Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) *[Lords]*
Electricity
Employed Persons (Health and Safety)
Explosives (Age of Purchase) *[Lords]*
Friendly Societies *[Lords]*
Gas
Hare Coursing
Hospital Endowments (Scotland)
Industrial Relations
Industrial Training
International Monetary Fund
Mines Management *[Lords]*
Misuse of Drugs
National Superannuation and Social Insurance
Oil in Navigable Waters
Ports
Shipbuilding Industry
Teaching Council (Scotland)

1973-74
Channel Tunnel
Cinematograph and Indecent Displays
Companies
Consumer Credit
Crofting Reform (Scotland)
Dumping at Sea *[Lords]*
Health and Safety at Work, etc.
Housing and Planning
Independent Broadcasting Authority
International Organisations (Land)
Land Registry *[Lords]*
Land Tenure Reform (Scotland)
Merchant Shipping
Rabies *[Lords]*
Road Traffic *[Lords]*
Safety of Sports Grounds *[Lords]*
Solicitors (Amendment)
Unit Pricing

1974
Channel Tunnel
Education (Awards and Grants)
Housing Rents and Subsidies
Social Security Amendment

1974-75
Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries
Channel Tunnel
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) *[Lords]*
Hare Coursing
Road Traffic (Seat Belts)
Scottish Development Agency
Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment)
Welsh Development Agency

1975-76
Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries
Public Lending Right *[Lords]*
Road Traffic (Seat Belts)
Weights and Measures &c.

1976-77
Employment Protection (Consolidation) *[Lords]*
European Assembly Elections
Local Authority Works (Scotland)
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) *[Lords]*
Police (Scotland)
Reduction of Redundancy Rebates
Scotland and Wales

1978-79
Companies
Consents to Prosecutions
Countryside
Criminal Justice (Scotland)
Education
Housing
Kiribati *[Lords]*
Local Government (Finance)
Local Government Grants (Ethnic Groups)
Road Traffic (Seat Belts)
Short-time Working Compensation

1980-81
Petroleum and Continental Shelf

1981-82
Local Government Finance

1982-83
Data Protection *[Lords]*
Housing and Building Control
Local Authorities (Expenditure Powers)
Medical *[Lords]*
Petroleum Royalties (Relief)
Police and Criminal Evidence
Telecommunications

1984-85
Civil Aviation
Crown Immunity (Removal from Workplaces)
Education (Corporal Punishment)

1985-86
Shops *[Lords]*
Channel Tunnel (Proceedings Suspended)

1986-87
Channel Tunnel (Proceedings Suspended)
Dartford-Thurrock Crossing (Proceedings Suspended)
Norfolk-Suffolk Broads (Proceedings Suspended)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list in the *Official Report* those *(a)* Government Bills and *(b)* private Member's Bills which were rejected by the House of Lords in each Session since 1958.

Mr. Wakeham: The following Bills introduced in and passed by the House of Commons were not passed by the House of Lords, from Session 1958-59 to Session 1986-87:

(a) Government Bills

1969-70
Ports

1973-74
Land Tenure Reform (Scotland)
Unit Pricing

1974-75
Hare Coursing

1982-83
Housing and Building Control
Telecommunications

1984-85
Education (Corporal Punishment)

(b) Private Members' Bills

1963-64
Pharmacy

1969-70
Carriage of Goods by Sea (Amendment)
Inertia Selling

1974
Local Lotteries

1979-80
Ground Game

1982-83
Broadcasting of Parliament (Annual Review)
Charities

1986-87
Community Health Councils (Access to Information)

Members' Staff

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Lord President of the Council what guidance is given to right hon. and hon. Members as to their statutory responsibility in respect of staff employed by them.

Mr. Wakeham: The Fees Office has responsibilities for guidance to Members in respect of statutory obligations to their staff. Guidance is given by means of personal advice, circulars on relevant topics and, recently, by the provision of a draft statement of the main terms and conditions of employment together with a completed set of guidance notes. These notes include details of employees' statutory rights and entitlements.

Members have also been issued with a copy of the Fees Office handbook "Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Pensions", which includes advice on their statutory obligations to their staff in relation to income tax and national insurance.

An advisory service on questions of employment legislation is maintained with the close support of ACAS. In addition ACAS offers assistance on a wide range of employment issues, and various publications are available in the Fees Office on request.

PRIME MINISTER

Manufacturing Industry

Q100. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise the issue of the United Kingdom's trade balance in manufactured goods with the European Economic Community at the next meeting of the European Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I have nothing to add to the reply I gave my hon. Friend on 17 May at column *367*.

New Zealand (Food Exports)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Prime Minister if she has conveyed or will convey her comments in the House on 19 May, *Official Report*, column 1087-88, in regard to New Zealand's food exports to the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community Commission before any proposals are made by the Commission on New Zealand's butter exports to the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will ensure that the Government's views on this issue are communicated to the European Commission at the appropriate time.

Belize

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the future of British involvement in Belize; and if any plans exist to reduce that involvement, with specific reference to any planned transfer of responsibilities to any third Government.

The Prime Minister: The British garrison is in Belize at the request of the Belize Government to assist in external defence and the training of the Belize defence force. It will remain for an appropriate period. There are no plans to transfer this responsibility to any third Government.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to mark the arrival of the President of Turkey. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I will be attending a state banquet in honour of President Evren.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Whisky

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Scotch whisky industry and *(b)* his European Community counterparts on the taxation of whisky.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend received various representations from the Scotch whisky industry in the run-up to his annual Budget. My right hon. Friend meets his European Community counterparts from time to time to discuss a variety of subjects.

Meat and Livestock Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will apply section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 to the Meat and Livestock Commission to allow it to reclaim value added tax on non-business expenditure.

Mr. Lilley: No. The Meat and Livestock Commission is not a body to which it would be appropriate to apply section 20 treatment. However, I have agreed to meet the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss the impact on his members of the recent court ruling about reclaiming VAT on non-business expenditure.

Apple and Pear Development Corporation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will apply section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 to the Apple and Pear Development Corporation to allow it to reclaim value added tax on non-business expenditure.

Mr. Lilley: The Apple and Pear Development Council is not a body to which it would be appropriate to apply section 20 treatment. However, I have agreed to meet representatives of the agricultural levy-funded bodies to discuss the impact on them of the recent court ruling about reclaiming VAT on non-business expenditure.

Domestic Investment

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of recent interest rate adjustments on the level of domestic investment.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor estimated, at the time of his Budget, that business investment would grow by 9 per cent. in 1988.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost to the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The relevant cost was as follows:

Financial year	£
1983-84	2,655,187
1984-85	4,843,278
1985-86	5,418,927
1986-87	4,839,535
[1]1987-88	5,979,487

[1] Provisional.

VAT

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has made to the French Government about the implications for the Channel tunnel of the costs of value added tax on the French portion of the project.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* The effects of VAT on the construction of the Channel tunnel were considered jointly by the United Kingdom and French authorities at the planning stage. Special provisions were considered unnecessary.

THE ARTS

Works of Art in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he anticipates any call in the near future on the Contingency Reserve for a work of art offered in lieu of capital transfer tax.

Mr. Luce: I am very pleased to be able to announce that heritage Ministers have accepted in principle two paintings by William Hogarth. The formal exchange of memoranda will complete the acceptance in the near future. The amount of tax satisfied will be in the region of £1·3 million. This will be met by a call on the reserve.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests (Compensation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's policy towards compensating service men for the alleged effects of radioactivity suffered during the nuclear tests in the 1950s of the letter, dated 20 September 1951, sent by Rear-Admiral Turlesse of the trials metering section at the Admiralty to Vice-Admiral Brooking of the armament research establishment at the Ministry of Defence, stating with regard to the hurricane tests that *(a)* some degree of risk had to be run by some people if the Government were to achieve the full purpose of the trial, *(b)* all Government servants were entitled to compensation for injury on duty and *(c)* the ill-effects from the tests may be long delayed.

Mr. Sainsbury: The letter to which the hon. Member refers from the naval commander of Operation Hurricane, written more than a year before the first United Kingdom test at Monte Bello, exemplifies what those planning the whole operation had long recognised, namely, the need to control exposure to ionising radiation so that no one should suffer harm. The resulting system of radiological control applied with only minor modifications throughout the whole United Kingdom atmospheric trials programme at Monte Bello, Maralinga and at Christmas Island. It was based on advice from the Medical Research Council and its main provisions are closely comparable with the radiological protection regulations which apply today throughout the nuclear industry. I am confident that it was wholly effective.

The radiation protection standards, both at Hurricane and later, catered specifically for Rear Admiral Torlesse's concern that to achieve the full purpose of the trial some personnel might experience higher exposure and hence correspondingly higher risk. The risk, though higher, was still very small indeed. The regulations required all such operations to be specially authorised by a senior officer for the small number of personnel who were concerned.

It is acknowledged that illnesses caused by exposure to radiation may be long delayed and that they are often indistinguishable from illnesses which occur in people not known to have been exposed. These features of radiation-related illnesses are among the reasons for commissioning the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) study of the health of United Kingdom test participants which confirmed that the chance of anyone suffering harm to health was extremely small. The NRPB study, which analysed mortality data up to end of 1983 and included participants who experienced significant exposure, did not show an association between radiation related diseases and exposure to radiation. The provisions of the war pensions arrangements administered by the Department of Health and Social Security exist to provide compensation in cases where "reliable evidence of reasonable doubt that harm is attributable to Service", can be shown. Furthermore, in answer to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes), I stated that

"if there were definite evidence linking the ill health of participants to their participation in the tests, we would of course be coming forward with offers of compensation". —[*Official Report*, 28 June 1988; Vol 136, c. 188.]

NATO (Infrastructure Contracts)

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he is taking to assist British companies in securing North Atlantic Treaty Organisation infrastructure contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Assistance to United Kingdom companies in securing NATO infrastructure projects is provided by the Ministry of Defence for electronics projects and by the Department of the Environment for civil works projects. The address of the MOD contact point is given in each issue of the "Defence Contracts Bulletin". There is also a free booklet "Infrastructure Guide to Defence Contractors", which sets out infrastructure procedures in detail.

F14 Fighters

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has as to *(a)* what missiles are known to be carried by Iranian F14 fighters in the Persian Gulf, *(b)* how such missiles would be fired and *(c)* at what speed and level these aircraft would normally be flying in the course of an attack; and what would be their angle of descent;

(2) what information he has as to the maximum speed of an F14 fighter armed for attack on a naval vessel.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It would not be in the interests of the safety of our ships to reveal details of intelligence of the equipment and tactics which might be employed in attacks on shipping in the Gulf.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether Iranian F14 fighters are stationed at Bandar Abbas airport.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Bandar Abbas is both a civil and military airport. It is common knowledge that there are F14 aircraft stationed there.

Royal Navy (Aircraft Identification)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what range and at what height the Royal Navy ships operating in the strait of Hormuz are able to identify aircraft leaving the airports at Bandar Abbas, Shajah and Dubai.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 6 July, at column *646*.

Civil Airliners (Persian Gulf)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's ships patrolling in the Persian Gulf are aware of the timing and routes of scheduled flights by civilian airliners in the region.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Yes.

Iranian Airliner

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Government will instruct the Royal Navy to co-operate with the Iranian authorities to help recover the black box of the aircraft shot down by the United States to enable the flight path to be established beyond all reasonable doubt.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Any such request from the Iranian authorities would be carefully considered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether ships of the Royal Navy have helped to recover bodies from the Iranian airliner shot down by the United States Navy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No Royal Navy ships were in the immediate vicinity and no requests for assistance were received from the Iranian authorities.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will ask the commanders of Her Majesty's ships operating in the Persian Gulf and the strait of Hormuz for their records of the flight path taken by the Iranian airbus on leaving Bandar Abbas airport, their interpretations of its movements and the identity that they gave to it; whether he intends to provide that information to the United States Government; and if he will publish it in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on 11 July, at column 4.

Belize

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if his Department has any plans for joint military operations or training exercises in Belize with any military power other than that of Belize; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if any joint military operations or training exercises have been carried out in Belize with foreign Governments other than that of Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No such operations or exercises have taken place, and the Ministry of Defence has no plans to hold any.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Licensed Trade (Competition)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's investigation into competition in the licensed trade.

Mr. Maude: The Secretary of State announced today that he had granted the Commission an extension of up to six months for this investigation, until 3 February 1989.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sentencing Policy

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor has any proposals to eradicate any disparities in the sentencing of black and white defendants; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: It is not for the Lord Chancellor or any other Minister to intervene in the sentencing of individual defendants. Sentencing in every case, except where mandatory sentences are provided by statute, is a matter of judicial discretion, in the light of the circumstances of each particular case and bearing in mind any guidelines which may have been laid down by the appellate courts. It is open to each convicted defendant to appeal against the sentence passed by the court if he or she is aggrieved by it.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General how many representations the Lord Chancellor has received concerning current disparities in sentencing policy between black and white defendants, as outlined in the recent report by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, a copy of which has been sent to him.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has received no representations from organisations other than the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, nor from individual members of the public, concerning the sentencing of black defendants. He is, however, meeting representatives of NACRO shortly to discuss its concerns on this and other issues outlined in NACRO's recent report.

Judicial Studies Board

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General how many black members have been appointed to the Judicial Studies Board.

The Attorney-General: No black members have been appointed to the Judicial Studies Board.

Judiciary (Training)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General what measures exist in relation to the training of the judiciary prior to appointment or during tenure of office which ensure that sentencing reflects fully the multicultural nature of society; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: On appointment and at regular intervals during their careers, members of the judiciary attend training seminars. Sentencing exercises form part of this training, during which the principles of sentencing are explored. These principles require the sentencer to take into account the nature of the offence, the circumstances of the offender and any relevant judicial authority. The cultural background of the offender may well be a significant factor to be considered.

Herald of Free Enterprise

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Attorney-General (1) how many prosecutions have been brought in relation to events surrounding the capsize of the Herald of Free Enterprise

in 1987; how many prosecutions are presently being considered by his Department in relation to events surrounding the capsize of the ferry; and if he will explain the delays in bringing forward any such prosecutions;

(2) what information he has as to how many *(a)* criminal charges have been brought and *(b)* convictions have been secured against individuals in relation to events surrounding the capsize of the Herald of Free Enterprise in 1987; and if he will explain any delays in bringing forward such charges.

The Attorney-General: Police inquiries were instituted in November, 1987, after the coroner's jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing. The inquiries are, of necessity, complex and extensive. A preliminary report was received from the police in June, and is now being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions and Counsel. Counsel will advise as to any further inquiries that may be required. No criminal proceedings have as yet been instituted.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government policy on on-train passport controls following the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Renton: For Eurotunnel shuttle train journeys beginning or ending at Cheriton, static inward and outward controls are planned at Fréthun and Cheriton respectively. For journeys beginning or ending in London, the Government's view remains that the most convenient and practicable option is a quick and effective static control at Waterloo. For trains proceeding beyond London, the Channel Tunnel Act provides for immigration controls to be carried out on-train, subject to the provision of satisifactory facilities on those trains and to the payment of any fees or charges that may be imposed. Discussions with British Rail and Eurotunnel are continuing.

Cab Drivers (Assaults)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to taxi and mini-cab drivers on safety precautions to deal with situations involving assault; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no present plans to do so. The taxi trade has been invited to take part in the deliberations of a Department of Transport standing committee which is considering the problem of violence towards road transport staff.

Vehicle Registration

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the police to establish a more satisfactory method of vehicle registration; and what consideration is being given to a lifetime personal registration plate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no representations from the police that the current vehicle registration system should be altered. Any proposal for a change in that system would in the first instance be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to consider.

Alcohol Purchases (Identity Cards)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will seek to introduce a system of photographic identity cards to be issued to all who desire to purchase alcohol from public houses, off-licences or supermarkets.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have at present no plans to introduce such a scheme nationally but welcome, and are watching with interest the effect of, the introduction of local voluntary identity card schemes by local licensees or licensed victuallers associations with the co-operation of the police.

Prison Visits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department will have supplies of pre-paid envelopes for claims for help with prison visits.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to issue pre-paid envelopes: the assisted prison visits unit, when making payment to successful claimants, already adds 18p to cover postal costs.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have undergone prolonged detention for each year since 1986; and what were their nationalities.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 4 June 1988]:* The information readily available and shown in table A gives the numbers of asylum applicants at the ports who, on the first day of each month since January 1987, had been detained for more than one month. They are listed by the principal nationalities involved. Monthly numbers include detainees carried forward from previous months. On 1 June 1988, 66 persons who had sought asylum at ports were in detention. Their nationalities are shown in table B and the periods they had been detained in table C.

Table A

Nationality	*1987*												*1988*					
	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*
Sri Lankans	27	44	50	87	88	84	84	68	64	58	14	15	15	18	17	15	13	13
Iranians	6	19	29	20	13	10	11	14	8	11	6	7	13	14	13	9	8	8
Ethiopians	0	0	3	9	6	0	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ghanaians	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Iraqis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	4	3	4	5	3	4	2	1	1
Ugandans	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	6	5

Nationality	1987												1988					
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Pakistanis	3	3	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Indians	3	4	3	3	3	5	6	5	6	6	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Seychelloises	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Others	5	6	5	4	13	15	16	14	17	15	15	9	8	12	12	12	25	11
Total	46	78	92	127	126	114	119	110	102	99	30	36	43	50	51	41	55	40

Table B

Nationality	*Number*
Sri Lankans	17
Iranians	9
Ethiopians	1
Ghanaians	2
Iraqis	1
Ugandans	16
Indians	3
Seychelloises	1
Turks	5
Stateless	2
Botswanans	1
South Africans	1
Somalians	2
Surinamese	1
Sierra Leonians	1
Afghanis	1
Zairians	1
Colombians	1

Table C

Period	*Number*
Not more than 1 month	26
Over 1 month but not more than 2	9
Over 2 months but not more than 3	9
Over 3 months but not more than 4	0
Over 4 months but not more than 5	6
Over 5 months but not more than 6	2
Over 6 months	14

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Students (Finance)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the report of the review of student financial support.

Mr. Jackson: The Government will publish their proposals for the future of student support when they are ready to do so.

Special Needs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of disability organisations to discuss the provision of education for pupils with special needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend met representatives of MENCAP in January 1987. As the Minister with specific responsibilities for special education in schools, I meet representatives of disability organisations frequently.

University of Wales

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the university of Wales; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Jackson: On 29 January 1987, when matters relating to the funding of the university were discussed.

Tourism Courses

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to up-date courses currently offered by colleges of further education and universities related to the tourist industry.

Mr. Jackson: It is for institutions of further and higher education, in consultation with accrediting bodies where appropriate, to determine the content of courses. One aim of the current reforms is to make the educational system at all levels more responsive to the needs of all sectors of the economy, including tourism.

Many colleges are working closely with the tourism industry, for example through advisory groups and industrial fellows, to help keep their courses up to date. This work is complemented by the Department's PICKUP (professional, industrial and commercial updating) programme.

Pictures (Royal Holloway College)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to prevent the sale of all or part of the collection of British pictures from Royal Holloway college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: No. This is a matter for the college authorities.

Polytechnics and Colleges

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish draft guidance and model articles of government for institutions in the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council sector; what bodies and organisations have been consulted before publication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today issued draft guidance including model articles of government for institutions which will form the PCFC funding sector, as proposed in the Education Reform Bill. The draft guidance, including model articles, is being issued now in order to give those concerned an opportunity to comment and to help institutions prepare for the introduction of the new arrangements. Comments have been requested by 16 September. Copies of the texts have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

In preparing the draft, officials had discussions with the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics and the Standing Conference of Principals.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in England and Wales

provide systematic information or teaching about *(a)* water fluoridation and *(b)* other aspects related to the purity of drinking water and its effect on the health of people.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected by my Department or by the Education Department of the Welsh Office.

University College, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special measures he will take to ensure that University college, north Wales, avoids insolvency and receives sufficient block grant to meet its existing commitments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The UGC monitors the academic and financial plans of all the university institutions it funds. As appropriate, University college, north Wales will be eligible for assistance from the committee's special three-year £250 million restructuring programme.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the block grant received by University college, north Wales, in real terms, for each of the years since 1978-79; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows. These payments of recurrent grant to individual universities are made on the advice of the University Grants Committee.

Academic years	[1]*£'000*
1978-79	10,607
1979-80	11,466
1980-81	12,271
1981-82	11,472
1982-83	12,711
1983-84	12,392
1984-85	12,464
1985-86	12,368
1986-87	13,552
1987-88	12,159

[1] 1986-87 prices, as measured by the GDP deflator.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish the annual report of Her Majesty's inspectors on local education authority provision for education and the quality of response in schools and colleges in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 23 October 1987, at column *907*, and to the reply which my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 17 May at column *792*. I hope to publish the next annual report in January 1989, which will cover the whole of the 1987-88 academic year rather than just one term.

WALES

Minerals Planning

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has the power to impose on a mineral planning authority a programme of proposed sites if that authority refuses to agree one with British Coal Corporation;

(2) if mineral planning authorities were obliged to agree with British Coal a programme of proposed sites for opencast coal extraction, as suggested in "Minerals Planning Guidance 3".

Mr. Grist: The Government's recently issued advice in "Minerals Planning Guidance 3" on planning control over opencast mining recommends the industry to discuss with the mineral planning authorities plans for future opencasting in their areas. There is no power to require an authority to agree long-term plans or impose a programme of sites on them. However, we do consider that negotiations between authorities and both British Coal and private operators on possible future working can help facilitate the consideration of opencast coal planning applications.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will accept as a sound planning basis for an appeal against refusal by a mineral planning authority to grant permission for an opencast coal development, the refusal of that authority to agree a programme of proposed sites with British Coal Corporation;

(2) if the inclusion of a site within a programme of proposed sites in paragraph 20 of "Minerals Planning Guidance 3: Opencast Coal Mining" is material consideration to be taken into account by mineral planning authorities when deciding an individual application for that site.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraph 22 of "Minerals Planning Guidance 3" which advises that where programmes have been agreed the Secretary of State will have regard to them in approving development plans and deciding opencast appeals. I must stress, however, that while such programmes would provide helpful indications of where opencasting might be acceptable, they have no statutory basis, and the existence or otherwise of a programme would be one of the factors to be taken into account when determining an application or an appeal.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if, in the light of paragraph 19 of "Minerals Planning Guidance 3", a mineral planning authority may deem it appropriate to draw up a policy of no development or of very limited developments on the basis of strong or overwhelming local opposition;

(2) whether, in the light of the statement in paragraph 19 of "Mineral Planning Guidance 3" that where appropriate mineral planning authorities should draw up policies for opencast coal mining in their area, an authority may deem it inappropriate to do so on the basis of strong or overwhelming local opposition to that development.

Mr. Grist: Mineral planning authorities are advised to draw up appropriate development plan policies for mineral working and the content of these should follow the advice in MPG 1 and 3. When approving structure plan

policies, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should have regard to all relevant considerations, including any representations and objections received.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the provision of housing in rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We are encouraging local authorities in rural areas to use their considerable powers to provide homes for local people. Dwyfor district council has received additional allocations for this purpose totalling £0·5 million over the last three years. In addition, in approving the Housing Corporation's development programme, we have asked it to invest at least 25 per cent. of its increased allocation of £60 million in rural areas. Officials are discussing with the corporation and Mid Wales Development ways in which they can harness private finance to further increase the number of projects to provide housing for rent and low-cost home ownership schemes.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the provision of housing in Mid Wales in relation to incoming industrial projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Mid Wales Development has its own programme to provide key worker housing to help attract incoming investment to its area and is considering ways it can use private finance to encourage additional provision. Mid Wales Development also has an agreement with the Housing Corporation for housing associations to provide a further 30 key worker houses per annum throughout its area.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of council and Mid Wales Development area houses completed for each of the years from 1979 to 1987 and the number of house starts in 1988-89 in the Mid Wales development area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Details of completions by local authorities and Mid Wales Development for the years 1979-1986 are published in "Local Housing Statistics," copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The figures for 1987 in the Mid Wales Development area are given in the following table. Figues for housing starts in 1988-89 are not yet available.

Completions in 1987—Mid Wales Development area

	Number
Brecknock	25
Ceredigion	40
Meirionnydd	0
Montgomeryshire	8
Radnor	12
Mid Wales Development	0

SCOTLAND

Quangos and Trading Funds

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all quasi-autonomous non-government organisations and trading funds reporting to his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: The bodies which report to my Department are listed in "Public Bodies—1987", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

None of my Department's activities is organised as a trading fund.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now make it his policy to list in the *Official Report* all the sites in Scotland identified by Nirex as suitable for nuclear waste disposal and storage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. We are still awaiting a report by Nirex on sites worthy of further investigation, and this is not expected until early next year.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by region and district the area of land designated as of outstanding natural beauty up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The designation "area of outstanding natural beauty" does not apply in Scotland. Since 1980, 1,017,300 hectares have been designated as national scenic areas. A breakdown by district is not readily available but following is information by region:

Regional or Islands Council area	*Hectares*
Shetland	15,600
Orkney	14,800
Highland	539,600
Western Isles	115,600
Grampian	62,000
Tayside	77,200
Strathclyde	137,000
Central	19,800
Borders	15,900
Dumfries and Galloway	19,800

Before 1980 special arrangements to protect the landscape applied in national park direction areas, which covered an area of 485,150 hectares, mostly in HIghland region.

Easterhouse Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the reasons for the refusal of urban aid support to the Easterhouse citizens advice bureau for the use of new technology and the expansion of its services.

Mr. Lang: The project did not fully meet the criteria for support under the urban programme, and the competition for funds is intense.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools in Scotland provide information and teaching on *(a)* water fluoridation and *(b)* the quality of drinking water and its effect on the health of the people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally. The relation between fluoridation and the incidence of dental caries has long figured in the ordinary grade biology syllabus and is now also covered in the standard grade science course. Exemplar curricular materials concerning fluoridation for this course have recently been distributed to education authorities.

Police Numbers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the authorised establishment and actual numbers of *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilians employed in each constabulary in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information as at 31 March 1988 was as follows:

Force	*Regular Police*		*Civilians*[1]	
	Authorised Establishment	*Strength*[2]	*Authorised Establishment*[1]	*Strength*[1]
Central	568	579	123	121
Dumfries and Galloway	344	343	94	85
Fife	754	757	179	166
Grampian	1,008	1,011	313	298
Lothian and Borders	2,443	2,419	851	787
Northern	620	600	183	166
Strathclyde	6,954	6,775	1,722	1,511
Tayside	1,001	991	252	246
Total	13,692	13,475	3,717	3,380

[1] Excludes police cadets and part-time staff.
[2] Strength figures include officers on national training courses, on central service and with the Scottish Crime Squad.

Medical Secretaries

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what study he has made of the effects of regional differentials in levels of pay for medical secretaries on the recruitment and retention of such staff in the Borders region.

Mr. Rifkind: I have made no such study.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the pay levels of medical secretaries.

Mr. Rifkind: Over the last two years, I have received a number of letters on this matter, both from individual medical secretaries and from hon. and right hon. Members writing on their behalf.

I have explained that health boards are able to use their discretion to upgrade medical secretaries' pay to the highest salary available, but essentially the matter is one for the boards to decide.

Natural Sites (Preservation)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all private landowners in Scotland who have received payment for the preservation of natural sites of environmental or historical importance under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Scotland) 1981.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Nature Conservancy Council is empowered to enter into management agreements with owners or occupiers of land designated as a site of special scientific interest, or within a national nature reserve. Details of individual payments are confidential, but data on the numbers and costs of such payments are published in the Nature Conservancy Council's annual report, copies of which are in the Library.

Mental Health (Code of Practice)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to issue for consultation the code of practice under section 119 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The draft code of practice has been issued today to a wide range of interests in the mental health field inviting comments on the code within four months. The issue of this draft code represents a further significant step towards improving the lives of people who suffer from mental disorder through the guidance it will offer to doctors, nurses and other professions in the care and treatment of such patients. I am sure the draft will stimulate much interest, and the Secretary of State and I look forward to considering responses to the consultation.

Health Spending

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1974-75 (i) total National Health Service expenditure, (ii) current expenditure on hospital and community health services, (iii) capital expenditure on hospital and community health service, (iv) expenditure on family practitioner services, (v) expenditure on centrally funded National Health Service services and (vi) expenditure on personal social services; if he will give each *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and *(c)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator; and if he will place in the Library details of the methods used to make these adjustments.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 February 1988]:* The information in the format requested is not fully available. Details of expenditure, broken down by service, in both cash terms and as adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator, are given in the following tables.

(i) Total National Health Service expenditure

At 1987-88 prices

	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	453	1,667
1975-76	596	1,746
1976-77	676	1,749
1977-78	768	1,745
1978-79	882	1,810
1979-80	1,053	1,849
1980-81	1,330	1,970
1981-82	1,519	2,047
1982-83	1,648	2,073
1983-84	1,758	2,112
1984-85	1,885	2,169
1985-86	1,997	2,168
1986-87	2,126	2,233
1987-88[1]	2,334	2,334

[1] provisional outturn

(ii) Hospitals and community health services: gross current expenditure

At 1987-88 prices

	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	318	1,170
1975-76	414	1,213
1976-77	470	1,216
1977-78	540	1,227
1978-79	617	1,266
1979-80	737	1,232
1980-81	951	1,403
1981-82	1,069	1,441
1982-83	1,142	1,437
1983-84	1,212	1,456
1984-85	1,291	1,486
1985-86	1,363	1,480
1986-87	1,456	1,529
1987-88[1]	1,585	1,585

[1] Provisional outturn.

(iii) Hospitals and community health services: Gross capital expenditure

At 1987-88 prices

	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	30	110
1975-76	39	114
1976-77	37	96
1977-78	38	86
1978-79	51	105
1979-80	58	102
1980-81	59	87
1981-82	84	113
1982-83	92	116
1983-84	99	119
1984-85	106	122
1985-86	119	129
1986-87	104	109
1987-88[1]	112	112

[1] Provisional outturn.

(iv) Family Practitioner Services

at 1987-88 prices

Year	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	80	294
1975-76	109	319
1976-77	129	334
1977-78	145	329
1978-79	167	343
1979-80	197	346
1980-81	246	364
1981-82	281	379
1982-83	322	405
1983-84	347	417
1984-85	380	437
1985-86	400	434
1986-87	438	460
[1]1987-88	491	491

[1] provisional outturn.

(v) Centrally Financed Services

at 1987-88 prices

Year	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	25	92
1975-76	34	100
1976-77	40	104
1977-78	45	102
1978-79	47	96
1979-80	61	107
1980-81	74	110
1981-82	85	115
1982-83	92	116
1983-84	100	120
1984-85	108	124
1985-86	115	125
1986-87	128	134
[1]1987-88	146	146

[1] provisional outturn.

(vi) Personal Social Services

At 1987-88 prices

	£ million cash	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	77	283
1975-76	93	272
1976-77	118	305
1977-78	123	279
1978-79	149	306
1979-80	189	332
1980-81	239	354
1981-82	263	354
1982-83	285	359
1983-84	302	363
1984-85	323	372
1985-86	348	379
1986-87	356	374
1987-88[1]	398	398

[1] Provisional outturn.

Gross Domestic Product Deflators as at June 1988

	GDPD
1974-75	28·540
1975-76	35·863
1976-77	40·592
1977-78	46·232
1978-79	51·179
1979-80	59·814
1980-81	70·919
1981-82	77·938
1982-83	83·488
1983-84	87·413
1984-85	91·277
1985-86	96·729
1986-87	100·000
1987-88	105·034

ENERGY

Sellafield

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what are the requirements placed upon British Nuclear Fuels by covenant to the Crown Commissioners under the deed of grant of 12 May 1975 in respect of any prior approval or consent needed from the commissioners before any modifications or additions can be made to the existing pipelines at Sellafield;

(2) what prior approval was sought from, and what consent was given by, the Crown Commissioners before the installation by British Nuclear Fuels of the 220 mm internal-diameter polyethylene discharge pipeline in June 1987 at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Nuclear Fuels plc consulted and received consent from the Crown Commissioners for the installation of the discharge pipeline in accordance with the covenant under the deed of grant.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the 220 mm internal-diameter polytethylene discharge pipeline installed by British Nuclear Fuels at Sellafield during June 1987 complies with the requirements of the nuclear site licence and authorisation certificate for Sellafield; whether British Nuclear Fuels consulted the appropriate authorising parties with regard to compliance with the licence and certificate prior to the commissioning and use of the pipeline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the polyethylene pipeline complies with the requirements of the Sellafield nuclear site licence and the liquid effluent authorisation.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many pipelines have been installed for the discharge of liquid effluent from the British Nuclear Fuels Sellafield plant in Cumbria to the marine environment of the Irish sea; what was the year of installation and of commissioning of each of the pipelines; what was the year during which any individual pipeline was permanently withdrawn from service; what was the type of material and the effective internal diameter of each of the pipelines; whether in each case the construction, installation and exact condition of the pipeline is in accord with the requirements and conditions of the nuclear site licence and the discharge authorisation certificate for the Sellafield site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Four such pipelines have been installed since 1949. In each case the construction and installation was in accordance with the requirements of the authorising Government Departments and regulatory bodies.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the power stations which will be allocated to each of the two generating companies which he proposes to establish.

Mr. Parkinson: This matter is still under discussion with the industry.

Bradwell Power Station

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest information he has received from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Central Electricity Generating Board concerning the future of Bradwell No. 2 reactor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 4 July 1988, at column *715*.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is to be the duration of the nuclear protection zone in the environs of Bradwell power station, after the decommissioning of the reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The provisions of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 will continue to apply to the site until no further radiation hazard exists.

ENVIRONMENT

Acid Rain

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about progress being made in his Department's attempts to reduce the incidence of acid rain in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received a number of such representations.

We have recently reached agreement on a European Community directive on emissions from large combustion plants. This commits the United Kingdom to reducing total emissions from existing plants relative to 1980 levels, as follows: for sulphur dioxide, by 20 per cent. by 1993, by 40 per cent. by 1998 and by 60 per cent. by 2003; for nitrogen oxides, by 15 per cent. by 1993 and 30 per cent. by 1998. The directive also sets stringent new standards for emissions from new plants.

Water

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the cost to water authorities to comply with all existing European Economic Community directives on water if no derogations applied.

Mr. Moynihan: Some EC directives allow member states to give derogations from certain standards in certain circumstances. Where such derogations have been given, information on the cost of complying with the relevant standard is not available.

London Residuary Body (Property Sales)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount raised by the London residuary body from property sales since its inception; and what is the current estimated value of its holdings.

Mr. Chope: During the first two years of the London residuary body's existence, completions of property sales amounted to £187 million. The remaining holdings, excluding the county hall site, are expected to realise over £100 million.

Landfill Waste Disposal

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the disposal of clinical waste by landfill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Properly controlled landfill is an environmentally acceptable disposal route for a restricted range of clinical waste such as soiled surgical dressings, properly packaged instruments, pharmaceutical and chemical waste. Detailed guidance to hospitals, disposal authorities and others concerned is contained in waste management paper 25.

Water Companies

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement in respect of Government policy towards increased foreign investment in private water companies.

Mr. Moynihan: European Community law does not allow discrimination against investment by nationals of other Community members. As a trading nation we do not discriminate against foreign investment, just as we are pleased to see British firms expanding their interests overseas.

Special Grants Programme

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public funding has been awarded in grants under the special grants programme since 1984-85; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1984-85 £8·329 million has been awarded in grants to voluntary organisations under the special grants programme.

Waste Materials

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current proposals he has to encourage the recycling of waste materials and disposal of non-toxic waste materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government encourage the recycling of waste wherever it is economically viable. A number of initiatives have been taken to promote recycling by involving industry, local authorities, schools and the voluntary sector. The focus is on the creation of markets for recycled materials and efficient collection arrangements. The Department has spent £1·5 million per annum over the past 15 years on recycling and reduction of waste.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest timetable for water privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: We intend to introduce the necessary legislation as soon as practicable. The restructuring and privatisation of the water authorities will follow enactment of the legislation.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to change procedures for the safe handling of hazardous waste imported into Britain.

Mr. Moynihan: We intend to lay regulations shortly to implement the EC directive on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste. The regulations will introduce new procedures for notification of certain hazardous waste imports.

Homelessness

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for levels of homelessness for England; and what are the corresponding figures for 1979.

Mrs. Roe: The latest estimates of households accepted as homeless appear in table 1 of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for first quarter 1988, Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

Figures for the first quarter of 1979 are not available, but for estimates of acceptances in 1979 and 1987 I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 17 June at column *358*.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to combat the increasing level of homelessness.

Mrs. Roe: Responsibility lies with local authorities, under part III of the Housing Act 1985. They have to make best use of the housing stock; to help them, additional resources of £74 million have been made available since October last year. We are reviewing the legislative provisions to see if further national initiatives would be helpful.

Rating Reform

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the likely headings for the new simplified distribution under the community charge.

Mr. Howard: The framework for the new system of assessment and distribution is set out in my Department's yellow booklet "The New Grant System", copies of which are available in the Library. This says, "There will be a separate assessment of need made for each authority, and it is likely that these will be built up for each of the major services, with a single assessment for all other services".

We will be bringing forward more detailed proposals for discussion with the local authority associations in the autumn.

Empty Properties

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue monthly figures on the number of Government-owned empty residential properties and the number of homeless families that could be housed in them.

Mrs. Roe: No.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is not held centrally and could only be collected at disproportionate cost.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Ridley: About 1,750 in the Department of the Environment (excluding the Property Services Agency); a ratio of one work station to three members of staff. The figure includes all terminals, microcomputers and word processors but excludes portable text processors. Work stations will continue to be provided where they can give good value for money in meeting the Department's varied needs. No five-year plans are available.

In the Property Services Agency (which at present includes the Crown Suppliers) there are some 1,600 work stations representing one for every 10 members of staff. It is anticipated that by 1993, the number of work stations will have increased to about 5,000—a ratio of about one work station to three members of staff.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Ridley: The members of the senior level information technology steering group for the Department of the Environment (Central) are:

Director of Administrative Resources (Chairman)
Director of Personnel Management and Training
Director of Housing Monitoring and Analysis
Deputy Director Building Research Establishment
Director, East Midlands Regional Office
Head of Business Efficiency Services
Head of Directorate of Planning Services Division 1
Head of Environmental Protection Statistics and Economics Division
Head of Finance Analysis Central and Taxation Division
Head of Finance Departmental Services Division
Head of Finance Local Authority Statistics Division
Head of IT Strategic Planning Division
CCTA representative

The chairman of the steering group consults Ministers as appropriate.

Members of the main information technology committee in the Property Services Agency are:

Principal Establishments Officer (Chairman)
Principal Finance Officer
Director of Information Technology
Director of Home Regional Services
Director of London Region
Chief Estates Surveyor
Director of Defence Services II
Chairman of Professional Computing Project Board
Director of CCTA
Director from Coopers and Lybrand

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary responsible for the Property Services Agency is kept informed of progress, and recently attended a presentation of the information technology strategy while on a visit to the Hastings computer centre.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Ridley: During the financial year 1987-88, one person at grade 2 and 10 people at grade 3 attended courses or training on information technology awareness or information technology management.

In addition, one person at grade 2 and three people at grade 3 attended management courses which had an information technology component. Also, in PSA regular information technology presentations are made to board members (grades 1, 2 and 3), IT committee members (grade 3) and regional and headquarters directors (grades 3 and 4) to keep them informed of developments.

Pier Terrace Wandsworth

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the circumstances in which the London residuary body sold the arches in Pier terrace, Wandsworth, in the light of its acknowledgement that the Greater London council had agreed the terms of a lease for the occupiers, Commodore Motors.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter for the London residuary body.

Minerals Planning

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has the power to impose on a mineral planning authority a programme of proposed sites if that authority refuses to agree one with British Coal;

(2) if mineral planning authorities were obliged to agree with British Coal a programme of proposed sites for opencast coal extraction, as suggested in "minerals planning guidance 3".

Mr. Trippier: The Government's recently issued advice in MPG3 on planning control over opencast coal mining recommends the industry to discuss with mineral planning authorities plans for future opencasting in their areas. There is no power to require an authority to agree long term plans or impose a programme of sites on them. However, we do consider that negotiations between authorities and both British Coal and private operators on possible future working can help facilitate the consideration of opencast coal planning applications.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will accept as a sound planning basis for an appeal against refusal by a mineral planning authority to grant permission for an opencast coal development, the refusal of that authority to agree a programme of proposed sites with British Coal;

(2) if the inclusion of a site within a programme of proposed sites in paragraph 20 of "Minerals Planning Guidance 3: Opencast Coal Mining" is material consideration to be taken into account by mineral planning authorities when deciding an individual application for that site.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 22 of MPG3, which advises that, where programmes have been agreed, the Secretary of State will have regard to them in approving development plans and deciding opencast appeals. I must stress, however, that whilst such programmes would provide helpful indications of where opencasting might be acceptable, they have no statutory basis, and the existence or otherwise of a programme would be one of the factors to be taken into account when determining an application or an appeal.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, in the light of paragraph 19 of "Minerals Planning Guidance 3", a mineral planning authority may deem it appropriate to draw up a policy of no development or of very limited development on the basis of strong or overwhelming local opposition;

(2) whether, in the light of the statement in paragraph 19 of "Mineral Planning Guidance 3" that where appropriate mineral planning authorities should draw up policies for opencast coal mining in their area, an authority may deem it inappropriate to do so on the basis of strong or overwhelming local opposition to that development.

Mr. Trippier: Minerals planning authorities are advised to draw up appropriate development plan policies for mineral working and the content of these should follow the advice in MPGs 1 and 3. When approving structure plan policies, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have regard to all relevant considerations, including any representations and objections received.

Algal Bloom (North and Baltic Seas)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 7 July, if he will list the recommendations put forward by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and agreed at the end of the symposium held on 23 and 24 June to consider the growth of algal bloom in the North and Baltic seas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The purpose of the meeting held at Bonn on 23-24 June to discuss algal blooms and seal deaths and hosted by the Federal Republic of Germany was to facilitate an exchange of scientific views between those participating principally through the exchange of scientific papers. Recommendations were drawn up by the meeting's rapporteur, but were not put to the vote and, as far as I am aware, no formal record of the meeting or recommendations has been circulated.

I understand that the principal recommendations put forward were on the following lines: nutrient inputs to coastal areas should be reduced, with particular reference to large river systems; contaminant inputs to the sea should be reduced by 50 per cent. and the reduction of nutrients to a similar extent should be expedited where a detrimental effect can be established; marine research should be accelerated and studies undertaken into reducing marine inputs of phosphorous and nitrogen through various pathways; airborne emissions of nitrogen should be reduced; agricultural practices and river protection systems should be examined with a view to reducing inputs to the sea from agriculture.

In the context of the sea areas affected by algal blooms which were considered by the symposium, these recommendations reflect the ministerial declaration issued after the second North sea conference, on whose implementation the United Kingdom has taken an early lead.

Water Metering

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to approve the 10 national water metering trial schemes; and if he will publish details of them.

Mr. Moynihan: It is for each water undertaker to decide whether and when to submit a meter trial scheme to the Secretary of State. So far, my right hon. Friend has received formal proposals for six schemes. The first of these, covering a small-scale trial in Chandlers Ford in Hampshire has been approved. The other schemes are under detailed consideration. As with all charges schemes made under section 31 of the Water Act 1973, water undertakers are required to publish metering trial schemes in such a manner as in their opinion will secure adequate publicity for them.

Trees (Sulphur Emission)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being conducted by his Department into the effects on trees of sulphur emission from power stations.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* Details of all projects in the Department's air pollution research programme are contained in the compilation of Project Information Sheets. I have arranged for copies of the latest compilation to be placed in the Library of the House. Several projects are investigating ways in which sulphur oxides and their derivatives, in combination with other pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides and ozone, and with natural stresses such as drought and cold, may affect trees. Most of these projects will be reporting at the end of this year or in 1989. Research organisations involved include the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, the universities of Lancaster, Newcastle upon Tyne, Aberdeen and Imperial college London, and the Forestry Commission, are continuing work begun at the university of Ulster.

Tree Preservation Orders

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the available statistics for each of the last five years on the number of breaches of tree preservation orders.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The latest available information on the number of prosecutions in England and Wales is as follow:

	Number
1982	42
1983	54
1984	71
1985	50
1986	59

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to take any action to secure stricter compliance with tree preservation orders.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* I announced on 22 March a wide-ranging review of tree preservation policy and legislation. Pending the outcome of that review, I consider the penalties for contravening orders are sufficient to ensure general compliance. On summary conviction an offender may be fined up to £2,000, or twice the sum which appears to the court to be the value of the tree, whichever is the greater. On conviction on indictment, the fine is unlimited and, in determining the amount, the court is required to have regard to any financial benefit which has accrued, or appears likely to accrue, in consequence of the offence.

Football (Attendances)

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of the total number of attendances at all League matches, Football Association challenge cup, Littlewoods cup, Simod cup and Sherpa van trophy for the whole of the 1987-88 football season.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* Information held by the Football Association and the Football League shows the following attendances at football matches for the 1987-88 season:

	Million
League Matches	18·27
Football Association Challenge Cup	2·05
Littlewoods Challenge Cup	1·54
Simod Cup	0·29
Sherpa Van Trophy	0·34

Floating Jetty, Coulport

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column 182, he will *(a)* name the main contractor selected for the floating jetty for RNAD Coulport and *(b)* give details of the material of which it will be constructed and its place of construction.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* Tenders for the floating jetty are being evaluated by the Property Services Agency and I am therefore unable at this stage to add anything to my answer of 14 June at column *137*.

Water Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the capital expenditure figures for each of the water authorities in England and Wales in each of the past five years, expressed in 1987-88 prices, and for his Department's services only.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The capital expenditure figures are set out in the folllowing table.

Capital Expenditure by Authority

Expressed in 1987-88 prices
£ million

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Anglian	131·6	105·6	118·0	133·0	146·4
Northumbrian	37·3	30·5	42·0	38·1	39·2
North-West	153·6	166·5	176·0	192·2	202·5
Severn-Trent	133·5	121·1	129·1	155·8	160·5
Southern	67·8	64·5	68·0	69·6	71·5
South-West	34·4	44·5	41·1	41·2	49·6
Thames	130·7	118·4	119·2	135·9	167·2
Welsh	52·0	41·2	54·6	60·4	65·9
Wessex	46·5	41·7	53·8	62·9	73·7
Yorkshire	90·0	105·8	100·6	128·7	138·1
TOTAL ENGLAND AND WALES	877·4	839·8	902·4	1,017·8	1,114·6

Notes:
1. *Source:* Water Authority Accounts.
2. Breakdown of DOE and Water Authorities Association.
3. Prices are deflated using the "public works-non roads" (PWNR) index.

Rents

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now estimate by how much he expects the average rent charged in England by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* private landlords to rise in real terms over the next four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* No. It will be for individual landlords to determine their own rents.

Rating Reform

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest estimated figure for those who will be subject to the poll tax in *(a)* the Metropolitan borough of Walsall and *(b)* the Walsall, North constituency.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* My right hon. Friend placed in the Library on 1 July a note showing the data used to estimate illustrative community charges in

England for 1988-89. That note includes estimates of the adult population resident in each local authority area. Figures are not available for parliamentary constituencies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Ethiopia

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Ethiopian Government following the recent bombardment of Hauzien in Tigre.

Mr. Eggar: We have no information on the alleged incident but can confirm that military operations were taking place in Tigre at the end of June.

If reports of atrocities were confirmed we would, of course, condemn them.

Diplomatic Service

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serving staff of the Diplomatic Service in the administrative group are from ethnic minorities having their antecedents in the Afro-Asian-Caribbean Commonwealth; and if he will give the numbers of such staff recruited in each of the years 1985 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Eggar: The Diplomatic Service participated in the recent voluntary ethnic monitoring survey for London and the south-east. Of those who have responded, only one serving member of the administrative group was identified as belonging to an ethnic minority with antecedents in the Afro-Asian Caribbean Commonwealth.

The Diplomatic Service started ethnic monitoring of recruitment in 1987. In 1987, no recruit to the administrative group came from the category mentioned.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serving staff in the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service are *(a)* male and *(b)* female; and if he will give the numbers of *(a)* males and *(b)* females recruited into the group in each of the years 1985 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Eggar: There are 765 serving officers in the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service, of whom 692 are male and 73 are female.

The number of males and females recruited into the administrative grades in the years 1985 to 1987 are as follows:

	Males	*Females*
1985	12	10
1986	15	9
1987	19	6

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications there were from persons with qualifications obtained at polytechnics for posts in the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service in each of the years 1985 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Eggar: The number of applicants with qualifications obtained at polytechnics for posts in the administrative grades of the Diplomatic Service was as follows:

	Number
1985	211
1986	253
1987	298

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a breakdown of the type of secondary school attended by applicants for posts in the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service in each of the years 1985 to 1987 inclusive, indicating what percentage in each case was successful.

Mr. Eggar: We do not keep this information.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a breakdown of the universities from which applicants for posts in the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service came during each of the years 1985 to 1987 inclusive, indicating what percentage in each case was successful.

Mr. Eggar: The university background of applicants for the administrative grades of the Diplomatic Service for 1985 to 1987 is as follows:

	Applicants	*Success rate Per cent.*
1985		
Oxford/Cambridge	387	3·1
Other universities	1,286	0·7
Others (polytechnics, etc.)	296	0
1986		
Oxford/Cambridge	404	3·9
Other universities	1,320	0·4
Others (polytechnics, etc.)	350	0·6
1987		
Oxford/Cambridge	380	6·0
Other universities	1,522	0·7
Others (polytechnics, etc.)	455	0

The detailed breakdown of the success rate of applicants from individual universities and polytechnics is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, columns 262-63, if he is able to provide a breakdown of the type of history degree held by the 192 serving staff of the Diplomatic Service in the administrative group who graduated in history, indicating the numbers obtaining qualifications in *(a)* ancient, *(b)* medieval, and *(c)* modern history.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Belize

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what involvement his Department has had in plans for joint military operations or training exercises in Belize with any military power other than Belize; and if any such plans in which his Department anticipates involvement are being developed.

Mr. Eggar: None; and there are no plans to do so.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those

international organisations from which the United Kingdom Government obtain information in confidence, as referred to in paragraphs 28 and 51 of the White Paper on "Reform of Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911" (Cm. 408); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not think that it would be practicable to compile a list as requested. Circumstances might arise in which we receive information of the kind specified in paragraphs 28 and 51 of the White Paper from a number of international organisations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Donaghadee Carpets

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been paid out in grants in each of the last five years by the Department of Economic Development to Donaghadee Carpets.

Mr. Viggers: The amounts paid in selective assistance and standard capital grant are as follows:

	£
1983-84	78,645
1984-85	228,106
1985-86	649,440
1986-87	381,616
1987-88	Nil

In addition, the company has received assistance under various training grant schemes operated by the Department.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been employed by Donaghadee Carpets in each of the past five years.

Mr. Viggers: The actual numbers of people employed is a matter for the management of the company. I understand the average of the number of people employed over the last five years to be in the region of 440.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been made redundant by Donaghadee Carpets in each of the last five years.

Mr. Viggers: I understand that last year the company made a number of temporary staff redundant. However the actual number of redundancies in any year is a matter for the management of the company.

Enterprise in Action Conference

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the forthcoming enterprise in action conference.

Mr. Viggers: The first European enterprise conference is to be held at Queen's University, Belfast, from 28 September to 1 October 1988. In addition to support from the European Commission's small firms task force, sponsorship for the event has been attracted from the private sector. More than 300 potential delegates, mainly from Europe but also from further afield, have expressed their interest in the event. The main aims of the conference are the promotion of Northern Ireland as a centre of excellence in enterprise development and the sharing of ideas and experience on small business support with delegates from many parts of Europe.

It will also provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the Province's potential as a major conference and tourism destination.

Fishquarter and Rowreagh (Streams)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the streams between the townlands of Fishquarter and Rowreagh were last cleaned out; what steps have been taken to reduce flooding upstream of the crossing below the Kercubbin to Portaferry Road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: There are two designated water courses in the townlands of Fishquarter and Rowreagh—the Rowreagh drain and the Rowreagh branch drain. Maintenance work was carried out on both these water courses by the Department of Agriculture in April this year. The responsible Minister, my noble Friend Lord Lyell, is not aware of a flooding problem such as the right hon. Gentleman describes, but if he would provide further details of the nature and location of the problem, the matter will be investigated.

Union Flag

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply on 1 July, *Official Report*, columns *379-80*, what arrangements he has made to fly the Union flag on the Department of Agriculture's drainage offices in The Mall West, Armagh City, on Tuesday 12 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: As the office will be closed on 12 and 13 July, arrangements have been made to hoist the Union flag on the afternoon of the last working day (Monday 11 July) and lower it on the morning of the next working day (Thursday 14 July)

Fountain Estate, Londonderry (Attacks)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary with a view to publishing a table in the *Official Report* showing for each month since 1 January 1986 to the latest available date how many reports or complaints were made to the Royal Ulster Constabulary about attacks upon the Fountain estate in Londonderry *(a)* by Republican gangs, *(b)* in the form of other sectarian attacks and *(c)* in the form of similar attacks upon Protestants or dwellings occupied by Protestants in the vicinity of the Fountain estate; and what number of other street disturbances not covered by *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above were reported.

Mr. Stanley: The information sought is not readily available from existing records and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the dates since 15 November 1985 of meetings between Ministers of Her Majesty's Government and Ministers of the Government of the

Republic of Ireland, indicating in each case whether it was a formal and scheduled meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, an informal meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference, a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council, or other, and listing Ministers present at each and subjects discussed at those which were not Intergovernmental Conference meetings.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* There have been innumerable meetings, formal and informal, during the period in question. Information on them all could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. The following is a list of meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference during the period:

1985
11 December
30 December

1986
10 January
13 February (Ministerial sub-group)
11 March
9 May
17 June
29 July
6 October
31 October (Ministerial sub-group)
8 December

1987
22 April
16 July
21 October
16 November

1988
2 February
16 February
24 February
25 March
5 May
17 June

Fair Employment

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to include in the legislation implementing the fair employment proposals a provision providing immunity from legal action for employers willing to redress religious imbalances in their work force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* Employers must of course act within the law, and the White Paper made it clear that direct discrimination will continue to be unlawful in all circumstances. But paragraph 3.23 of the White Paper also indicated that employers will be given statutory backing for measures designed to facilitate the access of under-represented groups to employment opportunities, notwithstanding the proposed prohibition of indirect discrimination.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants and other incentives will be available from Her Majesty's Government to encourage the development of fair employment.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* To encourage the development of fair employment the Government are operating a support scheme for private sector employers with 25 or more employees. It provides for free consultancy advice on best practice; and free training in objectively-based selection techniques. In addition, the Department of Economic Development is organising seminars for private sector employers. Funds will also be made available in the public sector to meet the cost of introducing and operating equal opportunities monitoring systems. Discussions on the development and funding of such systems are currently taking place between public sector bodies and the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Michael Tighe

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *338*, what are the reasons for his decision not to set up an inquiry into the circumstances in which listening devices came to be placed in the hayshed in which Michael Tighe was killed and as to why no police action was taken to ascertain the identity of those who planted the devices before the inquiry by the Manchester police.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* It is not the practice to comment on such matters.

Amnesty International (Report)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he intends to make to Amnesty International's report entitled "Northern Ireland: Killings by Security Forces and Supergrass Trials", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* I have received a copy of this report, and its contents are being studied.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that British agriculture will be on an equal footing with its European Community counterparts, from the point of view of research and development, following the outcome of the Barnes report.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It has always been my policy to ensure that British agriculture is not put at a competitive disadvantage within the European Community.

Potato Marketing Board

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give an indication as to the likely outcome and timing of the consultative document on the future structure of the Potato Marketing Board.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The revised potato market support arrangements introduced in Great Britain on 1 July 1985 are due to be revised before 30 June 1990. The review will consider, amongst other things, the future of the Potato Marketing Board. I am considering at present how to conduct the review and will make my intentions known as soon as possible. I intend that there should be full consultation with all sectors of the industry and I will give as much notice as possible of any changes.

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the light of the integrated European Community market in 1992, he expects the Potato Marketing Board to continue its current basis of operation.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The advent of the single European Community market in 1992 will not affect the legal position of the Potato Marketing Board, which exists under United Kingdom domestic legislation. However, the potato market support arrangements are due to be reviewed before 30 June 1990. I am considering at present how to conduct the review and will make my intentions known as soon as possible. I intend that there should be full consultation with all sectors of the industry and will give as much notice as possible of any changes.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many full-time jobs in agriculture have been lost, by county, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information on the numbers of full-time jobs lost in agriculture over the last five years is not available in the form requested. The June agricultural census does record in England and Wales the numbers of full-time farmers, partners and directors, family workers, hired workers and salaried managers working on agricultural holdings. Similar information is available for Scotland and Northern Ireland, although the categories adopted for labour are somewhat different in these countries. The available information will take some time to extract and collate by county for the five years, 1982, to 1987, but I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Cereals

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the impact the reduced cereal crop as a result of drought in North America will have on grain storage levels and cereal prices in 1988-89 in both the European Community countries as a whole and the United Kingdom particularly.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is too early to make a realistic assessment of the effect of the drought in the USA on stock levels and cereal prices in 1988-89 in the European Community and the United Kingdom. Stocks and prices will be primarily influenced by the size of the EC and United Kingdom harvests and by the EC's export policy; the operation of the CAP acts to insulate the EC's grain market from much of the impact of world market fluctuations.

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the anticipated reduction in the production of cereals in the United Kingdom, in the light of current European Community proposals on prices and stabilisers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is not possible to make such an estimate since the level of cereals production in any year is primarily determined by the weather.

Departmental Shareholdings

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all shareholdings in public and private companies still held by his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

Shareholdings held as at 31 March 1988

Company	*Number of shares*
Agricultural Co-operation and Marketing Services Ltd.	1
Arable Crop Storage Ltd.	1
Avoncroft Cattle Breeders Ltd.	1
Brandsby Agric Trading Assoc Ltd.	1
Cardiganshire Farmers Ltd.	3
Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd.	56
Craven Grain Storage Ltd.	13
Fengrain Ltd.	3
Goldenlay Eggs Ltd.	2
Grower Marketing Services Ltd.	350
Hampshire Grain Ltd.	1
Littleton and Badsey Growers Ltd.	5
Livestock Producers (Wales) Ltd.	3
Nursery Traders (Lea Valley) Ltd.	2,418
Soc of Growers & Allied Traders (Cornwall) Ltd.	1
United Oilseed Producers Ltd.	2
Warwick Grain Group Ltd.	1
Welsh Quality Lambs Ltd.	428
Yorkshire and Northern Wool Growers	1

Pollution

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many water pollution incidents in England and Wales were caused by farm wastes in each of the last three years for which figures are available; how many of these incidents were classed as serious; how many prosecutions were commenced in respect of these serious incidents; and how many convictions resulted;

(2) what were the main causes of the serious water pollution incidents reported to his Department in each of the last three years for which figures are available in each of the water authority areas in England and Wales; how many prosecutions were commenced in respect of these incidents; and how many convictions resulted.

Mr. Gummer: The information is contained within the 1985, 1986 and 1987 MAFF/Water Authorities Association reports of water pollution from farm waste, as follows:

1985 report: tables 7-10
1986 report: tables 6-9
1987 report: tables 6-9

Copies of these tables are being placed in the Library of the House.

Food Aid

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations responsible for the distribution to pensioners of surplus European Community beef and butter in the Liverpool, West Derby constituency; who was responsible for notifying pensioners of their entitlement; how the surplus was distributed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on 21 April at column *566*.

Footpaths and Bridleways

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has plans, or has held

discussions with other bodies, about introducing an experimental scheme to allow farmers to maintain footpaths and bridleways as agents of county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* My officials have held discussions with the Countryside Commission about an experimental scheme proposed by the Commission under which farmers would maintain footpaths and bridleways under contract to the highways authority. I would fully support the aims of such a scheme.

Nuvan

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been conducted into less toxic or non-toxic alternatives to the pesticide Nuvan.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The development of new pesticides is a matter for industry. However, the Agriculture Departments and the Agriculture and Food Research Council conduct and support a good deal of strategic research into alternatives to pesticides and into less toxic pesticides. For example, my Department is collaborating with the Scottish Salmon Growers Association to fund a three-year project at the University of Stirling on sea lice infections in cultured salmon. The association is also funding other related work at the university and elsewhere.

Fish Quotas

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table of data for the whitefish sectoral allocations for cod, haddock, saithe and whiting for each of the producers' organisations involved for the year 1988 and the comparable figures for 1987; what quantity of fish has been recorded for the non-sector in 1988; and what special provisions have been made for vessels under 10 m in these allocations.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* I would be prepared to publish this information—which would reveal details of individual producer groups' allocations—only if such a course was acceptable to the industry. We shall shortly be consulting the industry on this, and when these consultations are completed, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

TRANSPORT

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the expenditure of his Department in the London Docklands development corporation area since 1981; and what is in prospect.

Mr. David Mitchell: Capital expenditure to date on the docklands light railway amounts to some £140 million for the initial railway and extend it to the City. Completion of the upgrading and the City extension and construction of the eastern extension to Beckton, a Bill for which is currently before the House, will cost in excess of £250 million. Olympia and York Canary wharf is contributing £68 million to the cost of the City extension and upgrading. The London Docklands development corporation paid for half the cost of the initial railway and will be meeting the whole cost of the eastern extension from increases in land values accruing as a result of the construction of the extension.

London Regional Transport has spent some £6 million since 1981 on improvements to the underground in the London Docklands development corporation area.

Docklands is also benefiting from the £10·5 million which British Rail has invested on electrification and station improvements to the north London line.

Since 1981 my Department has spent nearly £170 million on road projects of relevance to docklands now completed: the A406 South Woodford to Barking relief road; the A2 Rochester Way relief road and the A13/A117 tidal flow. Other trunk road schemes in the Department's programme, including improvements to the A13 in docklands, will involve expenditure of some £470 million by the mid-1990s.

Motor Accidents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of people killed or seriously injured in motor accidents, by age, in each local authority area in the north-west region in each of the last five years; and what proportion of these accidents were related to excessive alcohol consumption.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The data requested can only be supplied at disproportionate cost. The following tables show the number of people killed or seriously injured, by age, in each county in the north-west region for each of the last three years.

There are no readily available statistics for accidents related to excessive alcohol consumption, by region.

Killed and seriously injured casualties, by age, by county: North West Region: 1985-1987

County	*Age of Casualty*						
	0-4	*5-14*	*15-24*	*25-39*	*40-59*	*60+*	*Total*
1985							
Cheshire	27	124	447	220	163	104	1,085
Cumbria	19	100	386	191	156	109	961
Greater Manchester	83	439	973	538	333	390	2,756
Lancashire	60	228	780	378	279	272	1,997
Merseyside	40	232	420	330	216	231	1,469
Total	229	1,123	3,006	1,657	1,147	1,106	8,268
1986							
Cheshire	18	114	494	299	190	118	1,233
Cumbria	18	89	408	193	150	117	975
Greater Manchester	81	333	906	526	352	341	2,539
Lancashire	56	209	817	435	287	282	2,086

County	Age of Casualty						
	0-4	5-14	15-24	25-39	40-59	60+	Total
Merseyside	26	222	490	295	204	225	1,462
Total	199	967	3,115	1,748	1,183	1,083	8,295
1987 (provisional data)							
Cheshire	26	93	434	228	175	126	1,082
Cumbria	29	69	367	200	130	143	938
Greater Manchester	58	350	828	511	314	367	2,428
Lancashire	49	219	717	425	319	265	1,994
Merseyside	64	223	404	308	246	215	1,460
Total	226	954	2,750	1,672	1,184	1,116	7,902

Shared Ticketing

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place a copy of the London Regional Transport discussion document on shared ticketing in the Library; and if he will make a statement on the effects of the proposals in the document on transport fares in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. I understand that the document was prepared by LRT as a basis for internal discussion of options. No proposals arising from it have been put to this Department.

London Underground

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate discussions with the chairman of London Regional Transport with a view to a new objective being established to construct new routes to relieve the acute congestion of passenger services on London Underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 25 March the setting up of a central London rail study jointly with British Rail and London Regional Transport. The study is considering, among other matters, the possible need for extensions to London's rail infrastructure. Initial results are expected shortly, although further work will be needed before a full report can be prepared.

British Flag Protection (Persian Gulf)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the names and ownership of the vessels which have applied for the protection of the British flag for their operations in the Persian Gulf since British naval vessels were dispatched there; and if he will introduce a levy on such vessels in order to pay for their protection.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is not possible to provide this information going back to September 1980, except at a wholly disproportionate cost.

There is no intention of introducing a levy on reflagged vessels to pay for their protection by the Royal Navy.

Car Indicators

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a publicity campaign to encourage drivers to make proper use of their indicators and give adequate signals to other road users.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our new leaflet on motorway driving issued earlier this year includes advice on the use of signals.

This is one of a number of key aspects of safe driving that is already fully covered in the Highway Code and other publications. We shall continue to draw attention to its importance.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change emergency service procedures in the event of an accident involving the transportation of nuclear waste materials of all levels.

Mr. David Mitchell: The emergency procedures are kept under continuous review by both the operators and the Department. There are no current plans to change them.

Journey Times (London-Norfolk)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of average journey times from London to *(a)* Lowestoft, *(b)* Great Yarmouth and *(c)* Norwich by road; and what steps are being taken to improve them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When new road schemes are appraised, the journey times on the old road, the new road and the surrounding network are examined in detail. Improvements in the times for long journeys, such as those specified, come from a number of separate schemes along the route. There is a continuing programme of improvements on the A11 and A12.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the rail freight capacity of the Channel tunnel; what are the forecasts of demand for rail freight through the Channel tunnel; and when he expects to make a statement about Eurotunnel's plans for allocating freight capacity through the tunnel in cases of excess demand.

Mr. David Mitchell: The rail freight capacity of the Channel tunnel will depend on a number of factors, notably the way in which the total available capacity is allocated between Eurotunnel's shuttle trains and the through trains which will be operated by the British Railways Board in conjunction with SNCF and other continental railway operators. The usage agreement between Eurotunnel and the railways entitles the railways to half the total available capacity of the tunnel; the way in which this share of the total capacity if allocated between passenger and freight services is a matter for the

operators concerned, whose planning is still at an early stage. This issue is addressed in British Rail's report on the need for additional rail capacity in the longer term between London and the tunnel, which will be published shortly. The report will also include information on the demand forecasts for rail freight through the tunnel.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has given to British Rail on the criteria for assessing investment in the strategic rail networks of the regions outside the south-east; and whether he will make it his policy to review those criteria in the event that it is not possible to justify investment required to achieve Government policy towards dispersing freight and passenger traffic from the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: I expect BR's freight and passenger investment related to the Channel tunnel to be justified on a proper commercial basis. Section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 precludes subsidies for Channel-related services.

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent his Department monitors the technology and engineering expertise employed in the construction of the Channel tunnel; what assessment he has made of the implications for safety and the lifetime of the concrete tunnel linings, in the light of the recent problems of corrosion in the Hong Kong mass transit rail tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The United Kingdom-French Channel Tunnel Intergovernmental Commission and Safety Authority has established procedures for monitoring the Channel tunnel project. These bodies are, in accordance with the Channel tunnel concession agreement, considering avant projets covering the design of the project. In doing so they are receiving reports from the independent Maitre d'Oeuvre that include assessments of the technology and engineering expertise being used. The difficulties that have arisen on the design of the Hong Kong mass transit rail tunnel are known; the Channel tunnel is being designed to avoid such problems.

Customs Clearance Depots

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with British Rail the case for developing an inland customs clearance freightliner depot in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for the British Railways Board and its subsidiary Freightliners Limited. I understand that Freightliners already has depots with associated customs clearance facilities in both Manchester and Liverpool.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what plans British Rail has for the provision of inland customs clearance depots throughout the north of England to coincide with the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no detailed information yet. Under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act, British Rail is required to publish by the end of 1989 a plan setting out its proposals for services through the Channel tunnel and any proposals for works or other development in connection with these services, including inland clearance depots.

Historic Motor Vehicles

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether European Community directives will restrict the use of historic motor vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. I can assure my hon. Friend that there are no plans to restrict the use of historic vehicles through the introduction of retrospective legislation. It would be unreasonable to require the original features of old vehicles to be adapted or replaced in order to comply with the various EC directives which apply to new vehicles. The recent EC directives on vehicle emissions apply only to new vehicles. There is no question of their being made retrospective.

I am sure the Commission has no plans to make any proposals that would adversely affect the many historic vehicle enthusiasts in Europe.

Vehicle Lighting

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take to implement the decision of the European Court of Justice about dim-dip lighting devices on vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the light of the court's decision I shall shortly issue for comment draft regulations amending the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1984 to exempt from the requirement to fit dim-dip systems and side-marker lamps vehicles which have been fitted with lighting and light-signalling devices in accordance with the EEC vehicle lighting directive and fully meet all the requirements of that directive.

The effect of this amendment will be that motor vehicles will be required either to be equipped with headlamp levelling systems in accordance with the EEC requirements or with the more simple dim-dip requirements. Both systems, if use correctly, can be helpful in reducing glare from headlamps.

Motor vehicles sold since 1 April 1987 are required to have headlamps with a dim-dip system.

There has been a long-standing controversy about the use of lights at night in towns where there is good street lighting. Side lights are not always bright enough to make a moving vehicle readily visible, but modern dipped headlights can be too dazzling, especially in wet weather, and negate the benefits of street lighting.

The purpose of dim-dip is to improve road safety by providing a light more visible than a side light but without the glare associated with a dipped headlight. Dim-dip comes on automatically whenever a vehicle is driven with only the side lights switched on.

Some EC countries (Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark) forbid driving on side lights, a problem which dim-dip overcomes automatically in the United Kingdom. Apart from the problem of dazzle, a difficulty these countries face is that in marginal lighting conditions some vehicles are completely unlit while others use dipped headlights. The remaining EC countries (United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece) do not suffer from this difficulty to the same extent.

The dim-dip requirement was challenged by the European Commission. The Commission pleaded that the intention behind the vehicle lighting directive was to prohibit member states requiring the fitting of further devices not listed in that directive.

The United Kingdom argued in the court that the articles of the directive, which define its scope, plainly confined the scope to the installation of the vehicle lighting devices which are listed in the directive and that it therefore did not prohibit a requirement for any further device such as a dim-dip device or a side marker lamp. Side marker lamps had been required in the United Kingdom, to the full knowledge of the Commission, for many years.

The court decided that the directive had been intended to prohibit the requirement of further devices not imposed by that directive,

"since motor vehicles complying with the technical requirements laid down therein must be able to move freely within the Common Market."

Railway Electrification

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will discuss with British Rail the case for bringing forward investment proposals for the electrification of *(a)* the Midland main line beyond Bedford, *(b)* the line from Manchester to Preston and Blackpool and *(c)* the line from Leeds to the freight liner depot at Stourton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It is for the British Railways Board, as manager of the railways, to identify and put forward sound investment proposals. It would be quite wrong for the Government to ask it to put forward schemes which it believes to be uneconomic.

West Coast Railway Lines, Scotland

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to alter the existing ownership structure of the west coast railway lines, Fort William to Mallaig and Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* I have no such plans. Any proposals to dispose of individual lines are matters in the first instance for British Rail. British Rail provincial sector has assured me it has no proposals for changes affecting these lines.

Unlicensed Vehicles (Greater London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost of each of the campaigns organised by his Department since 1981 in London to crack down on motor tax dodgers; and what has been the estimated amount of excise duty collected as a result of each campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* No figures are available for police costs associated with campaigns. The following table gives details of the Department's total costs for each London campaign together with the estimated additional revenue and fines arising.

London campaigns: Costs and revenue gained

Year	*Department of Transport costs* £	*Estimated revenue from induced licensing and prosecutions* £
1988	123,100	Results awaited
1987	95,000	7,300,000
1986	99,800	6,700,000
1985	78,500	No reliable figures available
1984	92,000	No reliable figures available
1983	[1]14,400	No reliable figures available
1982	[1]13,800	No reliable figures available
1981	[1]12,900	No reliable figures available

[1] No paid publicity. Identifiable staff costs only.

Motor Accidents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has information relating to the driving experience of private vehicle drivers involved in motor accidents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has made a study of accident involvement rates according to age. This shows that young drivers have a much higher accident involvement rate than the middle age group. The involvement rates rise again in old age.

I am placing copies of the report in the Library.

The Transport and Road Research Laboratory is currently undertaking a study of drivers with less than 10 years driving experience, in order to determine accident patterns for this group.

The results are due later this year.

Stansted Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the capital and operating costs, the benefit for each pound sterling of capital cost and the net present value of the rail link now being constructed with the support of his Department at Stansted airport.

Mr. David Mitchell: The capital cost of the rail link to Stansted airport is currently estimated at £45 million. As this project is a commercial venture, the operating costs and net present value of the project are confidential matters, but the investment was approved on the basis of a financial appraisal which showed that the service would operate profitably and require no grant. No estimate has been made of any external benefits generated by this scheme, because it has always been intended to be justified on financial grounds alone.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the operating and development costs of Stansted airport, the revenue generated by that airport and the airline charges employed at that airport; whether the Government's objective, stated at the time the British Airports Authority airports were restructured, that Stansted airport should operate on a financial basis independent of Heathrow and Gatwick airports, has been achieved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When the Government gave investment approval to the then British Airports Authority in 1986, the cost of the current development at Stansted airport was put at £290 million. We understand from BAA plc that the charges levied at the airport are as follows:

CHARGE ON LANDING

Charge is based on maximum total weight authorised, and it consists of two elements:

(1) A fixed charge.

(2) A variable charge at a rate per tonne for aircraft with a maximum total weight authorised in excess of 50 metric tonnes.

Domestic and International Flights

	1 April to 31 October £	*1 November to 31 March* £
Helicopters	18·00	18·00
Fixed wing aircraft not exceeding 16 metric tonnes	20·00	20·00
Fixed wing aircraft over 16 metric tonnes not exceeding 50 metric tonnes	38·00	38·00
Aircraft over 50 metric tonnes	72·00 [1]2·31	38·00 plus [1]0·94

[1] Per metric tonne or part thereof in excess of 50 metric tonnes.

PASSENGER CHARGE

Charge payable per terminal departing passenger on flights operated with a maximum authorised weight in excess of five metric tonnes.

Time period of take-off	*Domestic flights* £	*International flights* £
June to September/Saturdays and Sundays	3·30	4·00
June to September/Monday to Friday	2·90	2·90
October to May/At all times	1·60	1·60

AIRCRAFT PARKING CHARGES

The standard charge for parking an aircraft is based on its maximum total weight authorised.

Charges per 24 hours or part thereof in excess of 24 hours

	£
Not exceeding two metric tonnes	8·35
Over two metric tonnes, not exceeding five metric tonnes	16·60
Over five metric tonnes, not exceeding 10 metric tonnes	25·00
Over 10 metric tonnes not exceeding 15 metric tonnes	38·05

Charges per metric tonne per hour, or part thereof in excess of two hours

	Pence
Over 15 metric tonnes	26

Note: The above charges are exclusive of value added tax
Source: BAA Conditions of Use, April 1988.

The operating costs and revenue generated at Stansted airport are commercial matters for the airport operator and the right hon. Member could get in touch with Stansted Airport Limited. The question of the financial basis on which Stansted airport operates is one for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has responsibility for the economic regulation of airports designated under part IV of the Airports Act 1986. I have asked the chairman of the authority to write to the right hon. Member direct.

Sludge Farm (Heathrow Airport)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the action so far taken by the British Airports Authority plc to relocate the sludge farm at Heathrow airport; what assessment he has made of the implications of its early relocation for the aviation interests of the United Kingdom; and whether he intends to use the Government's influence to ensure that this course is pursued by the British Airports Authority plc as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We understand from BAA plc that technical trials to determine the optimum method by which the Perry Oaks site might be released to Heathrow airport continue. The 1985 White paper "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542) made it clear that the removal of the sludge works and release of the land to the airport was "highly desirable," and that remains the Government's view. Discussions between BAA plc and the Thames water authority on the future of the Perry Oaks site are primarily a matter for the two organisations concerned.

British Airports Authority plc

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Her Majesty's Government expect to reach a decision about the referral of the London subsidiary companies of the British Airports Authority plc for investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Airports Act 1986 provides for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, following a reference by the Civil Aviation Authority, to review and report on airport charges and operational activities at airports designated for economic regulation purposes under part IV of the Act. Airports so designated include the following subsidiaries of BAA plc: Heathrow Airport Ltd., Gatwick Airport Ltd. and Stansted Airport Ltd.

Air Safety

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has been monitoring the published evidence given to the Transport Committee on air safety; whether he was aware before the Committee's inquiry of the delays in realising the 52 movements per hour throughput at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton airports, assumed by the inspector of the Stansted/Heathrow planning inquiries to be achieved in 1992; and if he will now instruct the Civil Aviation Authority to undertake to publish an evaluation of the airspace implications of difficult capacity options in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has naturally followed with interest the evidence presented to the Select Committee, including the memorandum submitted from the Civil Aviation Authority in CAP 537. My right hon. Friend last week commissioned from the CAA a wide review of the requirement for airport capacity up to 2005, with separate advice on strategies to make good use of the available airspace in the London area in the nearer term. The inspector at the airports inquiries stated that the accommodation of Stansted alongside Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton airports would require substantial reorganisation of airspace in the London area, concluding that such reorganisation could be achieved.

Air Traffic

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a statement on updated forecasts of air traffic demand, and the implications of these forecasts for the Government's airports policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect revised forecasts of United Kingdom air passenger traffic demand to 2005 to

be published before the end of the year. Their implications for airports policy will be assessed in the light of advice from the Civil Aviation Authority on the adequacy of United Kingdom airports capacity over the same period.

Unlicensed Vehicles (Greater London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the number of unlicensed vehicles in the Greater London area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* No figures are available for the number of unlicensed vehicles evading duty in the Greater London area. Figures for unlicensed vehicles include vehicles currently off the road, including those temporarily in the hands of motor dealers, as well as vehicles in use on the road whose owners are evading vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, by London boroughs, the number of unlicensed vehicles detected in the 1988 campaign against motor tax evaders.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* The figures are not intended as a reflection of the distribution on unlicensed vehicles in each area.

The number of unlicensed vehicles detected in roadside checks in each of the London boroughs during the 1988 campaign is given in the following table.

Borough	*Number of VED offence reports*
City of London	447
Barking	80
Barnet	125
Bexley	72
Brent	147
Bromley	66
Camden	145
Croydon	159
Ealing	207
Enfield	51
Greenwich	153
Hackney	178
Hammersmith	87
Harrow	42
Havering	58
Haringey	50
Hillingdon	149
Hounslow	49
Islington	158
Kensington and Chelsea	[1]
Kingston	52
Lambeth	168
Lewisham	62
Merton	174
Newham	62
Redbridge	166
Richmond	91
Southwark	251
Sutton	27
Tower Hamlets	40
Waltham Forest	254
Wandsworth	173
Westminster	112
Total	4,055

[1] No roadside checks held in this campaign.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Care

12. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards increasing public awareness of the benefits of preventive health care; and what steps he is taking to encourage healthy eating.

Mrs. Currie: We are making available £25 million from central funding this year to promote good health through health education programmes. We are also helping prevent disease at an early stage through the breast cancer and cervical cancer screening service. A major campaign to help eradicate childhood infections including measles, mumps and rubella will be launched shortly.

As for healthy eating, the Government aim at:

accurate information on food value;
ready access to a wide variety of foods;
steadily rising prosperity and personal disposable income.

all of which we have achieved under this Government.

15. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how the proposals in the primary health care White Paper are intended to help to promote health and prevent illness.

Mr. Newton: In a variety of ways, including making health promotion and the prevention of disease a clearer requirement in practitioners' contracts, and introducing targets for vaccination immunisation and cytology.

19. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how the proposals in the primary health care White Paper are intended to help make services more responsive to the consumer.

Mrs. Currie: Specific White Paper measures include:

—more information for patients through FPC lists and practice leaflets;
—simpler procedures for changing doctors;
—changes to GP's remuneration system.

Talks are underway on details of other White Paper measures with the relevant professions.

71. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how the proposals in the primary health care White Paper are intended to raise standards of care.

Mr. Newton: Many of the proposals in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" will contribute to raising standards of care. In the case of the family doctors, changes to the doctors' remuneration system and terms of service will encourage doctors to emulate the best practices in the services they offer. Other changes include extending and developing training and teamwork in primary care generally and giving a stronger voice to the consumer. We will also require family practitioner committees to play an enhanced role in the management of the family practitioner services with the aim of securing continuing improvements in the level, quality and cost effectiveness of service provision and greater accountability from those providing and managing these services.

77. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how he proposes to improve primary health care services in inner cities.

Mr. Newton: By raising standards and extending services, the whole thrust of the White Paper "Promoting

Better Health" will benefit inner cities. Specific proposals aimed at improving services in these areas include strengthening primary care teams with the addition of health care professionals such as link workers, physiotherapists, counsellors and chiropodists as well as more practice nurses, and new incentives to attract pharmacies to inner cities and to encourage more doctors and dentists to work in these areas.

83. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to give patients a wider range of choice in obtaining high quality primary health care services.

Mr. Newton: One of the main themes of the White Paper "Promoting Better Heath" is to give patients a wider range of choice in obtaining high quality primary health care services. We intend to enable patients to make a more informed choice by making more information available about services provided by local doctors and dentists. We plan to strengthen primary health care teams by encouraging the inclusion of physiotherapists, counsellors, chiropodists and other health care professionals. We also plan to change the NHS contract with family doctors so that a greater range of services is provided, and to amend the dentists' NHS contract to improve the availability and quality of dental services.

Pensioners

13. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much pensioners' average real total incomes have changed since 1979.

Mr. Moore: Pensioners' average total net incomes grew by 2·7 per cent. a year in real terms between 1979 and 1985, compared with 0·6 per cent. a year between 1974 and 1979. The overall rate of growth was 18 and 3 per cent. respectively. The rate of growth of pensioners' inoomes between 1979 and 1985 was twice as fast as for the population as a whole.

36. **Mr. Forman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of pensioners receive income from savings.

Mr. Scott: Seventy per cent. of pensioners had income from savings in 1985, the latest year for which figures are available.

94. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much pensioners incomes from savings have increased since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The average income of pensioners from savings increased by 53 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1985, the latest year for which figures are available, equivalent to 7·3 per cent. a year.

Heating Charges

14. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on fixed heating charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We have received representations, including some from my hon. Friend, about some households receiving income support who experienced a cash reduction in housing benefit as a result of changes in the rules applying to fixed heating charges. Income support recipients in vulnerable groups can apply for transitional payments from the Glasgow unit.

Medical Equipment (Report)

16. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action was taken arising out of the Advisory Council on Applied Research and Development report on medical equipment.

Mrs. Currie: The Government's response to the ACARD report, summarising action then being taken or planned on the reports recommendations, was published in February 1987. Since then a wide programme of further improvements has been implemented and other developments in the fields of research, evaluation and equipment management are being vigorously pursued.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act

17. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what study his Department has made of the extent to which local social services authorities are implementing section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Department receives regular returns on many services provided under section 2 of the 1970 Act, as well as information from the Social Services Inspectorate. But it is local authorities which are responsible for implementing the Act.

46. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled last met the organisations of and for disabled people to discuss the extent to which local authorities are implementing section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

60. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled last met organisations of and for disabled people to discuss the extent to which local authorities are implementing section 1 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

63. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implementation by local authorities of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

80. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet the organisations of, and for, disabled people to discuss the implementation by local authorities of sections 1 and 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

137. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the implementation of sections 1 and 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Scott: I frequently meet organisations of and for disabled people but I have not recently been asked for a meeting specifically about implementation of sections 1 and 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. The Department receives regular returns on certain services provided by local authorities under the Act as well

as informtion from other sources including the Social Services Inspectorate. We have received no evidence that local authorities are generally failing to undertake their responsibilities under sections 1 and 2 of the Act. We do, however, follow up any specific cases referred to the Department where it was alleged that a local authority is in breach of its statutory duty.

General Practitioners

18. **Mr. Richard Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to improve the distribution of general practitioners.

Mr. Newton: We shall discuss with the Medical Practices Committee how to take forward the proposals in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" to improve the distribution of family doctors. These include plans to give greater emphasis to local medical and social factors in deciding on where doctors are needed. The White Paper also announced that the Government will introduce a new allowance especially related to working in areas of deprivation. If necessary other changes to the remuneration system will be introduced to help doctors in sparsely populated areas.

75. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to improve the training of general practitioners.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper "Promoting Better Health" provides for the introduction of a new postgraduate educational allowance for general medical practitioners. We are aiming by this means to encourage all practitioners to become involved in regular programmes of education and training throughout their careers. The content of education and training is largely for the profession itself to decide; but the Department's policies for allocating funds for vocational training and continuing education are designed to foster the development and improvement of these activities.

Clinical Grading Review

20. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on implementation of the clinical grading review.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities have been issued with comprehensive guidance on the implementation of the new clinical grading structure and have been asked to complete the exercise by 31 October 1988.

72. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the clinical grading review is based on actual jobs performed at the beginning of April and that managers will not be rewriting job descriptions.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) earlier today.

Social Security (Computerisation)

21. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the social security computerisation programme.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is making a massive investment in information technology to achieve greater efficiency in administration, a better service to the public and better jobs for staff. A system has already been delivered, on time and working well, for the administration of family credit. The systems for income support and pensions will start to be installed during the next 12 months: modernisation of the existing unemployment benefit system is also on the way. The network should be complete by mid-1992, and will represent a mojor step forward in the administration of social security.

54. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the social security computerisation programme.

79. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made with the introduction of computerisation in his Department.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) earlier today.

NHS (Reform)

22. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to publish a Green Paper on the financing and reform of the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: We are proceeding with our review of the National Health Service, and will bring forward proposals in due course. No decision has yet been taken on the form in which these proposals will be promulgated.

Child Care

23. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on child care in the light of the study "Caring for Children, Report of the EC Childcare Network" by Bronwen Cohen and "Childcare and Equality of Opportunity" by Peter Moss both published by the Commission of the European Communities at the end of June; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: These reports deal with child care largely from the point of view of working parents. Our view is that it is for the parents who go out to work to decide how best to care for their children. If they want or need help in this task they should make the appropriate arrangements and meet the costs.

Our objective is that there should be a range of day care services so that parents can make a choice. Public provision by local authorities should concentrate on the particular needs of children from families with health or social difficulties.

North Western Regional Health Authority

24. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department next plans to review the performance of the North Western regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The performance of regional health authorities is kept under continuous review. The ministerial review meeting, which takes place each year is, in the case of the North Western regional health authority, scheduled for 27 July.

Diabetics

25. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent improvements have been made in services for diabetics.

Mrs. Currie: Diabetics, like others, have benefited from new techniques employed in the National Health Service; early diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy followed by laser treatment may prevent blindness; increasing number of those with end stage renal failure are accepted for renal replacement therapy. As part of the development of services in the community disposable syringes and needles were made available from general practitioners in September 1987; blood glucose strips became similarly available on 1 June this year.

District General Hospital (Solihull)

26. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the effect on the neighbouring health authorities of the coming into full operation of the intended new district general hospital in Solihull.

Mrs. Currie: The development of Solihull district general hospital at a cost of £23·2 million is part of the west midlands' long-term strategy for increasing the provision of health services in the growing population centres surrounding Birmingham. The population of Solihull and of neighbouring districts will all benefit. For detailed information my hon. Friend may care to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

NHS Ancillary Staff

27. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on behalf of the National Health Service ancillary staffs seeking an improvement in their pay and working conditions.

40. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on behalf of the National Health Services ancillary staffs seeking an improvement in their pay and working conditions.

48. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on behalf of the National Health Services ancillary staffs seeking an improvement in their pay and working conditions.

98. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on behalf of the National Health Service ancillary staffs seeking an improvement in their pay and working conditions.

Mr. Newton: We have received two requests to meet staff side representatives of the ancillary staffs Whitley Council. Pay and conditions of NHS ancillary staff are matters for negotiation in that council. I have replied that in my view the normal processes of negotiation should be allowed to run their course, and that I would therefore prefer not to meet the staff side at this stage. I expressed my hope that a negotiated settlement would shortly be achieved.

31. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to ensure that health authorities will be in a position to finance an improvement in the pay and conditions of ancillary workers in the National Health Service.

37. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to ensure that health authorities will be in a position to finance an improvement in the pay and conditions of ancillary workers in the National Health Service.

101. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to ensure that health authorities will be in a position to finance an improvement in the pay and conditions of ancillary workers in the National Health Service.

121. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to ensure that health authorities will be in a position to finance an improvement in the pay and conditions of ancillary workers in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The pay and conditions of service of NHS ancillary staff are matters for negotiation in the ancillary staffs Whitley council. I understand that the current round of negotiations should be resumed later this month.

As health authorities operate within the cash planning system, they are expected to plan flexibly to meet pay increases and other costs from within the pool of resources available to them. This pool includes their increased cash allocations for the year, cost improvement savings and funds raised through income generation schemes.

Trasidrex

28. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any complaints about the drug Trasidrex with regard to allergies or lung problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Trasidrex is a combination of a beta-blocker (oxprenolol hydrochloride) and a thiazide diuretic (cyclopenthiazide), used in the treatment of hypertension. We are not aware of any complaints received about this drug. However, since 1979 the Committee on Safety of Medicines has received reports from doctors of two cases of bronchospasm and two of dyspnoea (difficulty in breathing) in association with Trasidrex. In each of these cases, the reports relate to the most important suspected reaction to the drug, and do not necessarily indicate a causal relationship.

The manufacturer's data sheet for Trasidrex warns doctors that

"as with other beta-blockers, bronchospasm ... may occasionally be precipitated in susceptible patients",

and advises that

"particular caution should be observed when treating asthmatics, chronic bronchitics or other individuals where bronchospasm may be provoked".

The data sheet also notes that

"in a few cases, allergic skin reactions ... have been reported".

NHS Review

29. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in response to his review of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

47. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in response to his review of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

81. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in response to his review of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

86. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in response to his review of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: We regularly receive representations about the future of the National Health Service. It is not possible to distinguish between those representations which have been made specifically in the context of the review and those which have not.

39. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations about his review of the National Health Service he has received from trade unions and other bodies representing Health Service staffs; and what has been the nature of their representations.

62. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations about his review of the National Health Service he has received from trade unions and other bodies representing Health Service staffs; and what has been the nature of their representations.

133. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations about his review of the National Health Service he has received from trade unions and other bodies representing health service staffs; and what has been the nature of their representations.

Mr. Moore: We have received a number of representations from such bodies, covering a wide range of issues.

44. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to announce the results of his review of the National Health Service.

103. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to announce the results of his review of the National Health Service.

109. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to announce the results of his review of the National Health Service.

111. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to announce the results of his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Moore: We are continuing to examine a range of options for improving the National Health Service and shall bring forward proposals in due course.

Cancer Screening

30. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the breast cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre (Mr. Mans), York (Mr. Gregory), Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), Thurrock (Mr. Jarman) and Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) on 14 June at column *155*.

102. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what resources are being provided to set up the breast cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on 14 June, at column *155*.

East and West Dorset Health Districts

32. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the increase in health budget for the East and West Dorset health districts in 1988 against 1987.

Mr. Newton: The information for financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89 is not available centrally. Allocations to individual health authorities are a matter for the regional health authority. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the Wessex regional health authority.

Child Abuse

33. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet the director of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to discuss its recent report on child abuse.

Mr. Newton: I am arranging to meet the director of the NSPCC to discuss a number of matters, including the report to which the hon. Member refers.

41. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to introduce legislation to tackle the problem of child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my statement to the House on Lord Justice Butler-Sloss's report on the inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland on 6 July, at column *1062*, when I said that legislation will be brought before Parliament at the earliest practicable opportunity.

49. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he now intends to take to tackle the problem of child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

117. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he now intends to take to tackle the problem of child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my statement to the House on publication of the report of the judicial inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland on 6 July, at columns 1061-63.

127. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the training of social workers to deal with the problem of child abuse.

Mr. Newton: I announced a specific grant of 70 per cent. in support of expenditure of £10 million in the child care field in 1989-90 in my statement to the House on publication of the report of the judicial inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland on 6 July, at column 1062. This

recognises the importance of social workers acquiring professional skills in the field of child abuse. In addition, we have already set up a centrally funded inter-disciplinary training initiative on child sexual abuse. Several of the projects so far established will be of benefit to social workers, and further projects are under consideration.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by health authority the number of children taken into care in each of the past 10 years for protection in cases of sexual abuse.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally. A pilot survey of children on child protection registers as at 31 March 1988 will be followed by an annual statistical return from 31 March 1989. A provisional summary of the information from the pilot survey will be published this Autumn.

Staff (Relocation)

34. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his plans to relocate clerical and administrative staff in the regions.

87. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the report on "Business of Service" on the social security services.

115. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the report "Business of Service" on the social security services.

118. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for the transfer of administrative staff in his Department from London and for their relocation in the provinces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of state announced on 23 June at column *273-4* the publication of two reports "The Business of Service" and "Out of Town". Both reports recommended that relocation of some work from London would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department of Health and Social Security, and "Business of Service" pointed to the improvement to service to the public which would result.

We are considering the two reports very carefully. Consideration is proceeding rapidly and we shall make a

Nurses (Pay)

35. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much the pay of ward sisters has increased since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The extent to which the pay of an individual sister has increased since 1979 depends on the duties and responsibilities of the post occupied, since these determine how the job is graded in the new clinical grading structure; and on whether or not the sister works in London.

The table sets out a range of outcomes for ward sisters on regrading.

Real increases in pay of ward sisters on the maximum of their scale since 1979

	Basic pay		*Basic pay including inner London allowance and London supplement*	
	Real terms cash increase at 1988 prices £	*Real terms percentage increase*	*Real terms cash increase at 1988 prices* £	*Real terms percentage increase*
Scale F	3,434	37·9	4,356	43·4
Scale G	4,859	53·6	5,781	57·6
Scale H	6,284	69·3	7,206	71·8

Notes:

1. The real increases above represent the increases in basic pay and London additions between April 1979 and April 1988 deflated by the change in the retail prices index between the beginning of the 1979-80 pay round year and the beginning of the pay round year 1988-89.
2. The above figures do not take into account changes in gross earnings which for a ward sister in 1987-88 were estimated to be, on average, 15 per cent. higher than the level of basic pay (excluding London allowances).

57. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from health authorities on the funding by his Department of the recent pay increase made to nurses.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities generally have welcomed the pay award and the additional funding made available.

95. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his Department's guidance on clinical grading for senior night nursing staff.

Mr. Newton: The management guidance which has been issued to health authorities on the grading of senior night duty posts indicates that they may be graded at any of the new clinical scales from F to I inclusive, depending upon the duties and responsibilities to be discharged. A copy of the guidance is in the Library.

104. **Mr. Gorst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the pay of staff nurses in inner London has increased since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The extent to which the pay of an individual nurse will have increased since 1979 as a result of the recent pay award will depend on the duties and responsibilities of the post occupied. However, the pay of a staff nurse on qualification working in inner London is now £9,677, including London weighting and London supplement. This is a real terms increase of £2,960, or 44·1 per cent. since 1979. The maximum pay of a staff nurse with post-basic nursing qualifications is now £12,538, including London weighting and London supplement. This is a real terms increase of £4,610 or 58·1 per cent. since 1979.

Social Workers

38. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding the decision of the Government not to fund the QDSW three-year basic training course for social workers.

51. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding the decision of the Government not to fund the QDSW three-year basic training course for social workers.

74. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding the decision of the Government not to fund the QDSW three-year basic training course for social workers.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 23 June at column *723*.

Pensions

42. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to publicise the incentives the pension reforms provide for people to take out a personal pension.

65. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to publicise the new opportunities there will be to take out a personal pension as a result of the pension reforms.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has just concluded a television and press advertising campaign to alert both employers and employees to the new pensions choice which are now available as a result of the Social Security Act 1986. A leaflet setting out the new pension arrangements is available from DHSS local offices and information guides for employers and employees explaining the new options in more detail can be obtained from the DHSS Leaflets Unit, PO Box 21, Stanmore Middlesex, HA7 1AY.

67. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to increase the extra pension for those over 80 years.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans at present to increase the age addition to retirement pension, paid to pensioners aged 80 and over. The income support scheme provides a higher pensioner premium from age 80, worth to a single pensioner £2·40 a week more than the standard pensioner premium. This higher premium, which is directed towards pensioners on low incomes, is a more effective use of resources than increasing the age addition for all pensioners aged 80 or over, regardless of individual need.

84. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the outcome to date of his pension reforms.

Mr. Portillo: As the full range of the new pensions options become available only from 1 July, it is not yet possible to make an assessment of the reforms.

District Health Authorities (Income Generation)

43. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made on income generation by district health authorities within the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: Preliminary estimates made by health authorities in England are that they will generate additional income of around £11 million in 1988-89.

AIDS

45. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for further publicity campaigns to help prevent the spread of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: Responsibility for carrying forward the mass media AIDS public education campaign rests with the Health Education Authority. The authority's operational plan for 1988-89 includes provision for further campaigns aimed at the general public and for specific groups in society. These will build on progress made so far in increasing public awareness of the facts about HIV and AIDS.

96. Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths have occurred from AIDS in Britain up to the latest available date.

Mr. Newton: The latest available figures show that, to the end of June this year, a total of 897 deaths of people with AIDS has been reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre and the Communicable Disease (Scotland) Unit.

Low-income Families

50. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra help is being provided to families on low incomes as a result of the social security reforms.

Mr. Portillo: Lower paid working families with children can now receive more help through family credit. Non-working families with children, as well as lone parents, disabled people and pensioners get specific additional help through the premiums in the income support scheme.

Overall, this year, we plan to spend an extra £200 million net in weekly income-related benefits on low-income families with children.

Cleveland Child Abuse Inquiry

52. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what the cost of the Cleveland child abuse inquiry will amount to.

64. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what the cost of the Cleveland child abuse inquiry will amount to.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) earlier today.

Social Security Reform

53. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the results of the implementation of the recent social security changes.

92. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the results of the implementation of the recent social security changes.

124. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the results of the implementation of the recent social security changes.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) earlier today.

140. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is still receiving representations from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents in regard to the changes in social security regulations that commenced operating at the end of March.

Mr. Portillo: Yes.

Drugs (Adverse Reactions)

55. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take to improve the monitoring of adverse reactions to medical drugs.

Mr. Newton: The Committee on Safety of Medicines has set in train a number of initiatives to encourage more doctors to report adverse drug reactions and to improve the quality of reporting. These include:

making yellow cards more widely available in prescription pads, the British National Formulary and the ABPI Data Sheet Compendium;

making an educational video to increase doctors' awareness of ADRs and the importance of reporting these to the CSM via the yellow card scheme. The video will be made available to the profession next month, and a copy will be placed in the Library;

a series of seminars on adverse reactions held in East Anglia during April to June this year in collaboration with the BMA and the ABPI;

publicity in the medical press for the doctor who reported the 200,000th yellow card in June 1988;

the "Red Alert" scheme, jointly with the drug safety research unit, to encourage GPs to report serious reactions to new drugs on yellow cards with red triangles. This began last autumn for a trial period;

a pilot scheme in three health regions to involve hospital pharmacists in stimulating ADR reporting by hospital doctors;

a pilot scheme, with the Association of Anaesthetists and Faculty of Anaesthetists, to encourage ADR reporting by anaesthetists using a newly designed form. This will start in September this year;

a project, in conjunction with the Institute of Dermatologists, to set up a cutaneous reactions database to encourage ADR reporting by dermatologists;

plans for a number of lectures to professional bodies by CSM members to mark the 25th anniversary of the yellow card in 1989.

A new improved computer system for adverse reaction monitoring is being designed and will come into use early in 1990.

Health Authorities

56. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make more information available to patients about the performance of individual health authorities.

Mr. Newton: Distric health authorities are responsible for making information available to patients about the performance of local services. Specifically on in-patient and out-patient waiting times, we have asked authorities to draw up local statements of policy which will cover, inter alia, the provision of information to the public on these issues.

Health Service indicators, which are primarily an aid to management, are published annually by the Department for all health authorities in England. A copy is in the Library. Those for 1986-87 were published in April. Health authorities have been asked to carry out an analysis of trends in their indicators for the four years 1983-84 to 1986-87. A commentary will be given to authority members by the end of July, which will also be made available to hon. Members and to community health councils.

108. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to abolish regional health authorities.

Mr. Moore: A number of options have been put forward for reforming the organisation of the NHS. We are looking carefully at these, but no conclusions have yet been reached.

Housing Benefit

58. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of people likely to qualify for transitional protection payments in respect of housing benefits.

99. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of people likely to qualify for transitional protection payments in respect of housing benefits.

136. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of people likely to qualify for transitional protection payments in respect of housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) earlier today.

100. **Mr. Millan:** *To ask the Secretary of State for* Social Services how many applications have been received and how many payments have been made by the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefits.

105. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications have been received and how many payments have been made by the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefits.

122. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications have been received and how many payments have been made by the special unit dealing with trasitional protection in respect of housing benefit.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications have been received and how many payments have been made by the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefits.

Mr. Portillo: To date over 50,000 applications have been received. Payments have already been made in a small number of urgent cases and further payments will be made from this week as the necessary information is received from local authorities.

Breastfeeding

59. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the breast-feeding initiative by the National Childbirth Trust and other bodies.

Mrs. Currie: The National Childbirth Trust breastfeeding promotion group, the La Leche League, and the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers are undertaking a joint long term initiative to persuade more mothers to start and maintain breastfeeding. The Government welcome this development, and are contributing more than £100,000 to the initiative over the next two years; the baby milk manufacturers have in addition agreed to contribute £30,000 for this year.

Census (1991)

61. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last discussed the ethnic question in the 1991 census; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 2 November 1987 at column *573* that the Government are planning to hold a census in April 1991 there have been wide consultations and the topic content of the census has been carefully considered. A White Paper will be published shortly, setting out the Government's proposals.

Dental Services

66. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with leaders of the dental profession on a new National Health Service contract for general dental services; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Government indicated in the White Paper on primary care published last year that they would discuss new arrangements for the remuneration of general dental practitioners with the profession. Officials of the Department have already begun such discussions relating initially to the collection of the necessary information and the technical points which need to be clarified before the start of formal negotiations, which we hope will be later in the year.

Community Care

68. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent represenations he has received on the Griffiths report, "Community Care: Agenda for Action"; and if he will make a statement.

107. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about community care following the publication of the Griffiths report.

114. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the Griffiths report on community care; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

132. **Mr. George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on the Griffiths report, "Community Care: Agenda for Action"; and if he will make a statement.

134. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on the Griffiths report, "Community Care: Agenda for Action"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received 102 representations from interested individuals and organisations and will take account of them in framing our own proposals.

Organ Transplantation

69. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the organ transplantation programme.

Mrs. Currie: According to provisional figures provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the major rise in organ transplantation is continuing. The number of cadaveric transplants of kidneys, hearts, heart/lungs and livers performed on NHS-entitled patients in the United Kingdom is as follows:

	Number
1 January 1987—30 June 1987	837
1 January 1988—30 June 1988	1,160

These figures reveal an increase of 39 per cent. in the number of transplants carried out. The factors contributing to this splendid achievement are described in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on 14 June 1988 at columns *156-57*.

Doctors, Dentists and Nurses

70. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the ratios of doctors, dentists and nurses per head of population when the National Health Service was founded; and what are the comparable figures for 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Newton: The ratios for NHS staff in 1949, the earliest year for which NHS staffing figures are available, 1978 and 1986 are as follows:

NHS staff in post per 100,000 population[1]
England—at 30 September

	[2]1949	1978	1986
Medical[3]	30·0	75·5	85·9
Dental[3]	1·3	5·5	5·6
Nursing and Midwifery[4]	361·7	752·7	852·2

Sources:
DHSS annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.
Office of population censuses and surveys mid-term estimates.
[1] Ratios calculated using NHS staff in post and mid-term population figures.
[2] 1949 figures are based on hospital staff in post estimates. With the NHS reorganisation on 1 April 1974, responsibilities for community health services were transferred from local authorities to the NHS. the figures quoted for 1949 will not therefore be truly comparable with those for 1978 and 1986.
[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.
[4] Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff.
Note: General practitioners (GPs) are not included in these figures as they are not NHS employees.

Private Nursing Homes

73. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards health authorities financing out of their budgets private nursing homes within the precincts of National Health Service hospitals.

88. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards health authorities financing out of their budgets private nursing homes within the precincts of National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards health authorities financing out of their budgets private nursing homes within the precincts of National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) earlier today.

Harris Tweed Weavers

76. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will agree to review the position of self-employed Harris Tweed weavers under the new social security arrangements.

Mr. Portillo: The rules for determining claims for income-related benefits by the self-employed are similar to those existing under the previous schemes. Self-employed people may be entitled to income support if they are working less than 24 hours and their income, including any earnings, is insufficient for their needs. Decisions on individual claims are made by independent adjudication officers and these carry the right of appeal to an independent appeal tribunal.

Disablement Benefit

78. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he is giving to the introduction of a system of benefits for disabled people irrespective of how their disability arose.

90. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he is giving to the introduction of a system of benefits for disabled people irrespective of how their disability arose.

106. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he is giving to the introduction of a system of benefits for disabled people irrespective of how their disability arose.

119. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he is giving to the introduction of a system of benefits for disabled people irrespective of how their disability arose.

Mr. Scott: I recently announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 7 June at column *575* that the first report from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on its surveys of disabled people will be published in September and that further reports will follow in 1988 and 1989. As the results of the surveys become available, we shall be considering their implications for benefits for disabled people. This consideration is likely to include the question of different types and rates of benefit for people disabled in different circumstances.

Maternity Units

82. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with chairmen of regional and district health authorities about retaining small, peripheral maternity units.

Mrs. Currie: Maternity services are discussed in the regional ministerial reviews.

In-Patient Treatment (Greater Manchester)

85. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people received in-patient treatment at hospitals in Greater Manchester in 1987, and what were the comparable figures for the previous five years.

Mrs. Currie: 1986 is the latest year for which data are available. The information is given in the table.

In-patient cases treated, Greater Manchester District Health Authorities, 1981 to 1986

District Health Authorities	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Bolton	32,894	32,598	33,471	33,837	35,289	35,385
Bury	20,990	20,683	20,362	20,988	21,166	22,125
North Manchester	40,059	38,706	41,236	40,534	40,496	40,133
Central Manchester	41,778	41,613	43,053	44,975	46,418	46,288
South Manchester	63,717	64,425	67,532	68,509	69,361	69,798
Oldham	24,448	25,398	26,480	27,581	29,273	28,902
Rochdale	20,287	20,877	20,137	20,973	21,597	22,962
Salford	40,397	38,913	43,591	42,806	42,860	43,636

District Health Authorities	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Stockport	33,055	32,969	34,637	34,822	36,718	37,623
Tameside and Glossop	21,324	20,792	23,555	23,480	26,858	27,894
Trafford	18,288	16,405	18,604	18,982	18,487	17,678
Wigan	33,395	32,422	34,301	35,080	35,679	36,871
TOTAL	390,632	385,801	406,959	412,567	424,202	429,295

Hospital Building

89. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the hospital building programme.

Mrs. Currie: Implementation of the programme continues to make good progress. Information held centrally shows that there are currently 504 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, at various stages of planning, design and construction. During the last year an additional 62 building schemes were completed at locations throughout the country. These new facilities are providing a better health care environment for patients and more attractive and productive working conditions for staff.

116. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major hospital building schemes have been started and completed since 1978.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally shows that 295 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been started and completed since 1978.

131. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major hospital building schemes are currently under construction.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally shows there are currently 133 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, under construction.

139. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the number of hospital building projects completed since June 1979 and the number planned for construction in the next 10 years.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally shows that 316 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been completed since 1979. In addition, there are some 370 schemes currently in planning or design which are forecast to start construction as part of a ten-year rolling programme. New schemes are continually being added to this programme.

Nurse Education

91. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the future of nurse education.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the timetable for the implementation of Project 2000.

Mr. Newton: The details and timetable for carrying forward Project 2000 are dependent on discussions with the statutory nursing bodies on a range of issues, which we are pursuing. We share the nursing bodies' view that a transition period of about 10 years will be necessary.

Waiting Lists

93. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to improve the flow of information between health authorities on the length of waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: As part of the waiting list initiative we are encouraging health authorities to make better and more up-to-date information about waiting lists and times widely available. This could include improvement to the flow of information between health authorities and will also provide general practitioners with information to help them decide where to refer their patients.

120. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress his Department has made in reducing health services waiting lists over the past five years; and what new plans he has, or is considering, to reduce them further.

Mr. Newton: In the fives years from September 1982 to September 1987 waiting lists have fallen from 726,000 to 662,000 on a comparable basis, a reduction of 9 per cent. This is a reduction of 12 per cent. from the highest ever figure at March 1979.

In 1986 we launched the waiting list initiative, backed by a special waiting list fund of £25 million in 1987-88 and £30 million in 1988-89. Last year health authorities used the fund to treat some 100,000 additional in-patients and day cases and some 40,000 additional out-patients. This year they plan to treat a further 107,000 in-patients/day cases and 80,000 out-patients. Health authorities are also taking vigorous action locally, including setting targets for the reduction of excessive waiting time and developing local statements of policy for out-patient and in-patient waiting times.

The initiative will continue for two more years.

Medical Laboratory Staff

97. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the pay and working conditions of the medical laboratory scientific officers within the National Health Service.

128. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the pay and working conditions of the medical laboratory scientific officers within the National Health Service.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the pay and working conditions of the medical laboratory scientific officers within the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) earlier today.

National Health Service (40th Anniversary)

110. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service.

Mr. Moore: The Health Service in England has made remarkable progress over the last 40 years. The health of the population has improved and the Health Service can take much of the credit for the elimination, or virtual elimination, of many once common diseases. Above all, it has been successful in providing access to good quality care regardless of the ability to pay.

In the acute sector there has been massive growth both in activity and in the application of new technology to health care. For example, the number of in-patient cases rose from less than 3 million in 1949 to 6·5 million now. This period saw remarkable changes in the medical and surgical treatment of heart disease across the whole age range. Important advances have also been made in the surgical treatment of elderly people.

Another important example of the progress which has been made is the introduction of organ transplants. We have more patients with a successful kidney transplant than any other country in Europe, and the successful kidney transplant programme was followed in this decade by the development of the heart and liver transplant programme.

These advances in medical treatment have been supported by advances in technology. For example, the introduction of powerful diagnostic tools such as computerised tomography scanning and magnetic resonance imaging has enabled diagnoses to be made which would have been impossible a few years ago.

Advances have not, of course, been limited to the acute sector. Our primary care system is one of the best in the world. The average list size of a GP has now fallen to almost 2,000. However, the most significant change has been in the way GPs work. The rise of group practices and the significant increase in the number of staff working in support of family doctors, has meant that a wider range of services are becoming available to more people. Major changes have also occurred in services for mentally ill, mentally handicapped, elderly and physically disabled people. Progress towards community care has enabled many to live useful and fulfilling lives in the community where once institutional care was the only option.

Improvements in all sectors of health care have been matched by improvements in facilities and premises. There are many new hospitals with modern facilities. The current NHS building programme comprises over 500 major schemes; and last year saw the completion of 62 schemes including the official opening of the new Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree.

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on the active promotion of good health and this approach will continue. The more illness can be prevented the more resources will be available to treat these conditions which cannot yet be prevented. Advances are also being made in the early detection of disease by screening. In particular, we are currently developing the first nationwide breast cancer screening service in the world, and we have adopted a similar approach to cervical cancer.

None of these advances could have been achieved without the commitment and dedication of health service staff. Their contribution cannot and should not be under-estimated. For the future, the Government remain firmly committed to a National Health Service which provides high quality health care on the basis of need, not on the ability to pay. Since 1979 the Government have amply demonstrated that commitment by increasing spending on the Health Service to record levels. The Health Service has responded with a vigorous drive for greater efficiency which, backed by additional resources, has enabled more patients to be treated than ever before. The Government are confident that the Health Service can continue to build on these successes by providing services in an effective and efficient way and responding positively to the growing level of consumer awareness. The Government's overall objective for the future of the Health Service is to secure the best possible deal for the public both as taxpayer and consumer.

Social Fund

112. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Portillo: The social fund successfully came into operation on 11 April and is providing people with valuable help for exceptional expenses. That is a tribute to the thorough preparations which were made by the staff of the Department. We are placing monthly statistics in the Library which show the position in each local office.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will redistribute social fund budgets between the local offices at Newbury and Oxford.

Mr. Portillo: On 1 July, the local office at Oxford assumed responsibility for serving those residents of Oxfordshire previously served by the local office at Newbury. These were, principally, the inhabitants of Didcot, Grove and Wantage. Accordingly the allocation to Newbury has been reduced proportionately and the money re-allocated to Oxford. The new allocations for the period 11 April 1988-31 March 1989 are as follows:

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget* £
Newbury	34,902	80,251
Oxford	197,597	461,194

Hepatitis Vaccine

113. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will instruct all district health authorities to issue hepatitis vaccine free of charge to all nursing staff who may be at risk; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The current memorandum from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which advises the Health Departments on all aspects of immunisation, recommends that specific groups should be considered for vaccination against hepatitis B. The JCVI has reviewed this guidance and publication is expected shortly.

Elderly Persons (Benefits)

123. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much real spending on benefits for elderly people has changed since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Total public expenditure on social security benefits for the elderly increased in real terms by 27 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Residential Homes

125. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department's rates for elderly people living in residential homes were last reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: All the limits were reconsidered as part of the last annual process of uprating benefit levels and as a result certain of the income support limits for people in independent residential care and nursing homes were increased on 11 April 1988. This followed a review which took account of a range of information on costs and charges in all categories of homes. The next general uprating of benefits will be in April 1989 and the position of people in homes, including elderly people in residential care homes, will again be considered, taking account of similar factors, in advance of that date. The Department would welcome any fresh information from hon. Members, or other sources, which might assist in that process.

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet reached conclusions following consultation about the level of registration and inspection fees for private residential care homes; and if he has any proposals to change the fees for the registration and inspection of nursing homes.

Mr. Newton: Yes. In the light of the survey carried out by the social services inspectorate and the Welsh Office social work service to establish more clearly the costs of registration and inspection, and of consultation with interested bodies on how best to take account of its findings, regulations have been laid to increase the fees with effect from 1 August 1988. The home registration fee will go up from £550 to £570; the manager registration fee from £100 to £155; the change of owner fee from £550 in some cases and £350 in others to a standard £570; and the annual fee per place from £15 to £28. These increases reflect our policy that authorities should have the means to do the work properly entailed in ensuring acceptable standards through the improved system of registration and inspection introduced under the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

The increased annual fee per place takes account of the additional requirement, also contained in the new regulations, that homes should be inspected at least twice a year, instead of once as at present. Guidance to local authorities will be that at least one of those inspections should be without notice.

We have also taken the opportunity of the new regulations and guidance to follow up a number of issues identified in Lady Wagner's report. Thus the regulations will now require that registered homes must keep a record showing for each individual resident any money or other valuables received by the home on the resident's behalf, and accounting for its use. The guidance will seek to reinforce existing arrangements to ensure effective complaints procedures, including giving residents information about the role of the local government ombudsman.

Pending the outcome of further steps to obtain more detailed information about the costs of registering and inspecting nursing homes, the fees chargeable in this respect are being increased, also from 1 August 1988, broadly in line with inflation since the present fees were set in April 1986. Regulations have been laid accordingly which provide for the home registration fee to go up from £550 to £600; the change of owner from £350 to £380; the annual fee per bed from £20 to £22; and the annual fee where there are no overnight beds from £175 to £190.

NHS (Pay)

126. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any further plans to introduce regional pay settlements in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The offer made by the management side of the Administrative and Clerical Staffs Whitley council on 3 June provided for discussions to continue on restructuring and the introduction of a facility for some local flexibility in pay.

X-ray Equipment

129. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what monitoring of private health service X-ray equipment takes place; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: All users of X-ray equipment are subject to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and related legislation. The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 put a duty upon employers to appoint a radiation protection adviser whose functions include the monitoring of X-ray equipment.

District health authorities have a general responsibility to ensure that medical, surgical and nursing equipment in private nursing homes and hospitals is adequately maintained. As part of this responsibility, they must inspect each establishment at least twice a year.

Society of Perfusionists

130. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Society of Perfusionists with regard to the status and grading of the profession; if he will agree to meet a deputation from the society; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend recently declined an invitation from a sub-committee of the Society of Perfusionists of Great Britain and Ireland to discuss with them the pay and conditions of service of perfusionists. Negotiations on pay and conditions are matters for the Professional and Technical Staffs B Whitley council.

Income Support

135. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis the compensatory element for 20 per cent. of the community charge will be calculated for incorporation in income support rates from April 1989.

Mr. Portillo: Decisions on the level of income support rates for April 1989 will be taken in the autumn.

Cook/Chill System

138. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the full cost of implementing the cook/chill system of catering within the Wakefield health authority.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 10 May 1988, at column 85.

Bed Closures

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many beds have been lost in National Health Service hospitals in each year from 1979 to 1987 in each of the constituencies of Hendon South, Mid-Worcestershire, West Lancashire, Fylde, Staffordshire Moorlands and Amber Valley.

Mrs. Currie: The information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. Details of the number of available beds in the district health authorities wholly or mainly covering the parliamentary constituencies are given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the district health authorities who may be able to provide the information relating to the parliamentary constituencies. For completeness, the numbers of in and day patients treated in each health authority are included.

Average daily available beds by selected District Health Authority 1979-86

District Health Authority	*Constituency*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Southern Derbyshire	Amber Valley	4,208	4,323	3,973	3,935	3,929	3,734	3,535	3,438
Barnet	Hendon South	2,841	2,800	2,771	2,748	2,670	2,551	2,445	2,324
Worcester	Mid-Worcestershire	1,684	1,645	1,619	1,629	1,603	1,567	1,461	1,295
North Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands	3,492	3,499	3,504	3,448	3,406	3,358	3,336	3,296
Blackpool, Wyre, Fylde	Fylde	1,564	1,576	1,664	1,733	1,732	1,737	1,756	1,730
West Lancashire	West Lancashire	886	862	854	851	851	867	812	790

District Health Authority	*Constituency*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Percentage change 1979-86*
Number of in-patients treated for years 1979 to 1986										
Southern Derbyshire	Amber Valley	47,540	49,757	49,839	48,247	51,569	53,558	53,724	54,919	15·5
Barnet	Hendon South	33,616	35,734	37,082	36,495	36,623	37,361	37,322	35,715	6·2
Worcester	Mid Worcester	24,304	24,967	24,586	24,826	25,729	26,854	27,950	27,535	13·3
North Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands	48,195	53,210	52,164	51,911	55,699	58,673	59,280	59,918	24·3
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	Fylde	30,727	30,947	30,644	32,154	34,023	35,896	37,146	37,972	23·6
West Lancashire	West Lancashire	13,501	13,964	14,423	14,348	15,501	15,965	17,359	17,580	30·2
Number of day cases treated for years 1979 to 1986										
Southern Derbyshire	Amber Valley	2,405	2,960	3,069	3,069	3,353	3,262	3,930	4,197	74·5
Barnet	Hendon South	2,884	2,620	3,132	2,907	4,719	5,414	5,725	6,090	111·2
Worcester	Mid Worcester	2,256	2,621	2,801	2,716	2,955	2,583	2,403	2,804	24·3
North Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands	5,252	6,200	6,210	5,578	5,910	5,556	5,938	6,307	20·1
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	Fylde	6,495	7,383	8,809	9,622	6,987	7,261	9,208	9,506	46·4
West Lancashire	West Lancashire	1,284	1,267	1,690	1,744	2,360	2,361	2,708	2,740	113·4
Number of in-patients and day cases treated for years 1979 to 1986										
Southern Derbyshire	Amber Valley	49,945	52,717	52,908	51,316	54,922	56,820	57,654	59,116	18·4
Barnet	Hendon South	36,500	38,354	40,214	39,402	41,342	42,775	43,047	41,805	14·5
Worcester	Mid Worcester	26,560	27,588	27,387	27,542	28,684	29,437	30,353	30,339	14·2
North Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands	53,447	59,410	58,374	57,489	61,609	64,229	65,218	66,225	28·9
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	Fylde	37,222	38,330	39,453	41,776	41,010	43,157	46,354	47,478	27·6
West Lancashire	West Lancashire	14,785	15,231	16,113	16,092	17,861	18,326	20,067	20,320	37·4

In Vitro Fertilisation

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is now in a position to announce when Government legislation will be introduced setting forth guidelines for the use of in vitro fertilisation and whether discussion is now being undertaken between his Department and the medical professions.

Mr. Newton: We have made clear our intention to introduce legislation during this Parliament. Wide consultation with the medical profession and other interested bodies preceded the publication of the White Paper, "Human Fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation" (Cm. 259) in November last year. Copies of the responses have been placed in the Library.

Meningitis

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of meningitis have been reported in each of the past six months; how many resulted in death; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Meningitis can be caused by a number of different organisms. My hon. Friend may be particularly interested in meningococcal meningitis; data for this plus all forms of acute meningitis are shown in the table. The data are not available in exactly the form requested; notification data for infectious diseases are compiled on a weekly basis, and are shown in the table by approximate monthly period. The data should be regarded as provisional.

(Provisional: to allow for corrected disease notifications and late death registrations)
Number of notifications of all forms of acute meningitis and meningococcal meningitis; and death registrations of meningococcal infection (ICD 9 036) by approximate monthly period
England and Wales 1988

Period	Notifications		Deaths[1]
	Acute	Meningococcal	Meningococcal infection
26 December 1987 to 22 January 1988	352	199	24
23 January 1988 to 19 February 1988	258	123	15
20 February 1988 to 18 March 1988	248	122	21
19 March 1988 to 15 April 1988	264	131	16
16 April 1988 to 13 May 1988	221	108	16
14 May 1988 to 10 June 1988	191	80	11

[1] Includes all deaths assigned to meningococcal infection (International Classification of Diseases 9th Revision code 036).

Social Services Staff (Attacks)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each local authority area in England and Wales the total number of attacks on members of local authority social services departments during the course of their duties, for each year since 1979, with the annual percentage changes;

(2) what consultation has taken place between the Government and professional bodies regarding physical attacks on members of local authority social services departments during the course of their duties;

(3) what steps the Government intends to take to monitor and combat the risks of physical assault faced by social workers in the course of their duties.

Mr. Newton: Information is not held centrally about the numbers of attacks made on employees by clients of local authority social services departments. A departmental advisory committee has reviewed the problem of physical assaults on staff working in the health and personal social services and in the social security organisation. Its findings, with recommendations for action locally, will be published shortly. These will reinforce advice on the prevention and containment of violent incidents provided in 1987 by both the Association of Directors of Social Services and by the Health Services Advisory Committee of the Health and Safety Commission. The major professional interests concerned with social services were represented on the advisory committee and on a consultative group established by the chief inspector of the Department's social services inspectorate.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing, for each local health authority in England and Wales, the total number of occupational therapists, the number per 1,000 of the population, and the number per 1,000 of the population aged over 65 years, over 75 years and over 85 years.

Mr. Newton: The table shows the number of occupational therapists in each district health authority and the rate per 100,000 population. It would not be meaningful to provide the ratio of staff to population in specific age groups as occupational therapists provide care to patients of all ages. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Qualified occupational therapists in post[1] and rates per 100,000 population[2] by district health authority at 30 September, 1986

Health Authority	Qualified Occupational Therapists	
	Whole-time equivalent	Rate per 100,000 population
England[3]	4,261	9·0
Northern RHA	181	5·9
Yorkshire RHA	290	8·1
Trent RHA	445	9·6
East Anglia RHA	239	12·0
North West Thames RHA	330	9·5
North East Thames RHA	322	8·6
South East Thames RHA	313	8·6
South West Thames RHA	288	9·7
Wessex RHA	280	9·7
Oxford RHA	259	10·4
South Western RHA	362	11·4
West Midlands RHA	376	7·2
Mersey RHA	205	8·5
North Western RHA	372	9·3
Hartlepool	1	1·1
North Tees	7	4·0
South Tees	21	7·1
East Cumbria	17	9·7
South Cumbria	5	3·0
West Cumbria	10	7·5
Darlington	10	8·3
Durham	10	4·4
North West Durham	6	7·3
South West Durham	3	2·1
Northumberland	16	5·3
Gateshead	10	4·6
Newcastle Upon Tyne	42	15·0
North Tyneside	2	1·0
South Tyneside	8	5·1
Sunderland	12	3·9
Hull	20	6·4
East Yorkshire	10	5·2
Grimsby	6	3·6
Scunthorpe	6	3·2
Northallerton	8	7·3
York	33	12·5
Scarborough	16	10·8
Harrogate	26	19·0
Bradford	13	3·8
Airedale	24	13·7
Calderdale	9	4·5
Huddersfield	17	8·2
Dewsbury	10	6·0
Leeds Western	40	11·1
Leeds Eastern	29	8·2
Wakefield	18	12·5
Pontefract	7	4·4
North Derbyshire	33	9·1
South Derbyshire	64	12·2
Leicestershire	53	6·1
North Lincolnshire	31	11·7

Health Authority	Qualified Occupational Therapists	
	Whole-time equivalent	Rate per 100,000 population
South Lincolnshire	16	5·2
Bassetlaw	2	1·6
Central Nottinghamshire	29	10·3
Nottingham	80	12·9
Barnsley	15	6·6
Doncaster	15	5·2
Rotherham	34	13·4
Sheffield	73	13·7
Cambridge	48	17·7
Peterborough	20	10·1
West Suffolk	22	9·8
East Suffolk	38	11·8
Norwich	71	15·2
Great Yarmouth	14	7·3
West Norfolk and Wisbech	19	10·3
Huntingdon	7	5·2
North Bedfordshire	21	8·4
South Bedfordshire	20	7·4
North Hertfordshire	14	7·5
East Hertfordshire	14	4·6
North West Hertfordshire	30	11·3
South West Hertfordshire	15	6·2
Barnet	30	9·7
Harrow	17	8·4
Hillingdon	13	5·6
Hounslow and Spelthorne	21	7·4
Ealing	23	7·8
Brent	31	12·0
Paddington	22	18·0
Riverside	61	21·1
Basildon and Thurrock	15	5·3
Mid Essex	21	7·4
North East Essex	33	11·0
West Essex	23	8·9
Southend	21	6·6
Barking, Havering	14	3·1
Hampstead	26	23·7
Bloomsbury	54	41·2
Islington	17	9·9
City and Hackney	23	12·0
Newham	12	5·8
Tower Hamlets	18	11·8
Enfield	25	9·3
Haringey	8	4·0
Redbridge	6	2·6
Waltham Forest	7	3·2
Brighton	28	9·3
Eastbourne	18	7·9
Hastings	12	7·3
South East Kent	17	6·4
Canterbury and Thanet	16	5·3
Dartford and Gravesham	10	4·7
Maidstone	18	9·0
Medway	15	4·7
Tunbridge Wells	17	8·8
Bexley	19	8·6
Greenwich	14	6·5
Bromley	24	8·2
West Lambeth	34	21·0
Camberwell	15	6·9
Lewis and North Southwark	55	17·4
North West Surrey	20	9·7
West Surrey & North East Hants	23	8·3
South West Surrey	12	6·5
Mid Surrey	11	6·6
East Surrey	33	17·9
Chichester	23	12·6

Health Authority	Qualified Occupational Therapists	
	Whole-time equivalent	Rate per 100,000 population
Mid Downs	20	7·3
Worthing	18	7·4
Croydon	23	7·2
Kingston and Esher	16	8·9
Richmond, Twickenham	26	11·2
Wandsworth	50	26·3
Merton and Sutton	13	4·0
East Dorset	52	11·8
West Dorset	32	16·2
Portsmouth	25	4·8
South West Hampshire	55	13·1
Winchester	16	7·5
Basingstoke	21	9·7
Salisbury	22	17·6
Swindon	14	6·3
Bath	33	8·3
Isle of Wight	11	9·0
East Berkshire	18	4·9
West Berkshire	30	6·7
Aylesbury	27	18·9
Wycombe	21	7·8
Milton Keynes	12	7·7
Kettering	32	12·6
Northampton	23	7·8
Oxfordshire	96	17·7
Bristol and Weston	46	12·5
Frenchay	45	20·3
Southmead	30	12·7
Cornwall	31	7·0
Exeter	53	17·6
North Devon	14	10·6
Plymouth	34	10·3
Torbay	22	9·1
Cheltenham	18	8·7
Gloucester	33	10·7
Somerset	37	9·2
Bromsgrove and Redditch	16	9·8
Hereford	14	9·1
Kidderminster	10	9·5
Worcester	34	14·6
Salop	37	9·5
Mid Staffordshire	12	3·7
North Staffordshire	32	6·9
South East Staffordshire	18	7·2
Rugby	6	7·4
North Warwickshire	1	0·6
South Warwickshire	12	5·4
Central Birmingham	22	11·9
East Birmingham	10	4·8
North Birmingham	8	4·8
South Birmingham	34	13·6
West Birmingham	11	5·0
Coventry	23	7·5
Dudley	29	9·8
Sandwell	9	2·8
Solihull	12	5·7
Walsall	8	3·0
Wolverhampton	19	7·7
Chester	31	17·5
Crewe	12	4·7
Halton	12	8·3
Macclesfield	18	10·1
Warrington	8	4·4
Liverpool	35	7·1
St. Helens and Knowsley	26	7·5
Southport and Formby	11	9·0
South Sefton	22	12·1
Wirral	32	9·0

Health Authority	Qualified Occupational Therapists	
	Whole-time equivalent	Rate per 100,000 population
Lancaster	24	18·1
Blackpool, Wyre	19	6·1
Preston	32	25.8
Blackburn, Hyndburn	20	7·3
Burnley, Pendle	14	6·3
West Lancashire	17	15·7
Chorley and South Ribble	8	3·9
Bolton	23	8·6
Bury	14	8·2
North Manchester	32	22·1
Central Manchester	21	16·5
South Manchester	34	18·5
Oldham	10	4·6
Rochdale	12	5·5
Salford	41	17·1
Stockport	27	9·2
Tameside and Glossop	5	1·9
Trafford	8	3·7
Wigan	13	4·1

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
[1] Figures independently rounded to nearest whole-time equivalent.
[2] Calculated on unrounded staff in post and population estimates figures.
[3] Figures include staff in post in London Post Graduate Special Health Authorities.

Community Care

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to replies on 15 March, *Official Report*, columns *553-54*, what steps he has taken to encourage local authorities to collect data on *(a)* the discharge and subsequent care of people from long-stay mental illness and mental handicap institutions, *(b)* the number of carers in their area, *(c)* the provision of home help support, district nursing services, social work support, or other services to carers and *(d)* the number of households with a mentally handicapped member and the numbers receiving sitting services, respite care or holiday relief schemes.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has not issued guidance on the collection of such data. It is for local authorities to decide what information they may need in addition to that collected centrally. The range of data to meet central requirements is reviewed regularly within the Department and with local authority representatives at the DHSS/LA technical working group on personal social services statistics.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to assess whether the execution of National Health Service contracts for laundry and linen services are properly monitored; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) on 1 July at column *394*.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the extent to which competitive tendering in the National Health Service has released resources for patient care; and what areas he identifies for improvement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 14 June at column *164*. We encourage health authorities to consider the possibility of competitive tendering in any area of their services where this is seen to offer scope for increased efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. Progress is now being made both in going to tender for a package of related services, and also in extending the range of services that have been put out to tender by individual authorities.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he gives to health authorities, in assessing competitive tenders, to ensure that the costs of in-house National Health Service laundry and linen services are accurately assessed.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) on 1 July at column *446*.

Board and Lodging Regulations

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the working of the board and lodging regulations as they affect young people.

Mr. Portillo: Income support regulations at present provide for all boarders to receive benefit on broadly the same lines as under supplementary benefit legislation with some minor adjustments to align those provisions with the new income support scheme. From April 1989, people in ordinary board and lodging accommodation will be able to claim income support for their living expenses and housing benefit for their accommodation costs in the same way as everyone else in rented accommodation.

Genetic Coding (Infants)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with professors of medicine at Charing Cross hospital and the medical faculty of the university of Leicester concerning records of the genetic coding of infants for purposes of the diagnosis of disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: None.

Geriatric Beds (Oxford RHA)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many geriatric beds there are per thousand population in each of the Oxford regional health authority districts.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Available beds per thousand population, geriatric sector, Oxford RHA, 1986

Health authority	Average daily number of available beds	Resident population[1] all ages (thousands)	Resident population[1] 65 and over (thousands)	Beds per 1,000 population all ages	Beds per 1,000 population 65 and over
East Berkshire	361·3	45·5	0·6	4·6	
West Berkshire	310	445·0	53·6	0·7	5·8
Aylesbury	135	142·5	17·0	1·0	8·0
Wycombe	190	272·0	36·4	0·7	5·2
Milton Keynes	84	162·0	14·0	0·5	6·0
Kettering	286	253·2	37·4	1·1	7·6
Northampton	298	301·3	41·2	1·0	7·2
Oxfordshire	312	540·0	69·5	0·6	4·5
Oxford RHA total	1,825	2,476·3	314·3	0·7	5·8

[1] Mid year population estimate.

Postgraduate Medical Education

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the outcome of his review of the role and functioning of the Council for Postgraduate Medical Education in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Following the review of its future role by the council itself, and further extensive consultation by officials of the Department, I have concluded that change is needed. On 1 August 1988, therefore, the present Council for Postgraduate Medical Education in England and Wales will be replaced by a new Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical Education.

The purpose of the standing committee will be to address issues concerned with the practical delivery of high standards of postgraduate medical education. We will be looking to the committee to identify these issues and, drawing on the relevant expertise in the profession, to put forward proposals clearly identifying the action to be taken centrally and locally. The committee's work will complement the advice which we already receive from a number of bodies concerned with medical and dental education, including the medical royal colleges and the education committees of the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council.

The chairman and members of the standing committee will be appointed by my right hon. Friend from recommendations made by the chief medical officer and the chief dental officer, who will seek advice from relevant professional bodies. The first chairman will be professor Dame Barbara Clayton CBE MD PhD FRCP PRCPath; members will be selected so as to cover the widest range of educational, professional and service interests.

The setting up of this new body, after extended consultation with professional and education interests, reflects the Government's commitment to maintaining, and if possible enhancing, the standards of medical education of which this country is justly proud.

Income

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what level of household income is denoted by each decile of the population below 10 per cent., below 20 per cent., below 30 per cent., below 40 per cent., and below 50 per cent., as in tables A1,2,3 and D1,2,3 in 1981, 1983 and 1985 in "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis".

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* As explained in the report of the technical review of the low-income statistics, and in the technical annex to the households below average income statistics, to enable meaningful comparisons, the actual cash incomes received by households are adjusted to reflect varying household size and composition and expressed in terms of individuals in households. National average income per individual, calculated after these adjustments, is shown in the table. The figures therefore provide a basis for comparisons of relative incomes between individual groups and individual years (as in the published tables); but do not provide an indication of the actual cash incomes of the households concerned.

Average Incomes of Individuals in Households 1981, 1983 and 1985
(Adjusted for Family Size and Composition)
Great Britain—Current Prices—Weekly Basis

	Percentile of the income distribution					
	Below 10 per cent.	Below 20 per cent.	Below 30 per cent.	Below 40 per cent.	Below 50 per cent.	Total
Tables A1 and A2			*All individuals—before housing costs*			
1981	42·95	50·95	56·65	61·80	66·85	104·70
1983	49·05	58·60	65·25	71·10	76·70	119·20
1985	58·80	68·70	75·90	82·55	89·25	140·95
Table A3			*Dependent children—before housing costs*			
1981	42·55	49·10	55·55	59·85	65·20	91·40
1983	51·10	58·65	64·40	70·20	75·50	106·95
1985	59·00	66·80	73·65	80·25	87·55	125·85
Tables D1 and D2			*All individuals—after housing costs*			
1981	31·40	39·45	45·30	50·70	55·95	93·00

	Percentile of the income distribution					
	Below 10 per cent.	*Below 20 per cent.*	*Below 30 per cent.*	*Below 40 per cent.*	*Below 50 per cent.*	*Total*
1983	35·90	45·65	52·10	57·75	63·30	104·20
1985	42·20	52·15	59·10	65·65	72·20	120·80
Table D3						
	Dependent children—after housing costs					
1981	31·70	38·35	44·35	50·10	55·05	80·05
1983	39·50	46·20	51·80	57·50	63·15	91·55
1985	44·20	50·85	57·30	64·60	71·10	104·95

Notes: Household income is defined after the payment of any income tax and national insurance and the receipt of any social security benefits. Individuals within households have been ranked according to their household incomes. Table numbers refer to "Households Below Average Income 1981-85". This publication, copies of which are in the Library, provides further details on the methods and assumptions used in these analyses.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will specify what level of household income is denoted by below 50 per cent., 60 per cent., 70 per cent., 80 per cent., 90 per cent. and 100 per cent. of average income as in tables C1, 2, 3 and F1, 2, 3 in 1981, 1983 and 1985 from "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis".

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 June]:* As explained in the report of the technical review of the low-income statistics, and in the technical annex to the households below average income statistics, to enable meaningful comparisons, the actual cash incomes received by households are adjusted to reflect varying household size and composition and expressed in terms of individuals in households. National average income per individual, calculated after these adjustments, is shown in the table.

The figures therefore provide a basis for comparisons of relative incomes between individual groups and individual years (as in the published tables); but do not provide an indication of the actual cash incomes of the households concerned.

Average incomes of individuals in households 1981, 1983 and 1985 (adjusted for family size and composition)
Great Britain—current prices—weekly basis

	Average equivalised income below a given proportion of the average					
	below 0·5	*below 0·6*	*below 0·7*	*below 0·8*	*below 0·9*	*below 1·0*
Tables C1 and C2—All individuals—before housing costs						
1981	41·10	50·30	57·10	62·65	67·75	72·35
1983	46·00	57·00	65·20	71·85	77·55	83·00
1985	57·80	68·80	77·20	84·55	90·70	96·85
Table C3—Dependent children—before housing costs						
1981	41·10	48·50	55·30	60·90	66·10	70·55
1983	48·90	57·45	64·40	70·90	76·25	81·50
1985	58·30	66·85	74·80	82·40	88·95	94·95
Tables F1 and F2—All individuals—after housing costs						
1981	35·10	41·75	47·15	51·95	57·05	61·20
1983	38·00	47·35	54·10	59·25	64·55	69·10
1985	46·20	55·40	62·05	68·20	73·45	78·70
Table F3—Dependent children—after housing costs						
1981	34·75	40·45	46·45	51·25	56·30	60·25
1983	40·95	47·75	53·80	59·10	64·15	68·50
1985	46·90	53·65	60·50	67·30	72·50	77·35

Notes: Household income is defined after the payment of any income tax and national insurance and the receipt of any social security benefits. Individuals within households have been ranked according to their household incomes. Table numbers refer to "Households Below Average Income 1981-85". This publication, copies of which are in the Library, provides further details on the methods and assumption used in these analyses.

General Hospitals

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of general hospitals in each district health authority in England and Wales in April 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1988.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* I regret I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. The available information is given in the table. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Number of general[2] hospitals by District Health Authority, 1979, 1983, 1985—1986

District Health Authority	*1979*	*1983*	*1985*	*1986*
Hartlepool	1	1	1	1
North Tees	1	1	1	1
South Tees	9	6	6	6
East Cumbria	[1]	6	6	6
South Cumbria	[1]	4	2	2
West Cumbria	4	4	4	4
Darlington	2	2	2	2
Durham	2	2	1	1
North West Durham	2	1	1	1
South West Durham	2	2	2	2
Northumberland	8	7	7	7
Gateshead	3	3	3	3
Newcastle upon Tyne	4	4	4	4
North Tyneside	3	3	4	4
South Tyneside	3	3	2	2

District Health Authority	1979	1983	1985	1986
Sunderland	3	3	2	2
Hull	4	5	5	5
East Yorkshire	4	4	4	4
Grimsby	[1]	3	1	1
Scunthorpe	3	3	3	3
Northallerton	4	4	4	4
York	4	2	2	2
Scarborough	5	4	4	4
Harrogate	3	3	3	3
Bradford	5	4	4	4
Airedale	3	3	3	3
Calderdale	2	2	2	2
Huddersfield	2	2	2	2
Dewsbury	3	2	2	2
Leeds Western	[1]	4	4	4
Leeds Eastern	[1]	2	2	2
Wakefield	3	3	2	2
Pontefract	3	3	3	3
North Derbyshire	5	5	5	5
Southern Derbyshire	7	6	6	6
Leicestershire	11	11	12	12
North Lincolnshire	7	6	4	4
South Lincolnshire	5	5	5	5
Bassetlaw	2	2	2	2
Central Nottinghamshire	3	3	3	3
Nottingham	4	3	2	2
Barnsley	1	1	1	1
Doncaster	[1]	2	2	2
Rotherham	[1]	1	1	1
Sheffield	[1]	3	3	3
Cambridge	1	1	1	1
Peterborough	4	5	4	4
West Suffolk	[1]	3	3	3
East Suffolk	[1]	4	4	4
Norwich	7	7	6	6
Great Yarmouth	5	5	5	5
West Norfolk and Wisbech	3	2	2	2
Huntingdon	[1]	3	2	2
North Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1
South Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1
North Bedfordshire	3	3	3	3
East Hertfordshire	3	3	3	3
North West Hertfordshire	3	3	3	3
South West Hertfordshire	3	3	3	2
Barnet	5	5	5	5
Harrow	2	2	2	2
Hillingdon	6	5	5	5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	[1]	5	4	4
Ealing	5	2	2	2
Brent	4	2	1	1
Paddington and North Kensington	3	3	4	4
Riverside	[1]	4	4	4
Basildon and Thurrock	3	3	2	2
Mid Essex[3]	4	4	5	5
North East Essex	6	6	6	7
West Essex	6	4	4	4
Southend	2	2	2	2
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	5	5	4	4
Hampstead	[1]	1	1	1
Bloomsbury	[1]	5	5	4
Islington	[1]	3	3	3
City and Hackney	3	3	2	2
Newham	6	6	2	2
Tower Hamlets	4	3	2	2
Enfield	4	2	2	2
Haringey	4	3	2	2
Redbridge	2	2	2	2
Waltham Forest	5	5	4	3
Brighton	7	6	5	5
Eastbourne	3	3	3	3

District Health Authority	1979	1983	1985	1986
Hastings	4	4	4	4
South East Kent	6	4	4	4
Canterbury and Thanet	7	6	5	5
Dartford and Gravesham	4	4	4	4
Maidstone	1	3	2	2
Medway	5	5	5	5
Tunbridge Wells	10	9	9	9
Bexley	2	2	2	2
Greenwich	5	3	3	3
Bromley	4	4	4	4
West Lambeth	[1]	1	1	1
Camberwell	3	3	2	2
Lewisham and North Southwark	5	3	3	3
North West Surrey	5	5	5	3
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	1	3	1	1
South West Surrey	4	4	4	4
Mid Surrey	4	4	4	4
East Surrey	7	8	5	5
Chichester	3	3	3	3
Mid Downs	4	4	3	3
Worthing	3	4	4	4
Croydon	5	4	3	3
Kingston and Esher	[1]	4	4	4
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	[1]	3	3	3
Wandsworth	5	3	[2]	[2]
Merton and Sutton	5	5	5	5
East Dorset	5	5	5	5
West Dorset	6	6	6	6
Portsmouth	7	6	6	6
South West Hampshire and Southampton	8	10	9	9
Winchester	2	2	2	2
Basingstoke	3	3	3	3
Salisbury	3	3	4	3
Swindon	3	3	3	3
Bath	13	13	13	13
Isle of Wight	4	4	4	4
East Berkshire	5	5	5	4
West Berkshire	5	7	5	5
Aylesbury	2	2	2	2
Wycombe	5	5	5	5
Milton Keynes	[1]	0	2	2
Kettering	2	2	2	2
Northampton	3	2	2	2
Oxfordshire	14	15	15	15
Bristol and Weston	6	6	6	5
Frenchay	2	2	2	2
Southmead	5	5	4	4
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	13	13	13	13
Exeter	9	8	9	9
North Devon	[1]	6	5	5
Plymouth	[1]	10	9	9
Torbay	13	13	13	13
Cheltenham	[1]	7	7	7
Gloucester	[1]	7	6	6
Somerset	10	11	10	10
Bromsgrove and Redditch	4	4	4	5
Herefordshire	6	6	6	6
Kidderminster and District	2	2	2	2
Worcester and District	6	6	5	5
Shropshire	13	13	11	11
Mid Staffordshire	3	4	3	3
North Staffordshire	5	5	5	5
South East Staffordshire	4	4	4	7
Rugby	1	1	1	1
North Warwickshire	[1]	2	2	2
South Warwickshire	[1]	4	4	4
Central Birmingham	[1]	2	2	2
East Birmingham	1	1	1	1
North Birmingham	4	4	4	1

District Health Authority	1979	1983	1985	1986
South Birmingham	[1]	1	1	1
West Birmingham	[1]	3	3	3
Coventry	3	3	3	3
Dudley	3	3	4	4
Sandwell	2	1	1	1
Solihull	[1]	2	2	2
Walsall	2	3	3	3
Wolverhampton	2	3	2	2
Chester	4	4	2	2
Crewe	[1]	3	3	3
Halton	1	1	1	1
Macclesfield	[1]	7	3	2
Warrington	2	1	1	1
Liverpool	6	5	4	3
St. Helens and Knowsley	[1]	3	3	3
Southport and Formby	2	2	2	2
South Sefton	2	2	2	2
Wirral	6	4	2	2
Lancaster	3	3	3	3
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	5	4	4	4
Preston	[1]	3	3	3
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	4	4	4	4
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	6	6	5	5
West Lancashire	1	1	1	1
Chorley and South Ribble	[1]	1	1	1
Bolton	3	3	2	2
Bury	2	3	3	3
North Manchester	5	5	4	4
Central Manchester	2	2	2	3
South Manchester	2	2	2	2
Oldham	3	3	3	3
Rochdale	1	1	1	1
Salford	2	2	2	2
Stockport	3	3	3	3
Tameside and Glossop	1	1	1	1
Trafford	4	4	5	3
Wigan	5	5	4	4

[1] Comparable figures not available due to restructuring in 1982.
[2] Acute, mainly acute and partly acute hospitals, which were open during all or part of the year. *Source:* Hospital Returns SH3.
[3] For 1986, includes Black Notley hospital, transferred from North East Essex district health authority that year.

Spending Power

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish tables showing, on the same basis as those given in the answer of 16 June to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), *Official Report*, columns *283-87*, information using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in Kensington.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 18 June 1988]:* The information requested is set out in the tables. They compare the post-reform position in April 1988 not with an actual pre-reform cash situation but with a hypothetical position which might have occurred, had the previous structure continued and been uprated on the assumptions in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" (October 1987).

In addition, it should be noted that, although the comparisons are based on average local authority housing charges in Kensington and Chelsea, they do not necessarily reflect either the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people in the borough actually pay or real families' circumstances and their housing arrangements. Finally, the comparisons take no account of the housing benefit transitional cash protection announced on 27 April.

It should be noted that water service charges of £1·78 have been removed from both the pre and post-reform tables. Under income support, water charges are treated like any other item of domestic expenditure.

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Kensington and Chelsea L.A.
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	[2]Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	14·50	42·90	31·15	11·31	8·52	5·85	2·55	1·83	84·19
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	14·50	42·90	29·90	11·31	8·12	5·85	2·55	1·83	85·64
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	14·50	42·90	28·65	11·31	7·72	5·85	2·55	1·83	87·07
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	14·50	42·90	27·40	11·31	7·32	5·85	2·55	1·83	87·02
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	14·50	42·90	26·15	11·31	6·92	5·85	2·55	1·83	86·97
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	14·50	42·90	24·63	11·31	6·35	5·85	2·55	1·83	84·28
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	14·50	42·90	22·56	11·31	5·53	5·85	2·55	1·83	84·09
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·00	14·50	42·90	19·26	11·31	4·23	5·85	2·55	1·83	85·89
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	14·50	42·90	15·96	11·31	2·93	5·85	2·55	0·00	85·86
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	42·90	12·66	11·31	1·63	5·85	2·55	0·00	87·66
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	42·90	9·36	11·31	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	89·13
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	42·90	6·06	11·31	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	92·23

New benefit system from April 1988
Kensington and Chelsea local authority
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates[2]	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	14·50	42·90	28·14	11·31	4·51	5·85	84·41	0·22
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	14·50	42·90	26·56	11·31	4·02	5·85	84·77	−0·87
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	14·50	42·90	24·98	11·31	3·53	5·85	85·12	−1·95
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	14·50	42·90	23·69	11·31	3·14	5·85	85·42	−1·60
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	14·50	42·90	22·41	11·31	2·74	5·85	85·72	−1·25
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	14·50	42·90	21·55	11·31	2·48	5·85	85·92	−1·64

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates[2]	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	14·50	42·90	20·30	11·31	2·09	5·85	86·20	+2·11
130·00	14·72	11·70	7·71	14·50	42·90	19·05	11·31	1·71	5·85	86·49	+0·60
140·00	17·42	12·60	3·23	14·50	42·90	17·80	11·31	1·33	5·85	86·78	+0·92
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	42·90	15·74	11·31	0·69	5·85	87·25	−0·41
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	42·90	11·58	11·31	0·00	5·85	88·80	−0·33
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	42·90	7·42	11·31	0·00	5·85	91·04	−1·19

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Kensington and Chelsea L.A.
Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	[2]Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	32·90	21·75	42·90	32·19	11·31	8·85	5·85	5·10	1·83	99·56
70·00	0·00	4·90	30·50	21·75	42·90	30·29	11·31	8·24	5·85	5·10	1·83	102·75
80·00	1·22	5·60	25·50	21·75	42·90	29·04	11·31	7·84	5·85	5·10	1·83	104·18
90·00	3·92	6·30	20·50	21·75	42·90	27·79	11·31	7·44	5·85	5·10	1·83	104·13
100·00	6·62	7·00	15·50	21·75	42·90	26·54	11·31	7·04	5·85	5·10	1·83	104·08
110·00	9·32	9·90	10·50	21·75	42·90	25·15	11·31	6·55	5·85	5·10	1·83	101·60
120·00	12·02	10·80	5·50	21·75	42·90	23·50	11·31	5·90	5·85	5·10	1·83	100·70
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·50	21·75	42·90	21·85	11·31	5·25	5·85	5·10	1·83	99·80
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	21·75	42·90	18·71	11·31	4·02	5·85	5·10	1·83	101·33
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	21·75	42·90	15·41	11·31	2·72	5·85	5·10	1·83	103·13
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	21·75	42·90	12·11	11·31	1·42	5·85	5·10	1·83	104·93
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	21·75	42·90	8·81	11·31	0·00	5·85	5·10	0·00	104·78

New benefit system from April 1988
Kensington and Chelsea local authority
Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates[2]	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	51·72	21·75	42·90	26·48	11·31	4·00	5·85	100·89	+1·33
70·00	0·00	4·90	46·05	21·75	42·90	24·90	11·31	3·51	5·85	101·25	−1·50
80·00	1·22	5·60	40·39	21·75	42·90	23·32	11·31	3·02	5·85	101·60	−2·58
90·00	3·92	6·30	35·77	21·75	42·90	22·04	11·31	2·63	5·85	101·91	−2·22
100·00	6·62	7·00	31·15	21·75	42·90	20·75	11·31	2·23	5·85	102·20	−1·88
110·00	9·32	9·90	28·07	21·75	42·90	19·89	11·31	1·97	5·85	102·40	+0·80
120·00	12·02	10·80	23·59	21·75	42·90	18·64	11·31	1·58	5·85	102·68	+1·98
130·00	14·72	11·70	19·11	21·75	42·90	17·39	11·31	1·20	5·85	102·97	+3·17
140·00	17·42	12·60	14·63	21·75	42·90	16·15	11·31	0·82	5·85	103·27	+1·94
150·00	20·12	13·50	10·15	21·75	42·90	14·90	11·31	0·00	5·85	103·12	−0·01
160·00	22·82	14·40	5·67	21·75	42·90	13·65	11·31	0·00	5·85	103·79	−1·14
170·00	25·52	15·30	1·19	21·75	42·90	12·40	11·31	0·00	5·85	104·46	−0·32

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Kensington and Chelsea L.A.
Single person with two children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	[2]Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	19·40	42·90	29·93	11·31	8·13	5·85	2·55	1·83	87·48
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	19·40	42·90	28·68	11·31	7·73	5·85	2·55	1·83	88·93
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	19·40	42·90	27·43	11·31	7·33	5·85	2·55	1·83	90·36
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	19·40	42·90	26·18	11·31	6·93	5·85	2·55	1·83	90·31
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	19·40	42·90	24·67	11·31	6·36	5·85	2·55	1·83	89·83
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	19·40	42·90	23·02	11·31	5·71	5·85	2·55	1·83	86·93
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	19·40	42·90	20·94	11·31	4·89	5·85	2·55	0·00	84·90
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·00	19·40	42·90	17·64	11·31	3·59	5·85	2·55	0·00	86·70
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	19·40	42·90	14·34	11·31	2·29	5·85	2·55	0·00	88·50
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	19·40	42·90	11·04	11·31	0·99	5·85	2·55	0·00	90·30
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	19·40	42·90	7·74	11·31	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	92·41
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	19·40	42·90	4·44	11·31	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	95·51

New benefit system from April 1988
Kensington and Chelsea local authority
Single person with two children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	[2]Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	19·40	42·90	22·06	11·31	2·64	5·85	81·36	−6·12
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	19·40	42·90	20·48	11·31	2·15	5·85	81·72	−7·21
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	19·40	42·90	18·90	11·31	1·66	5·85	82·07	−8·29
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	19·40	42·90	17·62	11·31	1·27	5·85	82·38	−7·93
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	19·40	42·90	16·33	11·31	0·87	5·85	82·67	−7·16
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	19·40	42·90	15·47	11·31	0·61	5·85	82·87	−4·06
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	19·40	42·90	14·22	11·31	0·00	5·85	82·93	−1·97
130·00	14·72	11·70	7·71	19·40	42·90	12·97	11·31	0·00	5·85	83·60	−3·10
140·00	17·42	12·60	3·23	19·40	42·90	11·73	11·31	0·00	5·85	84·28	−4·22
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	19·40	42·90	9·67	11·31	0·00	5·85	85·39	−4·91
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	19·40	42·90	5·51	11·31	0·00	5·85	87·63	−4·78
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	19·40	42·90	1·35	11·31	0·00	5·85	89·87	−5·64

Old tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates for Kensington and Chelsea and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988
Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

	Supplementary benefit	Earnings	Tax	NI	Fares to work	Rent	Rates[2]	Housing benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
(a) Not working after one year on benefit	45·93	—	—	—	—	42·90	11·31	54·21	19·40	2·55	1·83	69·71
(b) Working part time earning £20	[1]30·89	20·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	42·90	11·31	54·21	19·40	2·55	1·83	71·75
(c) Working part time earning £40	[1]14·35	40·00	0·00	2·00	2·92	42·90	11·31	54·21	19·40	2·55	1·83	73·21

[1] Assumes benefit in payment for less than one year.
[2] Water charges have been removed from both pre and post reform tables (£1·78)). Under Income Support, water service charges are treated like any other part of household expenditure.

Benefit system from April 1988
Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits" October 1987
Average rent and rates for Kensington and Chelsea local authority
Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

	Income Support	Rent	Rates	Housing Benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
(a) Not working after one year on benefit	45·35	42·90	11·31	51·95	19·40	2·55	1·83	66·87	−2·84

	Income support	Earnings	Tax	NI	Fares to work	Rent	Rates[2]	Housing benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
(b) Working part time earning £20	40·35	20·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	42·90	11·31	51·95	19·40	2·55	1·83	78·95	+7·20
(c) Working part time earning £40	20·35	40·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	42·90	11·31	51·95	19·40	2·55	1·83	78·95	+5·74

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish his estimate of the unemployment figures for each month since January 1982 on an unchanged benefits basis.

Mr. Lee: This information is available in the Library. The table shows seasonally adjusted unemployed claimants, excluding school-leavers, in the United Kingdom for each month from January 1982 to May 1988. This series is consistent with current rules allowing for all significant changes in coverage.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment United Kingdom (Thousands)

Month	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
January	2,510·3	2,792·1	2,930·6	3,077·6	3·154·0	3,112·2	2,564·7
February	2,521·4	2,799·6	2,954·5	3,097·9	3,164·8	3,066·5	2,532·6
March	2,532·3	2,824·7	2,966·2	3,094·3	3,204·7	3,037·3	2,504·0

Month	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
April	2,559·0	2,842·7	2,956·9	2,117·3	3,194·9	3,021·4	2,453·1
May	2,574·5	2,861·7	2,971·7	3,118·1	3,200·1	2,950·9	2,415·5
June	2,605·8	2,884·2	2,977·2	3,106·9	3,208·8	2,922·2	
July	2,635·7	2,886·9	2,993·6	3,111·8	3,210·3	2,873·1	
August	2,662·0	2,884·1	3,008·5	3,117·5	3,206·3	2,825·5	
September	2,685·0	2,893·8	3,038·3	3,122·7	3,185·7	2,772·2	
October	2,715·0	2,900·3	3,051·7	3,126·6	3,163·5	2,713·6	
November	2,740·7	2,908·4	3,064·5	3,127·1	3,150·7	2,650·8	
December	2,771·5	2,919·5	3,070·1	3,143·6	3,120·7	2,613·9	

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to lay before the House the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The regulations will be laid after they have been fully considered by the Government. I expect this to be before this end of the year.

Tourism

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the comparable amount of resources expended in 1987 by his Department and national tourist organisations in promoting London and the peripheral regions overseas; and what action he is taking to promote an open jaws policy where only one end of a journey is through the London airport system.

Mr. Lee: Government promotion overseas of London and the peripheral regions is directed through the British Tourist Authority (BTA). In 1987-88 the BTA spent about £5·8 million (27 per cent. of total overseas marketing spend) on promotion of the areas covered by the London, South-East, Southern, East Anglia and Thames and Chilterns regional tourist boards. Airports are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. However, my Department encourages tourists to visit attractions throughout Britain and so to use whichever airport seems most appropriate for their journey.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will indicate what priority his Department's policy on tourism places on the dispersal of tourist activity to the regions; what specific initiatives his Department is taking to realise this objective; what priority is placed on the development of the regional airports, and Manchester airport in particular, as part of his Department's tourism policy to realise this objective; what discussions he is having with national tourist organisations; and what assessment he has made of the implications of continued heavy promotion overseas of London for the scope for reducing the burdens already carried by the capital as a tourist centre.

Mr. Lee: My Department places a high priority on encouraging tourist activity throughout the country, and this is a major objective for both the English Tourist Board and the British Tourist Authority.

The network of regional tourist boards is organised to stimulate tourist activity in the regions, in conjunction with the English Tourist Board which has developed specific initiatives to assist with this, including tourist development action programmes, strategic development initiatives and the inner cities initiative.

Regional airports remain the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. However, the Government remain committed to the 1985 airports White Paper policy of encouraging the maximum use of all regional airports.

I have regular discussions with national tourist organisations on a variety of topics.

London is marketed abroad as one of the many attractions that Britain has to offer. However, I am confident that, with 60 per cent. of overseas visitors already spending nights outside London, the spread of tourism throughout the country will continue.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of air traffic handled in 1987 at London was attributable to inward tourists; to what extent that proportion is expected to increase by 1990, 1995 and 2000; what approximate level of increases in bed spaces in each of those years will be required in London to accommodate these figures; and what discussions he is having with national tourist organisations and others about London's ability to absorb further increases in tourist numbers, in the light of the existing burden on the capital as a tourist centre.

Mr. Lee: In 1987, 42 per cent. of air traffic handled in London was attributable to inward tourists. Forward projections for the years 1990, 1995 and 2000 are not available. The London Tourist Board estimates 20,000 extra hotel rooms will be needed by the year 2000. I have regular discussions with the national tourist boards and others on a variety of topics. Last year the London tourist board and the Joint London Tourism Forum published its tourism strategy for London, which sets out objectives designed to ensure that London continues to play its part in attracting visitors.

Fairgrounds

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* prohibition and *(b)* improvement notices under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act have been issued regarding fairgrounds for each year since 1979 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information for 1979 and 1980 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The number of notices issued since 1981 is as follows:

Year	Prohibition notices	Improvement notices
1981	3	4
1982	7	1
1983	5	7
1984	29	16

Year	Prohibition notices	Improvement notices
1985	17	11
[1]1986-87	12	5
[2]1987-88	7	11

[1] Period covers 1 January 1986 to 31 March 1987.
[2] Period covers 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist inspectors to inspect fairgrounds are employed by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: Fairgrounds are inspected by factory inspectors, who are supported as required by specialist inspectors from the technology division. No specialist inspectors are devoted solely to the inspection of fairgrounds.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to require an inspection by Health and Safety Executive inspectors at all mobile fairgrounds prior to opening to the public on every occasion when a fair is erected, including scrutiny of machinery, public access to exhibits and rides, handrails, steps and lighting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not intended to introduce legislation at this time to deal with fairgrounds, whether mobile or permanent. The general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, particularly sections 2, 3, 4 and 6, apply as they do to all other industries and are relevant to these matters. For fairgrounds these general provisions of the Act are supplemented by the code of safe practice at fairs, published in 1984, and by its newly published technical annex; these have the general support of the main representative bodies in the industry, as well as the Health and Safety Executive.

The 1984 code requires in particular that an inspection of each passenger-carrying amusement device should be carried out every day by the ride owner before it is made available for the public, and that records of these inspections should be kept. Other provisions deal with public access and with lighting, among other matters.

HSE inspectors visit fairgrounds periodically to monitor compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act and with the code of safe practice, including those provisions to which I have referred. Where necessary, they use the powers available to them under the Act in order to secure improvements.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of general and specialist inspectors at the Health and Safety Executive for each year from 1975 to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is as follows:

1 April	[1]General inspectors	[1]Specialist inspectors
1976	624	191·5
1977	676·5	206
1978	695·5	229
1979	742	224
1980	759	235
1981	735	228
1982	678	221
1983	654	213
1984	627	213
1985	652	208
1986	[2]623	220
1987	[2]621·5	227
[3]1988	[2]596	211

[1] Figures relate to factory inspectors, plus a small number of explosives inspectors (all specialists), in the Health and Safety Executive.
[2] Before April 1986 some inspectors now classed as specialists were categorised as general inspectors.
[3] 1 July.

Tourism Signs

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of signs erected since the publication of new tourism signs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Signposting is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I understand, however, that good progress continues to be made: 16,000 signs in England and Wales have now been approved and 5,000 signs have been erected.

Hotels (Crown Classification Scheme)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the results of any consumer research regarding public understanding of the crown classification scheme for hotels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In 1987 the English Tourist Board (ETB) commissioned a survey of public understanding of the crown scheme. The research was undertaken by MaS Research Ltd. in the last two weeks of March 1987. The results showed that, of a total sample of 4,759 people interviewed, 3 per cent. recognised the crown symbol, and 4 per cent. were aware that the ETB had a rating system for hotels. However, the survey was carried out less than three months after the public launch of the scheme.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 July 1988

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Harmonisation

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when a consultative document on direct tax harmonisation within the European Community is to be published.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The European Commission has not yet published its draft proposals for harmonisation of the business tax base. If in due course these are communicated formally to the Council of Ministers we will then consider how to proceed.

Corporation Tax

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to discuss with other European Finance Ministers any proposals to introduce reciprocal arrangements throughout the European Community to allow companies to set advance corporation tax against their tax liabilities arising in other European countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have at present no plans to do so.

Income Tax

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the effects of income tax cuts since 1979 on the regions of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am not aware of any recent representations on this point. The income tax cuts we have achieved since 1979 will provide a stimulus to enterprise and initiative in all regions of the country.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of taxpayers in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, and *(c)* Wales pay income tax in the highest band.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest available information by country is for 1985-86. In that year the following percentages of single people and married couples liable to tax were liable at (i) a higher rate, (ii) the highest rate of income tax: England (i) 5·0 per cent., (ii) 0·6 per cent.; Scotland (i) 4·3 per cent., (ii) 0·3 per cent.; Wales (i) 3·4 per cent., (ii) 0·2 per cent. Members of Her Majesty's forces and the Merchant Navy are excluded.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost to Her Majesty's Stationery Office of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The cost for each financial year is assessed as being:

Year	*£*
1983-84	70,000
1984-85	150,000
1985-86	400,000
1986-87	550,000
1987-88	400,000

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in Her Majesty's Stationery Office as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Brooke: The following is the information requested:

Company	*Assignment*
Touche Ross	Supply Computer Project
Price Waterhouse	CAPO Computer Project
Binder Hamlyn	Accounting systems upgrade
David Harris Associates	Financial consultancy
Management Partners	Marketing advice

Net Overseas Assets

96. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the most recently available figures for Britain's net overseas assets.

Mr. Major: The United Kingdom's net overseas assets were estimated at some £90 billion at end-1987, second only to those of Japan.

Value Added Tax

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the default surcharge and the effect it has had on the receipts of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government, in accordance with the announcement in May 1986 in their White Paper—"Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers"—reviewed the operation of the default surcharge provisions before the 1988 Budget.

It was apparent from that review that the default surcharge had not been in operation long enough for significant conclusions to be drawn. A further review of the impact and operation of the surcharge is now to be made and trade and other interested bodies are invited to contribute.

Contributions should be sent to:
HM Customs and Excise
VAT Control Division B2
11th Floor
Alexander House
21 Victoria Avenue
SOUTHEND ON SEA
Essex
SS99 1AH

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the rules for relief from value added tax on bad debts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government announced in May 1986 in their White Paper—"Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers"—that a review of the arrangements for value added tax relief on bad debts would take place within two years. That review has now begun and trade and other interested bodies are invited to contribute.

Contributions should be forwarded to:
HM Customs and Excise
VAT Control Division C2
St. John's House
Merton Road
BOOTLE
Merseyside
L20 3NN

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the proposed penalty for persistent value added tax misdeclaration will be applied automatically; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: This new penalty provision replaces the previous automatic third test for the serious misdeclaration penalty provided for in section 14 of the Finance Act 1985. It will not be automatically applied. When the thresholds of £100 or 1 per cent. are exceeded Customs will first consider whether the nature of the errors justifies the issue of a warning letter, or the imposition of a penalty. In no circumstances will a penalty be imposed without the case first being referred to Customs' head office. It will only be imposed on the most careless traders who persist in making significant errors even after receiving a formal written warning. The application of this new penalty will be closely monitored and kept under review.

Funeral Services (VAT)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that essential funeral services will continue to be exempted from value added tax.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans for changes in this area.

Oyston Estates Agency Ltd.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether all investigations into the tax affairs of Oyston Estates Agency Ltd. and related companies by the Inland Revenue are complete.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Confidentiality precludes the Inland Revenue from commenting on the tax affairs of any particular company.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance he has given, or intends to give, to the Inland Revenue in the current revaluation of non-domestic premises in England and Wales prior to the introduction of the non-domestic rate in 1990; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that the seasonal nature of trade in holiday areas is taken into account in fixing new valuations.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The chief valuer's office is responsible for giving guidance to valuation officers in the compilation of valuation lists. Rating assessments are based on rental values; accordingly, in areas where the seasonal nature of trade has an effect on rental values, this will be reflected in the rating assessments.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate, for each of the last five years, the cost of providing tax relief on private medical insurance *(a)* throughout the United Kingdom, and *(b)* in Scotland;

(2) what was the estimated cost to the Treasury of relief to *(a)* companies, *(b)* employees, *(c)* self-employed, and *(d)* other sources in each of the last five years, as a result of contributions to private health care premiums, in (i) the United Kingdom, and (ii) Scotland.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 28 June 1988]:* I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the costs of extending income tax relief to all private medical insurance premiums. Under present legislation, relief is available only on premiums paid by employers on behalf of employees whose earned income, including the value of benefits, is less than £8,500 per year. The cost of this relief is about £10 million per year in the United Kingdom and about £1 million in Scotland.

The estimated direct revenue cost of giving relief on all premiums, based on present levels of contributions, is about £240 million, of which about £10 million would be incurred in Scotland. These estimates make no allowance for any behavioural changes.

Estates (Inheritance)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of estates valued at *(a)* £0·5 million to £1·0 million and *(b)* over £1 million which were inherited free of inheritance tax in each year between 1978-79 and 1987-88 with projection for 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Comprehensive information is available only for years to 1985-86 and refers to numbers of estates where the net assets of the estate were within the requested ranges. These were as follows:

	£0·5 million to £1·0 million	*Over £1 million*
1978-79	23	11
1979-80	32	7
1980-81	53	18
1981-82	54	13
1982-83	61	18
1983-84	155	31
1984-85	143	32
1985-86	152	53

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff Dismissals

Mr. Holt: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list, for each grade, the number of civil servants dismissed for any reason, during each of the past nine years.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I am writing to my hon. Friend with the information requested, and will arrange for a copy to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's current role in promoting the development of infrastructure projects associated with the construction of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have responsibility for approving proposals from British Rail for railway infrastructure investment in connection with the tunnel. I have already approved in principle a package of investment proposed by the board not exceeding £550 million in total to enable Channel tunnel rail services to commence in 1993. Under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, the board is required to publish a plan by the end of 1989 setting out its proposals for international through services beyond London and the associated infrastructure investment. The board is this week publishing its report on the need for additional rail capacity in the longer-term between London and the tunnel.

We have direct responsibility for motorways and other trunk roads. A number of major trunk road improvements are programmed, in particular on the M20/A20 and A259 routes. The trunk road programme is kept under review, and schemes are added as the need is identified. We also support local authority road improvements on roads of more than local importance with transport supplementary grant (TSG). Kent county council is receiving TSG for schemes made necessary by the tunnel in addition to its main accepted road programme.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received from the British Railways Board its report on rail capacity between London and the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: I received the report on Monday 11 July. I understand from BR that it will be published on Thursday 14 July, and that BR will be sending copies to all hon. Members. Copies will also be placed in the Library of the House.

Bridges

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the last two years, all local authority bids to his Department for bridge maintenance work, together with the grants finally provided by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local authority bridge maintenance work is generally classed as current expenditure. Support is provided within the rate support grant mechanism. It is not the subject of specific bids. Bids for transport supplementary grant (TSG) are made for some capital expenditure on bridges. Where TSG is paid it will generally be towards a block of eligible expenditure within which individual bridgeworks are not separately identifiable.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what basis with regard to enstimated times of arrival of emergency services to the scene of accidents involving the transportation of nuclear waste, safety procedures for dealing with such accidents are framed.

Mr. David Mitchell: The emergency services would reach the scene of an accident in less than half an hour and would then if necssary be able to summon expert radiological assistance.

There has been no accident involving the tranport of irradiated nuclear fuel which resulted in any release of the radioactive contents.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost of employing management and computer consultants for each financial year from 1984 to 1987 was:

	£ million
1984-85	0·980
1985-86	1·254
1986-87	1·847
1987-88	2·195

Information for 1983-84 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not held centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Traffic Flows (London)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the methods available to his Department for measuring traffic flows in London;

(2) if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *360*, he will publish the information contained in the table for each borough individually; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on traffic flows in London and on the data collection methods used is given in the Department's statistics bulletin (87) 37 "London traffic monitoring report for 1986". Copies are in the Library.

Estimates of average traffic speeds in the individual boroughs during the period 1983 to 1986 are given in tables A2 to A4. Information for earlier years was published by the Greater London council in its "Traffic Monitoring Review 1984". I have placed copies of the relevant tables from this publication in the Library.

PSV Driving Tests

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the current period of delay between date of application and dates offered for a test by those currently applying for PSV driving tests in each traffic area, and the national average.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not readily available. The period includes assessment of a candidate's suitability to hold a PSV licence. The time taken to complete checks on health and character can vary considerably.

The Department aims to provide a test within four weeks of a positive decision on suitability. Waiting periods for HGV and PSV driving tests are overall still rather longer than we would wish. Steps are being taken to reduce them.

If my hon. Friend has knowledge of any specific problem perhaps he would let me have details.

Roads (London)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take immediate steps to publish in full the four recently completed consultants' reports on road and traffic proposals for London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is wrong to say the consultants have completed reports.

Nearly three weeks ago, on 23 June, at column *637*, I stated that the working papers would be placed in the Library and that the consultants would discuss options with the boroughs participating in the studies.

There is a wrong report in today's *Guardian* that the public cannot have the consultants' working papers.

Over two weeks ago, on 27 June, at column *122*, I stated that the working papers can be purchased from the consultants.

I refer the hon. Member to the consultants' stage 1 reports published in December 1986, the terms of reference for stage 2 published in July 1987 and the objectives of the studies developed in discussion with boroughs.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what objectives have been set for the London assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We developed the following objectives in consultation with the boroughs concerned and their associations.

1. TO PROMOTE ACCESSIBILITY

1.1 To increase opportunities for all people to gain access to employment, places and services and to improve ease of access to them.[3]

1.2 To provide or promote adequate access from the study areas to national transport systems.[4]

2. TO SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION

2.1 To support policies for employment, economic growth and regeneration particularly for inner city areas.[5]

3. TO DEVELOP AN EFFICIENT TRANSPORT SYSTEM

3.1 To encourage greater efficiency in the use of transport in London whilst still allowing freedom of choice.[2]

3.2 To provide or promote transport infrastructure and management which achieves adequate return on investment.[6]

3.3 To reduce congestion costs to industry and commerce, including public transport.

4. TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT

4.1 To keep car traffic entering central London to a manageable level.

4.2 To conserve and improve the quality of the environment.[7]

4.3 To provide opportunity for removing traffic, particularly heavy lorries, from unsuitable roads.

4.4 To provide relief to shopping areas and residential streets.

4.5 To improve the condition and appearance of existing roads, and to ensure any new infrastructure is designed with sensitivity for the environment.

5. TO ENHANCE SAFETY FOR TRAVELLERS

5.1 To improve the safety and personal security of all travellers within the transport system.[8 9]

5.2 To identify locations with high accident rates and to take action to improve safety.

Note:

1. The studies will develop options designed inter alia to meet these objectives and the views of the public will be taken into acount in reaching decisions on them.

[2] It should be noted that these objectives cannot be considered individually, they need to be considered together. For example freedom of choice should not be regarded as an absolute condition and will be assessed as it relates to the other objectives.

[3] Regard will be given to the provision of transport, to meet the needs of different groups of travellers and potential travellers and to its contribution to the improvement of opportunities for groups and individuals in the community suffering transport disadvantage.

[4] Objective 1.2—'national transport systems' includes those sections in other parts of London. Accessibility will be considered in relation to the Secretary of State's general responsibility for transport.

[5] 'Policies' includes approved central and local government plans and guidance by the Secretary of State for the Environment, taking into account advice by SERPLAN and LPAC.

[6] Provision of infrastructure and management for private and public transport will be assessed on a comparable basis.

[7] 'Environmental factors' include noise, pollution, visual impact, severance, townscape, ecology.

[8] 'All travellers' include cyclists, pedestrians and users of public transport and private vehicles.

[9] Objective 5.1 includes the need to design facilities to minimise the risk of harassment.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Loans

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries that have had their aid loans cancelled by the United Kingdom Government since 1983 *(a)* by date of loan, *(b)* by name of country, *(c)* by amount of loan and *(d)* by date of cancellation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Country	*Date cancellation agreement signed*	*Original loans cancelled*		
		Date of loan	*Original value (£ millions)*	*Amount waived (principal + interest) (£ millions)*
Mozambique	October 1983	1976	5·000	5·000
		1977	5·000	5·000
		1977	9·315	9·315
		1978	2·500	2·500

Country	Date cancellation agreement signed	Original loans cancelled: Date of loan	Original value (£ millions)	Amount waived (principal + interest) (£ millions)
East African Community	July August October 1984[1]	1961 1963[2]	1·000	0·469
		1961[3]	8·500	3·263
		1965	3·150	0·904
Ethiopia	January 1985	1971	0·197	0·010
		1971	0·660	0·275
		1972	0·384	0·129
		1973	0·341	0·275
		1973	2·416	1·879
Ghana	June 1985	1967	3·766	1·988
		1968	4·624	2·752
		1969	5·400	2·565
		1970	3·700	1·943
		1971	2·492	2·575
		1971	1·200	0·400
		1975	10·050	8·654
		1978	19·981	17·981
		1981	9·994	9·994

[1] Agreements were signed with each member country (Uganda in July, Kenya in August and Tanzania in October).
[2] Entry covers two related loans which were subsequently treated as one.
[3] Entry covers five related loans which were subsequently treated as one.

In addition, an agreement is due to be signed during 1988 with Senegal which will waive £1·071 million (interest and principal) on a loan of original value £1·000 million.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries that have negotiated with the United Kingdom Government better rescheduling terms for their aid loans since 1983 *(a)* by date of orginal loan, *(b)* by name of country, *(c)* by amount of orginal loan, *(d)* the orginal terms for repayment and *(e)* the revised terms for repayment.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following agreement in the Paris club certain payments of principal and interest due in respect of past aid loans have been rescheduled. The information on such rescheduling since 1983 is as follows:

	Rescheduling loans: Terms					Original loans covered by the rescheduling loans: Terms					
Country	Year signed	Total rescheduled (£ millions)	First repayment date	Final repayment date	Payments per year	Interest rate (per cent.)	Year signed	Total value (£ millions)	First repayment date	Final repayment date	Payments per year	Interest rate (per cent.)
Bolivia	1986	0·054	30 June 1990	31 December 1996	2	0	1973	0·422	15 December 1975	15 December 1997	2	0
Brazil	1984	0·961	20 May 1984	1 July 1992	2	6	1973	10·000	20 May 1978	20 November 1998	2	5
Costa Rica	[1]1984	0·380	30 September 1984	30 June 1989	2	6	1973	3·000	15 August 1973	15 February 1998	2	6
	[1]1984	0·549	30 September 1984	31 March 1992	2	6	As for previous rescheduling loan					
Jamaica	[2]1984	5·235	31 December 1984	15 August 1993	2	6	1978	20·000	17 July 1981	17 January 2003	2	6
							1978	2·750	21 March 1979	21 March 2003	2	6
							1978	2·750	30 May 1982	30 November 2003	2	6
							1979	2·000	19 April 1983	19 October 2004	2	6
							1981	6·000	23 July 1984	23 January 2006	2	6
							1981	5·600	December 1984	June 2006	2	6
							1982	2·500	18 December 1985	18 June 1992	2	4
							1982	3·000	June 1986	December 1992	2	4
	[2]1984	0·629	15 August 1985	15 August 1989	1	6	As for previous rescheduling loan					
	[2]1985	3·030	31 March 1991	September 1995	1	6	As for previous rescheduling loan					
Zambia	[3]1983	0·322	December 1983	June 1988	2	2	1973	1·014	31 December 1980	30 June 1998	2	0
							1978	9·260	30 September 1985	31 March 2003	2	2
							1978	20·000	February 1986	August 2003	2	2
							1980	10·000	24 July 1987	24 January 2005	2	2
	[3]1983	0·680	December 1983	June 1993	2	2	As for previous rescheduling loan					
	[4]1984	0·865	December 1989	June 1994	2	2	As for previous rescheduling loan plus 1983 rescheduling loans					
	[4]1986	2·527	December 1991	June 1996	2	2	As for previous rescheduling loan					

[1] These loans cover payments from two separate periods of the same original loan.
[2] These loans cover payments from three separate periods of the same eight original loans.
[3] These loans cover payments from two separate periods of the same four original loans.
[4] These loans cover payments from two separate periods of both the orginal four loans and the two 1983 rescheduling loans.

Following recent agreements in the Paris club, the Government are at present negotiating bilateral rescheduling agreements with Costa Rica, Brazil, Ecuador, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Mekong River Basin

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the extent of participation by Her Majesty's Government in the United Nations project for the Mekong river basin; what proposals are being discussed for the resumption of the original programme; and if he will now reappraise the opportunities offered by that project in the light of recent changes in the area.

Mr. Chris Patten: We expect to spend about £100,000 in the current financial year in support of two projects managed by the interim Mekong committee. While there

has been no attempt as yet to reconstitute the full committee, we are monitoring current political developments closely.

SCOTLAND

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each health board area in Scotland the total number of occupational therapists, the number per 1,000 of the population and the number per 1,000 of the population aged over 65 years, over 75 years and over 85 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table below sets out for each health board area in Scotland at 30 September 1987, the whole-time equivalent number of occupational therapists in post broken down into the categories as set out in the question. The figures given relate to occupational therapists employed by health boards only and do not include those employed by local authorities.

Number expressed as a rate per 1,000 population

Health Board	*Number in post*[1]	*Population*			
		Total	*Age 65-74*	*Age 75-84*	*Age over 85*
Argyll and Clyde	23·1	0·05	0·62	1·13	4·86
Ayrshire and Arran	17·0	0·05	0·52	0·92	4·32
Borders	6·7	0·07	0·64	0·99	4·00
Dumfries and Galloway	17·3	0·12	1·21	2·09	8·68
Fife	32·5	0·09	1·08	1·88	8·28
Forth Valley	26·8	0·10	1·20	2·12	9·32
Grampian	50·5	0·10	1·29	2·05	8·34
Greater Glasgow	120·7	0·13	1·40	2·44	10·64
Highland	10·3	0·05	0·64	1·03	4·35
Lanarkshire	17·0	0·03	0·41	0·82	3·95
Lothian	126·7	0·17	2·02	3·29	13·24
Orkney	0·6	0·03	0·33	0·51	2·01
Shetland	1·0	0·04	0·60	0·86	3·21
Tayside	51·6	0·13	1·41	2·24	9·26
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—

[1] As at 30 September 1987 (WTE).

Privatisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement outlining his plans to privatise the historic buildings directorate and the Registrar's Department; what consultations he has had with interested parties; and what time scale is proposed to implement the plans.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to privatise the historic buildings and monuments directorate of the Scottish Development Department or the Department of the Registers for Scotland (DRS). I did, however, decide that HBMD and DRS should be candidates for agency status under the next steps initiative announced by the Prime Minister on 18 February and the two trade union sides concerned were so informed on 29 April. Detailed proposals are now being drawn up and full consultations with the trade union side have been promised. No decision has yet been taken that either HBMD or DRS will become an agency; there is accordingly no time scale at present for implementation.

Nurses (Psychiatric Qualifications)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses there are currently employed by the National Health Service in Scotland who are qualified in psychiatric nursing; and if he will give the comparable figure for each of the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information, which relates to the whole time equivalent number of qualified nurses working in the specialties of mental illness and mental handicap, is set out.

Qualified nurses working in psychiatry as at 30 September (WTE)

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Mental illness	5,081·5	5,315·5	5,445·8	5,466·2	5,737·8	5,839·2
Mental Handicap	1,419·8	1,517·0	1,606·0	1,582·7	1,597·3	1,681·4
TOTAL	6,501·3	6,832·5	7,051·8	7,048·9	7,335·1	7,520·6

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many psychiatric hospitals there are in Scotland; and how many beds there are in each of them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For statistical purposes psychiatric hospitals are customarily taken to include mental hospitals, psychiatric units in general hospitals and mental handicap hospitals. In the year ending 30 September 1987 there were 30 mental hospitals, 28 psychiatric units in general hospitals and 16 mental handicap hospitals in Scotland. The average available staffed beds in each is given in the table.

Table 1
Mental hospitals in Scotland
Average available staffed beds: year ending 30 September 1987

Health board and hospital	*Beds*[1,2]
Argyll and Clyde	
Argyll and Bute hospital	383
Ravenscraig hospital	346
Dykebar hospital	584
Ayrshire and Arran	
Ravenspark hospital	219
Ailsa hospital	588
Borders	
Dingleton hospital	336
Dumfries and Galloway	
Crichton Royal hospital	623
Fife	
Stratheden hospital	741
Stratheden young peoples unit	45
Glenlomond hospital	87
Forth Valley	
Bellsdyke hospital	853
Grampian	
House of Daviot hospital	136
Kingseat hospital	491
Kingseat rehabilitation centre	11
Royal Cornhill hospital	677
Bilbohall hospital	149
Greater Glasgow	
Gartloch hospital	652
Stoneyetts hospital	225
Woodilee hospital	821
Leverndale hospital	891
Gartnaval Royal hospital	567
Highland	
Craig Dunain hospital	655
Lanarkshire	
Hartwood hospital	1,354
Lothian	
Herdmanflat hospital	252
Rosslynlee hospital	270
Royal Edinburgh hospital	917
Bangour Village hospital	576
Tayside	
Royal Dundee Liff hospital (including child psychiatry unit)	570
Murray Royal hospital	402
Sunnyside Royal hospital	436
Total number of hospitals	30
Total average available staffed beds	14,857

[1] Includes some beds in specialties other than psychiatric or mental handicap specialties.
[2] Average available staffed beds.

Table 2
Psychiatric units attached to general hospitals
Average available staffed beds: year ending 30 September 1987

Health board and hospital	*Beds*[1]
Argyll and Clyde	
Vale of Leven district general hospital	28
Inverclyde Royal hospital	56
Hawkhead hospital	94
Thorn hospital	2
Royal Alexandra hospital	31
Ayrshire and Arran	
Crosshouse hospital	60
Borders	
Mountview hospital	11
Fife	
Victoria hospital	120
West Fife district general hospital	120
Grampian	
Royal Aberdeen children's hospital	10
Glen O'dee hospital	5
Inverurie hospital	30
Ugie hospital	30
Greater Glasgow	
Duke Street hospital	41
Stobhill hospital	70
Southern general psychiatric unit	150
Gartnavel general hospital	36
Royal hospital for sick children	6
Lanarkshire	
Coathill hospital	7
Monklands district general hospital	58
Lothian	
Victoria hospital	90
City hospital	20
Royal hospital for sick children	24
Tayside	
Ninewells hospital	31
Ashludie hospital	24
Forfar infirmary	26
Stracathro hospital	24
Western Isles	
Lochmaddy hospital	1
Total number of units	28
Total average available staffed beds	1,205

[1] Average available staff beds in psychiatric or mental handicap hospitals.

Table 3
Mental handicap hospitals in Scotland
Average available staffed beds: year ending 30 September 1987

Health Board and Hospital	*Beds*[1,2]
Argyll and Clyde	
Elderslie hospital	20
Merchiston hospital	270
Ayrshire and Arran	
Dunlop house hospital	70
Fife	
Lynebank hospital	409
Forth Valley	
Royal Scottish national hospital	961
Grampian	
Woodlands hospital/Wellwood unit	145
Ladysbridge hospital	548
Greater Glasgow	
Lennox castle hospital	1,062
Waverley park hospital	100
Highland	
Craig Phadrig hospital	215

Health Board and Hospital	Beds[1,2]
Lanarkshire	
Bellefield hospital	94
Birkwood hospital	267
Kirklands hospital	217
Lothian	
Gogarburn hospital	532
Tornaveen house	10
Tayside	
Strathmartine hospital	542
Total number of hospitals	16
Total average available staffed beds	5,462

[1] Includes some beds in specialties other than psychiatric or mental handicap specialties.
[2] Average available staffed beds.

Rates

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland paid rates *(a)* before and, *(b)* after 1 April 1988.

Mr. Lang: At 1 April 1987 rates were payable in respect of approximately 2 million domestic and non-domestic subjects in Scotland. A corresponding figure for 1 April 1988 is not yet available.

Sewage

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each local authority in Scotland responsible for sewage disposal, each sewage outfall which discharges directly into the sea, showing *(a)* how far into the sea the outfall pipe travels before discharge, *(b)* how much sewage each year is discharged, *(c)* whether the discharge is of treated or untreated sewage and *(d)* the proximity of the nearest public bathing beaches to the sewage outfall.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are some 1,600 local sewage outfalls in Scotland, just over half of which discharge directly to estuaries or to the sea. The detail sought is too lengthy for inclusion in the *Official Report*. However, a summary of much of this information is contained in a technical report "Sewage Works and Discharges Archive Report 1987" produced by the Scottish Development Department and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

For the location of bathing waters identified in terms of the EC bathing water directive, I refer the hon. Member to my written answer of 29 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries, (Sir H. Monro) at column *247*.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those sewage authorities who regularly dump sewage at sea, indicating *(a)* the areas permitted for dumping purposes, *(b)* the volumes and types of sewage dumped and *(c)* the proximity of the nearest public bathing beaches to the dumped sewage.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian regional council is licensed to dump annually a total of 500,000 metric tonnes wet weight of sewage sludge containing not more than 25,000 metric tonnes of dry solids at sites off Bell Rock and St. Abbs Head which is defined as within 1½ nautical mile radius of centre co-ordinates 56° 25′ N 02° 10′ W and 56° 04·5′ N 02° 07·25′ W respectively. Dumping alternates between each site every six months.

Strathclyde regional council is licensed to dump annually a total of 1,800,000 metric tonnes wet weight of sewage sludge containing not more than 90,000 metric tonnes of dry solids at Garnock Head dumping ground which is defined as within ½ nautical mile radius of centre co-ordinates 55° 39·8′ N 05° 00·8′ W.

In the Firth of Clyde the water at Saltcoats/Ardrossan lies closest to the licensed dump site. In the Firth of Forth the water at Dunbar lies nearest. Both waters meet the standards of the EC directive.

WALES

Hospitals (Gwent)

Sir John Stradling Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the hospitals in the area of the Gwent health authority, with the average number of both patients and staff for each of them in each of the last 12 years.

Mr. Grist: The information can be provided only at disproportionate cost. My hon. Friend may, however, wish to refer to the following Welsh Office publications, copies of which are held in the Library of the House. "Bed Use Statistics" (which includes annual numbers of in-patients, day cases and out-patients by hospital) and "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales" (which provides a manpower summary for each district health authority).

Ciliau Moor Common (Slurry Tank)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, why his Department does not have a record of the builders of the slurry tank on Ciliau Moor common; if he will take steps to find out who the builders were; when construction of the slurry tank on Ciliau Moor common was completed; and if he will summarise the views of the Open Space Society and the Countryside Commission in their replies to him concerning the construction of a slurry tank on Ciliau Moor common.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office has no practical need to have on record either the name of the contractor who undertook these private building works or the date of their completion. It is not the practice of the Department to publicise or summarise views expressed by bodies consulted on developments on common land.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether Bedwas, Machen, and Maesycummer, Mid Glamorgan, are included within the boundaries of the area defined for the purposes of his recently announced valleys programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: Maesycummer is within the area covered by the new valleys programme. Bedwas and Machen are outside.

Green Belt

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county the area of land designated as green belt up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no statutory green belts in Wales.

Waste Tipping

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call a conference of local authorities in Wales to discuss and monitor the tipping of poisonous and industrial waste from overseas in quarries and other similar locations in Wales; if he will draw up and publish a register of licensed tipping locations entitled to receive poisonous and industrial wastes; if he will consult the appropriate local planning authorities to devise a 24-hour monitoring of tipping sites to ensure that the appropriate regulations are adhered to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Regular meetings, instituted with the support of the Welsh Office, are held by the waste disposal authorities in Wales to discuss any matters relating to waste disposal.

Each wast disposal authority is required by statute to maintain a public register containing copies of all waste disposal licences.

Arrangements for the supervision of the operation of licensed waste disposal sites are the responsibility of the appropriate waste disposal authority.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of those companies in the United Kingdom who trade in the tipping of contaminated soils, industrial waste and poisonous by products and who tip at locations in Wales; if he will list those ports in Wales through which contaminated wastes from overseas are imported; what steps are taken to ensure that at these ports of entry there s sifficient professional inspection of both the substances and the ships' documents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information on companies trading in wastes is not maintained centrally and information on waste imports is not maintained in the form requested. In 1986-87 special waste was imported through the ports of Newport, Holyhead, Briton Ferry and Fishguard.

In relation to contaminated soil, plant health legislation prohibits imports from outside Europe. Soil from European countries must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate signed by the plant health authority in the exporting country, confirming freedom from pests and disease, without which customs officials will not permit consignments to enter the United Kingdom. In relation to special wastes, it is the responsibility of the waste disposal authority in the area of which the waste enters the country, to ensure that the waste is disposed of at appropriately licensed sites.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will increase financial resources to local authorities to allow greater involvement of trading standards officers and departments in supporting the community with advice and assistance and fairly enforcing trading laws and consumer protection measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The rate support grant for Wales includes an element for the local authority trading standards service. This provides adequate resources for the enforcement of trading standards and consumer protection legislation.

I have no plans to amend the 1988-89 rate support grant provision which allowed for a nominal increase in consumer protection provision over the previous year of 7·4 per cent. My proposals for local authority relevant expenditure and grant in 1989-90 were announced to Parliament on 7 July. My view of service priorities for 1989-90 will be formally set out in the rate support grant report to be published later in the year. It is, however, entirely for local authorities to allocate block grant to particular services in accordance with their own priorities.

In addition, the Department of Trade and Industry funds the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux which provides the necessary support services for local citizens advice bureaux in England and Wales. Citizens advice bureaux, most of which receive financial support from local authorities, provide advice and assistance to local communities throughout Wales. I see no reason to alter these well established arrangements.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions since 1979 the British Government have been subject to legal challenge in courts in the United Kingdom or in Europe on account of alleged breaches of the European convention on human rights; and if he will list in each case the substance of the alleged breach and the outcome of any legal proceedings.

The Attorney-General: The European convention on human rights is not part of the law of the United Kingdom; an allegation of a breach of the convention's provisions cannot therefore found a cause of action in the courts of this country. The European court of human rights has delivered 22 judgments since 1979 in cases concerning the United Kingdom (excluding article 50 judgments, which concern damages and costs), of which the details are as set out:

Date of judgment	*Name of case: subject matter*	*Outcome*
13 August 1981	Young, James and Webster (closed shop)	Breach of Article 11.
22 October 1981	Dudgeon (homosexuality: Northern Ireland)	Breach of Article 8.
5 November 1981	X (mental patient: right to have detention reviewed)	No breach of Article 5(1). Breach of Article 5(4).
25 February 1982	Campbell and Cosans (corporal punishment in state schools: respect for parents' philosophical convictions)	No breach of Article 3. Breach of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1.
25 March 1983	Silver (prisoners' correspondence)	Breach of Articles 6(1), 8 and 13.

Date of judgment	Name of case: subject matter	Outcome
28 June 1984	Campbell and Fell (prison visitors; conduct of disciplinary proceedings)	Breach of Article 6 in two respects and of Articles 8 and 13. No breach of Article 6 on the other points at issue.
2 August 1984	Malone (telephone tapping)	Breach of Article 8.
28 May 1985	Ashingdane (detention of mental patient)	No breach of Article 5(1), 5(4) or 6.
28 May 1985	Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali (immigration: discrimination on grounds of sex)	Breach of Articles 13 and 14 in one respect. No other breach of Article 13 or 14. No breach of Article 3 or 8.
21 February 1986	James (leasehold reform)	No breach of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1, or of Articles 6(1) and 13.
8 July 1986	Lithgow (aircraft and shipbuilding nationalisation)	No breach of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1, or of Article 14, 6(1) or 13.
17 October 1986	Rees (transsexual)	No breach of Article 8 or 12.
26 October 1986	AGOSI (forfeiture by customs)	No breach of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1.
24 November 1986	Gillow	Breach of Article 8 in one respect. No breach of Article 8 in other respects, or of Article 6 or 14.
2 March 1987	Weeks (parole)	No breach of Article 5(1). Breach of Article 5(4).
2 March 1987	Monnell and Morris (criminal appeals)	No breach of Article 5(1), 6(1), 6(3)(c) or 14.
8 July 1987	O (child care)	Breach of Article 6(1). No breach of Article 8.
8 July 1987	H, W, B, R (child care)	Breach of Articles 6(1) and 8.
27 April 1988	Boyle and Rice (prisoners' correspondence and visits)	No breach of Article 13. Breach of Article 8 in respect of one letter.

Lonrho plc

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Attorney-General when the Crown Prosecution Service received from the City of London police the papers relating to the Liechtenstein subsidiaries of Lonrho plc, Blorg and Contango.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions first received papers from the City of London police in August 1986. He concluded that no further action was called for, a view which was shared by the then Attorney-General. Further papers have been submitted to the Director by the police and others on a number of occasions since. The Director has found no reason to depart from the conclusion reached in 1986.

Judicial Studies Board

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) 28 October, *Official Report*, column *272*, whether he has any proposals to change the criteria for selection of appointees to the Judicial Studies Board.

The Attorney-General: No.

Land Registry

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what, by grade, is the current establishment at Her Majesty's Land Registry, Gloucester; how this has varied in each of the last three years; and how many officers have been in place against establishment in each of the past three years.

The Attorney-General *[pursuant to his reply, 30 June 1988, c. 293-94]:* Additional information classified by grades is as set out in the tables.

Establishment and staffing at the land registry office at Coventry

	1 June 1987[1]		1 June 1988[1]	
	Establishment	Staff in post	Establishment	Staff in post
Lawyers				
Grade 5	—	—	1·0	—
Grade 6	—	—	—	—
Grade 7	3·0	1·0	2·0	4·0
Administration				
Grade 7	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Senior executive officer	6·5	2·0	8·0	6·0
Higher executive officer	13·0	5·0	14·0	12·0
Executive officer	52·0	15·0	61·0	34·0
Administrative officer	88·0	26·0	109·5	100·0
Administrative assistant	51·0	13·0	58·0	38·0
Secretarial category				
Typing manager	3·0	1·0	3·0	2·0

	1 June 1987[1]		1 June 1988[1]	
	Establishment	Staff in post	Establishment	Staff in post
Typist	26·0	12·0	29·0	18·0
Support grades[2]				
Telephonist	1·0	1·0	—	—
Office keeper	1·0	—	—	—
Senior paperkeeper	4·0	—	—	—
Paperkeeper	20·5	1·0	—	—
Senior messenger	1·0	—	—	—
Messenger	4·0	—	—	—
Security guard	1·0	1·0	—	—
Assistant CH. Repro. officer	1·0	—	—	—
Reprographics operator 1	1·0	—	—	—
Reprographics operator 2	2·0	—	—	—
Support manager 3	—	—	2·0	—
Support grade band 1	—	—	8·0	3·0
Support grade band 2	—	—	31·5	27·0
Totals	280	79·0	328	245·0

[1] These figures should be viewed in conjuction with those for the Gloucester District Land Registry.
[2] Support Grades were restructured into 5 grade bands with effect from 1.1.88.
Note: Casual staff have not been included in these figures.

Establishment and staffing at the Gloucester District Land Registry

	1 June 1986		1 June 1987[1]		1 June 1988[1]	
	Establishment	Staff in post	Establishment	Staff in post	Establishment	Staff in post
Lawyers						
Grade 5	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 6	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 7	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	3·0	4·0
Administration						
Grade 6	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 7	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Senior Executive Officer	17·0	17·0	18·0	17·0	16·0	18·0
Higher Executive Officer	28·0	28·5	30·5	29·5	32·0	29·5
Executive Officer	136·5	124·5	132·0	129·0	110·0	128·0
Administrative Officer	226·0	229·5	223·0	213·0	233·5	247·0
Administrative Assistant	147·5	122·0	156·0	131·0	65·5	132·0
Secretarial Category						
Chief Typing Manager	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Typing Manager	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	4·0	5·0
Typist	75·0	66·0	69·5	54·5	44·0	55·5
Support Grades[2]						
Telephonist	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—
Office Keeper	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—
Chief Paperkeeper	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—
Senior Paperkeeper	8·0	8·0	9·0	8·0	—	—
Paperkeeper	48·5	43·5	49·0	42·0	—	—
Senior Messenger	3·0	3·0	4·0	3·0	—	—
Messenger	13·0	11·5	13·0	12·5	—	—
Porter/Messenger	5·0	5·0	7·0	5·0	—	—
Security Guard	2·0	2·5	2·0	1·5	—	—
Night Watchman	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—
Chief Reprographics Officer	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—
Assistant Chief Reprographics Officer	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—
Leading Reprographics Officer	1·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	—
Reprographics Operator 1	6·0	7·0	6·0	5·0	—	—
Reprographics Operator 2	6·0	4·0	7·0	4·0	—	—
Support Manager 2	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
Support Manager 3	—	—	—	—	4·0	4·0
Support Grade Band 1	—	—	—	—	15·0	17·0
Support Grade Band 2	—	—	—	—	57·0	60·0
TOTALS	743·0	692·0	747·0	676·0	[1]590·0	706·0

[1] See also the establishment and staffing figures for the Coventry office.
[2] Support Grades were restructured into five grade bands with effect from 1 January 1988.
Note:
Casual staff have not been included in these figures.

Mr. Dermot Purdy

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General when the Crown Solicitor for Northern Ireland expects to have completed his work regarding the superannuation case of Mr. Dermot Purdy, 11A Stockbridge road, Donaghadee; and when he will be in a position to have the case listed in court.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have been asked to reply.

While Mr. Purdy's solicitors have been in correspondence with the Crown Solicitor, no proceedings have been instituted by or on behalf of Mr. Purdy. If such proceedings were to be commenced the listing of the case in court would be a matter for Mr. Purdy's solicitors.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Careless Driving

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drivers have been *(a)* cautioned, *(b)* prosecuted and *(c)* convicted for driving without due care and attention in Nottinghamshire, London and the north-west; and if he will express these figures as a proportion per 10,000 drivers in the said area, for each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is for 1983 to 1986 and is shown in the table. Information collected centrally on written warnings does not distinguish the specific offence of driving without due care and attention from other offences of careless driving etc. with which it is grouped. Figures for proceedings and findings of guilt for this specific offence, which form the vast majority of the offences in this group, could be broken down by police force area only at disproportionate cost. The figures are related to the home population of the police force area concerned although the offenders may not have been resident in the area; information on the number of drivers in each area is not available.

Offences and alleged offences of careless driving etc.[1]: written warnings issued, proceedings at Magistrates' courts and findings of guilt at all courts by selected police force areas

England and Wales 1983-86 *Numbers of offences*

	Police force area(s)					
	Nottinghamshire		*Metropolitan Police and City of London*		*North West Region[2]*	
	Number	*Number per 10,000 population[3]*	*Number*	*Number per 10,000 population[3]*	*Number*	*Number per 10,000 population[3]*
Written warnings issued						
1983	117	1·2	854	1·2	1,647	2·4
1984	29	0·3	1,732	2·4	1,247	1·8
1985	59	0·6	1,777	2·5	2,236	3·3
1986	99	1·0	1,557	2·1	1,882	2·7
Proceedings at Magistrates' courts						
1983	1,544	15·6	13,826	19·1	27,438	39·8
1984	1,126	11·3	15,244	21·2	25,040	36·4
1985	1,349	13·4	13,265	18·3	25,819	37·6
1986	1,161	11·5	10,641	14·7	22,588	32·9
Findings of guilt at all courts						
1983	1,419	14·3	12,631	17·5	25,256	36·6
1984	1,042	10·4	14,037	19·5	22,858	33·2
1985	1,249	12·4	11,930	16·5	23,277	33·9
1986	1,052	10·5	9,600	13·2	20,014	29·2

[1] Mainly driving without due care and attention.
[2] Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside police force areas.
[3] Based on mid-year population figures.

Driving Offences

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the distribution by sex of drink-driving offenders;

(2) what is the distribution by sex of offenders convicted of driving without due care and attention

Mr. John Patten: In 1986, 95 per cent. of those found guilty of driving and so on after consuming alcohol or taking drugs were males, and for careless driving and so on 86 per cent. Information on the age and sex of offenders is published annually, by broad offence group in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales". Table 8 of the issue for 1986, number 36/87 is the latest available and copies of this bulletin are in the Library. The offence of driving without due care and attention is grouped together with other offences of careless driving and so on, and findings of guilt for this specific offence, which forms the vast majority of the offences in the careless driving category, could be broken down by sex of offender only at disproportionate cost. The figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

Drivers (Retests)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions magistrates' courts have used their power to oblige a driving offender to take a retest; and what information his Department possesses on the ages and physical states of the said offenders, for each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: In 1987, about 600 disqualifications were imposed by magistrates' courts, where there was also a requirement for the offender to take a driving test. This information is published annually by broad offence group in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and

Wales, Supplementary Tables". Table 13 of the issue for 1986 is the latest available and copies of this and earlier bulletins are available in the Library. The Department does not collect information on the medical state of these offenders, and for most motoring offences information is collected on their age only if they are aged under 21. In 1987, over 90 per cent. of those required to take a driving test were aged over 21. Figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

Glen Parva

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to cope with the current problems at the Glen Parva centre for young offenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Apart from the temporary closure of a unit for inmates with special problems, the only specific problem of which we are aware is a shortage of staff, requiring the redeployment of some works officers to discipline duties. We expect this to be resolved as more staff are allocated to the establishment within the next few months.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects that the special unit for inmates with special problems, opened in April 1986 at the Glen Parva centre for young offenders and recently closed, will be reopened.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The unit opened in April 1986 is planned to reopen as soon as staff can be made available, and within this financial year; another unit with psychiatric support continues to provide a therapeutic environment for disturbed young offenders at Glen Parva.

Unpaid Fines

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for each of the nine inner London petty sessional divisions, how many cases of unpaid fines still await collection; and at what time point unpaid fines are written off as uncollectable.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not readily available. I will reply as soon as possible.

Detention Centres (Closures)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement in respect of Her Majesty's detention centre, Gringley on the Hill, Nottingham; and Her Majesty's detention centre, North sea camp, Lincolnshire, as to *(a)* why these detention centres were closed and *(b)* what future plans his Department has for them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's detention centre, Gringley was temporarily closed on 7 March this year. Her Majesty's detention centre, North sea camp ceased to accommodate detention centre trainees on 18 September 1987 but was maintained by a small complement of staff to provide daytime work for parties of prisoners from Her Majesty's prison Morton hall. This action was taken in response to the decline in demand for detention centre accommodation and it enabled staff at both establishments to be deployed in the most effective way to other prison service establishments where they were more urgently needed.

North sea camp has now converted to an open training prison for adult male prisoners and on 4 July this year began to build up a residential population which will increase to 202 as soon as resources allow.

The future of the establishment at Gringley is under review.

Market Harborough Fire Station

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the number of firemen stationed at the Market Harborough fire station will reach establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for the provision of the fire brigade in the area rests with Leicestershire county council. We understand that, whilst the authority is unable to say when the full establishment at Market Harborough will be reached, efforts are continuing to attract suitable recruits. We are satisfied that, despite the current shortfall, the nationally recommended standards of fire cover are being met.

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's practice with regard to progressing any legislative or policy plans where it is advised that they may be challenged under the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Hurd: When consideration is being given to legislative and other proposals full account is taken of the United Kingdom's obligations under the European convention on human rights and of any risk of challenge thereunder.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will amend the proposals in paragraph 47 of his White Paper on the reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act (Cm 408) so that designation, as proposed therein, shall relate to the nature of the material disclosed rather than the position of the individual civil servant.

Mr. John Patten: As the White Paper explains, the Government believe that any unauthorised disclosure by a member of the security and intelligence services is harmful, and should be caught by the criminal law. The same consideration applies to disclosures by certain officials who work closely with those services.

Sanctuary

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take urgent steps to end the practice of the claiming of sanctuary in England and Wales.

Mr. Hurd: Sanctuary was abolished by Parliament in 1623. I think it would be wrong to allow anyone to defy a lawful decision merely by entering a religious building. I reserve the right to secure the removal of anyone who has done so if that is necessary to uphold the rule of law.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded to all prisons in England and Wales for the purposes of psychiatric reports in each year from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* The readily available information is given in the table. Information for 1987-88 is not yet available.

Psychiatric reports prepared in prison department establishments in England and Wales on persons remanded in custody for reports.

	Number
1980	8,155
1981	8,003
1982	8,032
1983	8,193
[1]1984-85	9,102
[2]1985-86	7,084
[2]1986-87	6,367

[1] 1 January 1984 to 31 March 1985.
[2] Financial year, 1 April to 31 March.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further measures he proposes to take to ensure that further education responds to the changing employment demands of industry and commerce.

Mr. Jackson: One purpose of the Education Reform Bill is to help further education colleges respond better to the needs of industry and commerce. The Bill will, if enacted, reform the selection and composition of college governing bodies, increasing the proportion of governors representing employment interests. It will also require the delegation to governing bodies of responsibility for the management of colleges, so that they can respond more quickly and effectively. Meanwhile, the Training Commission is continuing to develop its procedures for ensuring that LEA plans for further education take full account of labour market needs. And the National Council for Vocational Qualifications is working to establish a more rational structure of vocational qualifications which will ensure that trainging delivered through the further education system is more relevant to employment needs.

Japanese Language

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made in his discussions on ways of enhancing Japanese language training for exporters.

Mr. Jackson: At present there is nothing I can add to the reply given to my hon. Friend on 16 June at column *186*. I will write as soon as there is progress to report.

Under-fives

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, what action he intends to take to ensure that provision for under-fives in primary school is appropriate to their stage of development.

Mr. Dunn: Where such provision is adequately resourced, it can and does fully meet the needs of the four-year-olds concerned. One current problem some LEAs face in this area is a shortage of teachers with relevant experience and my right hon. Friend has recently proposed a new national priority area addressed directly to this in my Department's 1989-90 training grants scheme for in-service teacher training.

Violence in Classrooms

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the response of the various teachers' unions to the setting up of the Elton inquiry on violence in school classrooms.

Mrs. Rumbold: All the unions representing school teachers and head teachers in England and Wales have responded positively to the establishment of the inquiry into discipline in schools, by submitting detailed written evidence for the committee of inquiry's consideration. The National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Head Teachers have mounted special surveys amongst their members, and a number of individual local union branches have also submitted evidence.

Computerised Lathes

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many computerised lathes there are in *(a)* schools and *(b)* technical colleges in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected centrally.

Religious Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many qualified teachers in religious education would be needed to ensure that at least one specialist in this subject is on the staff of every primary and secondary school in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twenty-three thousand, six hundred and fifty-three in England. There are 4,221 secondary and 19,432 primary schools in England. A special survey of secondary school staffing in 1984 suggests that there were 16,900 full-time and 1,700 part-time secondary teachers who held a post A-level qualification in which religious education was a main or second subject or who had attended an in-service course in RE of at least one term's full-time duration. A similar survey of primary school staffing in 1987 suggests that 16,700 full-time and 2,700 part-time primary school teachers held a post A-level qualification in which religious education was a main or second subject or who had in the previous five years attended an in-service course in RE of at least one term's full-time duration.

The position in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Teachers (Leaving Statistics)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers left the profession in the last full year for which figures are

available, in *(a)* the 50 to 54 years age group, *(b)* the 55 to 59 years age group and *(c)* the 60 years and over age group for reasons of (i) retirement, (ii) infirmity and (iii) other; and what percentage of all teachers in each of these age groups these teachers represent.

Mrs. Rumbold: The numbers of full-time school teachers in the given age bands leaving the maintained, assisted and grant-aided sector in the financial year 1985-86, and the percentage they make up of their respective age groups, are as follows:

Age	*Number*	*Percentage of age group*
50 to 54	3,490	7·5
55 to 59	5,014	17·0
60 and over	3,592	39·0

Information on how many of these left for reasons of retirement, infirmity and other is not readily available.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mrs. Rumbold: The cost to the Department of employing management or computer consultants for each financial year from 1984-85 to 1987-88 is given in the table.

	£
1984-85	69,300
1985-86	105,847
1986-87	229,842
1987-88	328,677

Similar information for 1983-84 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following contracts to management or computer consultancy firms were extant in the Department as at 1 January 1987:

Name of Firm	*Assignment*
CCTA	Education Information Study
Deloittes, Haskins and Sells	Financial management advice and assistance to the University Grants Committee.
Deloittes, Haskins and Sells	Review of audit controls over teachers' pensions (payments and contributions.
Loughborough Consultants Ltd	Analysis of universities' responses to the Jarratt report.
Spicer and Peglar Associates	Assessment of Data Envelopment Analysis as a technique for comparing education performance.
Butler Cox	Office Systems Strategy Study

Phlebotomus Fever

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list contracts between the Natural Environment Research Council and the United States Army research institute on infectious diseases in respect of the phlebotomus fever group of viruses.

Mr. Jackson: The Natural Environment Research Council institute of virology has one such contract with the United States Army medical research institute for infectious diseases. The contract is to help diagnose infections in humans and animals, and develop candidate vaccines.

GCSE (Animal Experimentation)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning questions on the subject of animal experimentation set by the southern examining group as part of its general certificate of secondary education examination paper.

Mrs. Rumbold: None. My right hon. Friend and I have received representations concerning stimulus material relating to animal experimentation supplied by the southern examining group for its English syllabus C.

Examinations (Resource Material)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he takes to ensure that the resource material supplied as background to candidates for general certificate of secondary education exams is impartial;

(2) if he will make it his policy to require examining boards to ensure that material supplied to students by them on the subject of animal experimentation includes material from those individuals or organisations involved in such work.

Mrs. Rumbold: The independent GCSE examining groups are responsible for GCSE syllabuses and examination material. The Government look to these bodies to avoid bias in all its aspects, in line with the national criteria for the GCSE. It is for the groups and the Secondary Examinations Council to ensure that the GCSE national criteria are enforced.

ENVIRONMENT

Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much tax and rates have been forgone in the enterprise zone on the Isle of Dogs.

Mr. Trippier: The tax forgone in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone cannot be identified. By 31 March 1988, about £16·7 million of rates revenue forgone had been reimbursed to the relevant local authorities.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total public subsidy to Canary wharf to date.

Mr. Trippier: There is no direct subsidy. Improvements costing some £250 million are being made to the public infrastructure to serve developments in that part of docklands which includes Canary wharf.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs he estimates that Canary wharf will provide.

Mr. Trippier: Between 50,000 and 60,000.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land, previously owned by the London borough of Tower Hamlets, has been acquired by the London Docklands development corporation since its inception.

Mr. Trippier: About 75 acres.

New Towns Commission and Council House Sales (Corby)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many New Towns Commission and council houses have been sold in the Corby district up to the present date.

Mrs. Roe: I assume that my hon. Friend is interested in sales since 1979. The number of dwellings that each district council has reported selling in the period from 1 April 1979 to 31 December 1987 is given in the table placed in the Library in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 9 June at column *654*. During the same period sales were reported of four of the new town dwellings.

Controlled Wastes Inspectorate

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to increase the staff of the controlled wastes inspectorate.

Mr. Moynihan: The controlled wastes inspection branch of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is at full complement. I have no plans to increase this level of staffing for the fulfilment of current responsibilities.

Football (Crowd Behaviour)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to have talks with the football authorities about crowd behaviour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am in the process of setting up a working party to examine the details of the proposed national membership scheme. The Football League and the Football Association will be represented on the working party which will have its first meeting, under my chairmanship, in the very near future.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by region and county, the sites designated as of special scientific interest, and the area of each, up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in England.

Mr. Moynihan: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. I am arranging, however, to send the hon. Member, and place in the Library, lists of SSSIs in England as at 31 December 1987 showing the site area, whether the site had been notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and those subsequently denotified.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the cost to the Property Services Agency of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Ridley: Expenditure by the Property Services Agency on management or computer consultants for the financial years 1983-84 to 1987-88 was:

	Cost £
1983-84	147,927
1984-85	152,721
1985-86	697,767
1986-87	2,322,106
1987-88	4,623,999

The figures quoted are for financial years as the breakdown by calendar year is not readily available and could be provided only at the expense of considerable staff effort. The figures for 1983-84 are for computer consulting only.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Ridley: Following is the information for DOE(C)

	£ million
1983-84	3·9
1984-85	3·7
1985-86	2·5
1986-87	3·6
1987-88	4·6

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in the Property Services Agency as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Ridley: The following consultancy contracts were extant in the Property Services Agency as at 1 January 1987:

Project	*Consultancy Firm*
1. Civil Estate Record information Systems	United Information Services Ltd.
2. Support for Installation of the Interim RHQ Computing Facility	Digital Equipment Co. Ltd.
3. Infrastructure—Technical Support	PACTEL

Project	*Consultancy Firm*
4. System Support for Staff Allocation Model (SAM)	SIA Ltd.
5. Support for VME Transition	ICL
6. Support for VME Transition	W. S. Atkins Ltd.
7. IT Standards—DITSTAN I	BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
8. Support to IT Committee	Coopers & Lybrand
9. Support for Accountancy Package—LAFIS	ICL
10. SSADM Support for Repayments Project	ICL
11. Support for Professional Computing Transition Project	Ove Arup and Partners
12. Support for PRIME Bureau Service at Croydon	Primary Systems Ltd.
13. Oracle Consultancy Support —PSA IMNEW Project	Oracle Corporation UK Ltd.
14. IT Standards—DITSTAN II	BIS Applied Systems Ltd
15. Support for Project Support Office	Coopers & Lybrand
16. Quality Assurance Repayments Re-Write Project	Coopers & Lybrand
17. Measured Term Contracts Feasibility Study	United Information Services Ltd.
18. Whitgift PABX Project Manager	BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
19. DWO PABX Replacement Technical Support	BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
20. Hastings PABX Technical Support	BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
21. Edinburgh PABX Technical Support	BIS Applied Systems Ltd.
Management Consultancy Contracts	
22. Commercial Accounts Study	Deloitte, Haskins & Sell
23. Evaluation Word Processing Market	Dialatron
24. Support for PSA Data Admin. Function	PACTEL
25. Directly Employed Labour Management Study	MCP Management Consultants
26. Privatisation of TCS	Coopers & Lybrand

Urban Programme

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of urban programme funding made available to each local authority for the current financial year and the amount this represents per head of population in each area.

Mr. Trippier: Fifty seven authorities have received allocations of urban programme resources for 1988-89, which reflect authorities' overall need as well as their urban programme performance. The amounts are shown in the table, together with the amount per head of population.

	1988-89 UP resources £ million cash	*UP £ per head of 1986 Population*
Partnership Authorities		
Birmingham	24·7	24·6
Hackney	9·7	51·6
Islington	9·7	57·4
Lambeth	11·8	48·0
Liverpool	20·4	42·4
Manchester/Salford	22·2	32·1
Newcastle/Gateshead	16·8	34·5
Programme Authorities		
Barnsley	1·5	6·8
Blackburn	4·0	28·8
Bolton	3·8	14·3
Bradford	4·5	9·7
Brent	3·9	15·3
Bristol	1·5	3·8
Burnley	1·8	20·4
Coventry	4·8	15·4
Derby	1·4	6·5
Doncaster	1·8	6·0
Dudley	1·3	4·2
Greenwich	1·9	8·7
Halton	1·4	11·6
Hammersmith and Fulham	4·3	28·6
Haringey	2·3	11·5
Hartlepool	1·8	19·3
Kensington and Chelsea	1·9	13·5
Kingston Upon Hull	4·9	19·0
Kirklees	0·8	2·2
Knowsley	4·0	23·9
Langbaurgh	1·8	12·0
Leeds	4·4	6·2
Leicester	5·4	19·3
Lewisham	2·0	8·4
Middlesbrough	5·5	38·1
Newham	2·3	11·0
North Tyneside	3·4	17·8
Nottingham	5·5	19·8
Oldham	3·7	16·8
Plymouth	1·0	3·9
Preston	2·0	16·0
Rochdale	3·6	17·4
Rotherham	1·8	7·0
St. Helens	1·7	9·0
Sandwell	4·9	16·2
Sefton	1·5	5·0
Sheffield	5·5	10·3
South Tyneside	4·4	28·0
Southwark	2·3	10·4
Stockton-On-Tees	1·4	7·8
Sunderland	4·4	14·8
The Wrekin	0·6	4·4
Tower Hamlets	4·5	29·5
Walsall	1·5	5·7
Wandsworth	4·5	17·5
Wigan	2·2	7·2
Wirral	3·5	10·2
Wolverhampton	5·4	21·4

Notes:

[1] Population is estimated as at mid-1986.

[2] The table does not include residual payments on the traditional urban programme to certain other local authorities.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those public agencies answerable to his Department which are jointly or solely responsible for the enforcement of legislation, by title and purpose, concerned with the welfare of farm animals; and if he will give for each of the last three years for which figures are available, the budget staffing of each agency.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Rates (Payment)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discretion local authorities have as to

whether to collect the 20 per cent. rates from people claiming housing benefit or income support in the form of 10 monthly payments to cover the year's total bill.

Mr. Howard: All ratepayers have the right to pay their rates in 10 monthly instalments. Local authorities may collect rates from their own tenants with rent, which may be on a weekly or fortnightly basis and they may make similar arrangements with other landlords also.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received with respect to tenants living in private accommodation and housing associations, being expected to pay their rates cost in a manner less favourable than those living in local authority accommodation; and if he will make a statement setting out Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of these arrangements, indicating what guidance has been given to housing associations by his Department.

Mr. Howard: I have received no such representations recently and have no proposals to issue guidance on the subject. Domestic rates will cease to be payable on 31 March 1990.

Rating Reform

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in favour of the retention of the rating system.

Mr. Howard: A summary of the 1,217 responses received by 31 October 1986, when the consultation period on the Green Paper ended, was placed in the Library on 15 December 1986. Overall, those respondents who supported the abolition of domestic rates outnumbered those who supported retention by 2 to 1.

Since June 1987, my Department has received some 10,900 letters containing a variety of comments on specific aspects of our proposals, or requesting further information. The letters do not readily lend themselves to an analysis of correspondents' views.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme, DOE—housing and DOE—other environmental services, classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The table gives figures consistent with those given in the answer the hon. Member received from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 May at columns *375-76*. The figures relate to income from charges in respect of programme expenditure and exclude capital receipts and receipts in respect of running cost expenditure.

	1982-83 £000	*1983-84 £000*	*1984-85 £000*	*1985-86 £000*	*1986-87 £000*	*1987-88 £000*	*1988-89 £000*	*1989-90 £000*	*1990-91 £000*
Department of the Environment—Housing									
Local authorities—other current expenditure	34,402	45,153	47,661	56,388	54,777	58,000	53,000	53,000	55,000
Department of the Environment—other environmental services									
Environmental research	16	40	20	97	59	75	181	186	191
Royal palaces, royal parks and royal armouries	5,898	6,271	7,581	7,631	6,478	7,099	9,930	9,560	9,800
Historic buildings, ancient monuments and national heritage	1,135	1,214	1,528	1,742	2,053	2,150	2,318	2,376	2,435
Local environmental services and other local authority current	587,980	579,885	701,771	761,392	832,242	780,242	715,661	743,733	766,829
Departmental administration	14,359	6,527	3,616	4,320	7,510	7,086	6,678	6,896	7,119
Total Department of the Environment—Housing	34,402	45,153	47,661	56,388	54,777	58,000	53,000	53,000	55,000
Total Department of the Environment—Other	609,388	593,937	714,516	775,182	848,342	796,652	734,768	762,751	786,374
GRAND TOTAL[1]	643,790	639,090	762,177	831,570	903,119	854,652	787,768	815,751	841,374

[1] Figures in table are consistent with Cm. 288.

Inner Urban Areas

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table given in answer to the then hon. Member for Liverpool, Wavertree, in the *Official Report*, column *324-30*, 14 May 1981, using the most recent statistics; and if he will extend the table to include any local authority whose area is covered by an urban development corporation city action team, or inner city task force.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* Statistics for the 43 districts then designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act given by the Secretary of State in 1981 were largely based on the 1971 census. Information for all local authorities in England based on the 1981 census are contained in my Department's publication "Census Information Note 2: Urban Deprivation". This was put in the Library of the House on 15 February 1983. This provides information on nine indicators:

(i) unemployed persons;
(ii) overcrowded households;
(iii) single-parent households;
(iv) pensioners living alone;
(v) households lacking exclusive use of basic amenities;
(vi) population change (1971-81);

(vii) standardised mortality rates;
(viii) low-skilled economically active persons; and
(ix) residents living in households where the head of household was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan.

More recent statistics are available only for:
(a) population estimates—mid-1986;
(b) population change—1981-86;
(c) standardised mortality ratios; and
(d) unemployment.

This information, for the 57 local authorities in England which benefit from the urban programme, city action teams or the Department of Trade and Industry's inner city task forces, is shown in the table.

District	*Population estimate[1] mid 1986*	*Estimated population change[2] 1981-86*		*Mortality ratio[3] (England and Wales = 100) 1981-1986*	*Unemployment May 1988[4]*	
		Number	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*
Birmingham	1,004,100	−16,700	−1·6	108	68,728	14·5
Gateshead	207,300	−5,900	−2·8	112	13,177	13·1
Hackney	187,199	+2,000	+1·1	101	16,837	19·3
Islington	168,000	+1,900	+1·1	100	13,349	15·9
Lambeth	245,000	−8,000	−3·2	100	19,661	15·3
Liverpool	483,000	−33,700	−6·5	114	47,261	19·9
Manchester	451,400	−11,200	−2·4	117	36,245	17·7
Newcastle	281,400	−2,700	−1·0	108	20,383	115·7
Salford	239,300	−7,700	−3·1	117	14,022	12·2
Barnsley	222,200	−3,600	−1·6	110	14,916	14·8
Blackburn	139,100	−3,500	−2·5	121	6,763	10·5
Bolton	261,600	−700	−0·3	117	13,099	10·6
Bradford	463,100	−1,800	−0·4	111	22,586	10·7
Brent	255,700	+1,500	+0·6	94	13,899	10·6
Bristol	391,500	−9,800	−2·4	100	17,908	9·7
Burnley	88,200	−6,000	−6·4	121	4,124	9·2
Coventry	310,400	−9,000	−2·8	103	18,107	12·1
Derby	216,200	−1,200	−0·6	108	11,864	11·7
Doncaster	289,300	−1,600	−0·6	108	19,294	14·7
Dudley	300,900	+100	0·0	106	13,722	9·3
Greenwich	217,800	+2,200	+1·0	102	11,020	10·7
Halton	123,200	0	0·0	114	8,113	14·6
Hammersmith and Fulham	150,800	−500	−0·3	97	9,774	12·3
Haringey	196,100	−11,100	−5·4	103	14,354	13·7
Hartlepool	90,700	−4,200	−4·4	124	7,359	16·6
Kensington and Chelsea	137,400	−2,700	−1·9	98	7,040	9·8
Kingston-upon-Hull	258,000	−15,700	−5·7	105	18,845	15·5
Kirklees	376,600	−600	−0·2	112	14,504	8·4
Knowsley	163,800	−10,200	−5·9	107	15,263	18·5
Langbaurgh	146,800	−4,100	−2·7	113	10,172	15·1
Leeds	710,900	−6,700	−0·9	101	31,587	9·5
Leicester	281,100	−2,100	−0·7	104	13,723	10·3
Lewisham	232,000	−4,400	−1·9	95	14,260	12·2
Middlesbrough	144,300	−6,300	−4·2	119	12,498	18·2
Newham	205,200	−7,600	−3·6	104	13,357	13·4
North Tyneside	192,300	−6,300	−3·2	110	11,381	12·1
Nottingham	227,800	−400	−0·1	111	19,001	14·9
Oldham	220,000	−1,400	−0·6	117	9,860	9·2
Plymouth	256,000	+3,100	+1·2	98	12,886	11·7
Preston	125,000	−1,400	−1·1	111	6,816	11·7
Rochdale	206,600	−1,600	−0·8	114	10,027	10·1
Rotherham	252,100	−600	−0·2	106	16,171	14·0
St. Helens	187,900	−2,300	−1·2	115	11,136	12·7
Sandwell	301,100	−8,700	−2·8	106	18,643	12·7
Sefton	298,000	−2,400	−0·8	104	16,869	12·1
Sheffield	534,300	−13,300	−2·4	105	34,556	13·8
South Tyneside	156,900	−5,100	−3·1	119	12,036	16·1
Southwark	216,000	−2,300	−1·1	101	17,163	15·9
Stockton-on-Tees	175,800	+1,900	+1·1	105	11,605	14·2
Sunderland	297,700	+400	+0·1	112	22,785	16·9
The Wrekin	130,200	+4,700	+3·7	104	6,899	12·3
Tower Hamlets	152,800	+7,600	+5·2	106	13,520	19·3
Walsall	261,800	−5,900	−2·2	110	13,809	10·8
Wandsworth	257,100	−4,900	−1·9	104	11,337	8·7
Wigan	306,600	−3,700	−1·2	114	16,178	11·2
Wirral	334,800	−5,800	−1·7	104	20,701	13·4
Wolverhampton	251,900	−4,700	−1·8	106	16,583	14·0

[1] Registrar General's population estimate at mid-1986.
Source: OPCS Monitor PP1 86/2.
[2] Registrar General's estimate of population change: mid-1981 to mid-1986.
Source: OPCS Monitor PP1 86/2.
[3] Standardised mortality ratios (SMR) are calculated as the number of actual deaths in each area in 1986 as a percentage of deaths which would have been expected if the local populations had experienced the sex and age specific mortality rates observed in England and Wales as a whole. Since 1983 SMRs do not include adjustment factors for institutional populations and deaths.
Source: Key Population and vital Statistics 1986: OPCS Series VS No. 13, PP1 No. 9.

* The ratio of the economically active population registered as unemployed as at 12 May 1988. The denominators used in calculating the percentage rates of unemployment are the 1981 census numbers of economically active.
Source: Department of Employment and OPCS.

Pool Cars

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received regarding criminal offences associated with the use of pool cars; what plans he has for curtailing the abuse of pool cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

We have found no record of this Department having received any representations on this subject. The investigation of criminal offences is a matter for the police to whom evidence of specific offences should be passed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretry of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what detailed analysis his Department has made of the effects of comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa in relation to the living standards of black South Africans.

Mr. Eggar: There is no doubt that, as a wide range of assessments have confirmed, comprehensive economic sanctions would seriously damage the living standards of black South Africans.

Departmental Survey Research Expenditure

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the level of expenditure on survey research for his Department for each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Foreign and Commonwealth Office expenditure in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 on survey research is shown below. No surveys were undertaken prior to 1986-87. The figures include expenditure for both the diplomatic and aid wings.

Year	*Expenditure £*
1986-87	11,195
1987-88	4,323

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Eggar: Foreign and Commonwealth Office expenditure in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 on management and computer consultancy is shown below. The figures include expenditure for both the diplomatic and aid wings.

Consultancy	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £
Management	68,329	257,272
Computer	783,103	1,171,347

Prior to 1986-87 consultancy expenditure was not separately identified in the FCO's accounts. Information for earlier years is therefore not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Eggar: On 1 January 1987 the following management and computer consultancy contracts were extant in both diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

Management consultancies	
None	
Computer consultancies	
Data General	Management accounting and information system
Kinesis Computing Limited	Development of overseas systems
Towngate Software Limited	Development of an overseas accounting system
Computer Sciences Limited	FOLIOS consultancy studies
Logica United Kingdom Limited	FOLIOS consultancy studies
Systems Designers plc	FOLIOS consultancy studies
The Instruction Set	FOLIOS consultancy studies
Psychometric R and D Limited	(i) A financial estimates system (ii) An overseas estates financial system
Price Waterhouse	Computerisation of administration records

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's practice with regard to progressing any legislative or policy plans where it is advised that they may be challenged under the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Eggar: When consideration is being given to legislative and other proposals, full account is taken of our obligations under the European convention on human rights and of any risk of challenge thereunder.

Wormhoudt Massacre

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date his Department handed over to the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany the British files on the Wormhoudt massacre.

Mr. Eggar: We are in touch with the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany about the most convenient way to make the information available to them.

DEFENCE

MOD Envelope Form 565

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will change the size of MOD envelope 565 so as to enable it to be fitted into the slots in the Members' Letterboard without being folded.

Mr. Freeman: MOD form 565 is a Post Office approved envelope which is designed to take a standard A4 size sheet of paper, folded twice. It was selected for reasons of economy and standardisation and I have no plans to reduce its size.

Greenham Common

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 July, if there is any construction work on existing buildings currently being undertaken at Greenham Common.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As part of the continuing routine maintenance programme at RAF Greenham Common, a hangar and a small storage warehouse are currently being refurbished.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for low-level flights over southern Scotland, giving an up-to-date table supplying the most recent figures for the table last published in the *Official Report* 1 May 1987, column *298*, in his written answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

Mr. Freeman: Movements in southern Scotland during 1987 and for the first three months of 1988 are given below in column 2. The number of movements in a flight is variable but around 2·5 on average.

1 *Year*	*2* *Movements in southern Scotland*	*3* *Complaints from southern Scotland*	*4* *Complaints from Borders Region*
1987	21,453	304	126
1988	2,220*	152**	46**

* Up to 31 March
**Up to 30 June

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing low flying over southern Scotland as a proportion of all low-level flights in the United Kingdom from 1980 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Numbers of flights have been directly recorded only since 1984. The proportion of low-flying activity experienced in southern Scotland in terms of aircraft movements is given below. The area in question represents approximately 9 per cent. by area of the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Proportion of United Kingdom low-flying movements over southern Scotland

Year	*Per cent.*
1980	3·8
1981	4·4
1982	4·3
1983	4·8
1984	5·7
1985	6·3
1986	6·1
1987	6·8
1988	2·6

Air Search and Rescue

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the rescue missions flown by the 22 SAR flight based at RAF Chivenor to convey injured or sick people to hospitals in north Devon or elsewhere; and if he will identify how many involved service personnel and how many involved civilians.

Mr. Freeman: During 1987, the last complete year for which records are available, search and rescue helicopters from Royal Air Force Chivenor conveyed 29 people to hospitals in north Devon and elsewhere, of whom 28 were civilians.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each of the Manpower Services Commission's areas in Greater London, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, the Birmingham and Solihull Manpower Services Commission area and for Great Britain as a whole, what are the most recent monthly statistics for new JTS showing *(a)* entrants in the latest available period, and the number of cumulative entrants since the scheme started, *(b)* a breakdown of entrants which shows how many were male and female, the length of time they had been out of work, their ethnic backgrounds and whether or not they had any disabilities, *(c)* the number of trainees in the latest available period who entered work placements and the cumulative total of how many are in work places at the latest available date, and *(d)* trainees who left the scheme in the latest available period, and the number of cumulative leavers since the scheme started; for all those trainees who have left the scheme how many (i) found work, (ii) failed to attend, (iii) went on to another course of training or education, (iv) completed the course, (v) left for sickness or (vi) went back into unemployment; and what is the total number of currently filled places.

Mr. Cope: At 25 March 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, some 30,435 formerly unemployed people were participating in the new job training scheme (NJTS). The breakdown is set out in the tables. Information on the immediate destinations/reasons for leaving of trainees who have left the scheme are not completed at a Training Commission area office level, as only a minority of trainees inform managing agents of their destinations on leaving NJTS.

More reliable information about job entry rates and other trainee destinations is being gathered by independent follow-up surveys. The first such survey will provide some information on trainees who left NJTS between October 1987 and December 1987, and will be available

for Great Britain shortly. Response rates have varied significantly by area; consequently information at that level is unlikely to be available.

The survey will be repeated quarterly and the information base will become fuller, and therefore more reliable at area level, over time.

Table 1
TC—Greater London

	London North	London East	London South	London West	Inner London North	Inner London South
No. of Entrants in latest available period (March)	106	310	114	79	169	131
Cumulative Entrants since Scheme started (April-March)	1,712	1,649	1,121	1,124	1,647	2,366
Cumulative						
(a) Male	1,138	974	704	624	662	1,627
(b) Female	574	506	354	421	985	712
(c) Length of time out of work						
(1) 6-12 months	809	668	486	478	810	989
(2) Over 12 months	412	331	266	280	485	606
(3) Over 24 months	491	481	306	287	352	744
(d) Declared Ethnic Background						
(1) White	787	784	641	464	786	939
(2) Black-African Caribbean descent	470	265	188	201	510	798
(3) Indian Sub-Continent descent	198	257	83	187	118	125
(4) None of those	185	129	102	128	141	264
(5) Not declared	72	45	44	65	92	213
(e) Declared disability	21	81	43	20	36	86
Entered first practical experience placements in March	28	35	20	26	60	49
In practical experience (not cumulative total) placements at latest date (end March)	223	190	123	103	527	523
Cumulative leavers	1,306	1,009	730	917	1,077	1,573
March leavers—non cumulative	114	75	44	76	146	158

Footnotes:
1. Due to difficulties in data collection some of the information given above is incomplete.
2. In the main, new job training scheme trainees undertake individually designed packages of training and practical experience, flexible in nature and of varying length. The scheme does not offer courses as such and trainees may and do leave at any time to pursue other opportunities.

Table 2
TC—Merseyside and Manchester

	Manchester Central	Manchester East	Manchester North	Merseyside
No. of entrants in latest available period (March)	358	212	203	261
Cumulative entrants since scheme started (April-March)	3,104	1,773	1,737	2,964
Cumulative				
(a) Male	2,438	1,427	1,358	2,162
(b) Female	665	346	179	902
(c) Length of time out of work				
(1) 6-12 months	1,173	729	687	987
(2) Over 12 months	713	437	409	715
(3) Over 24 months	1,193	607	639	1,247
(d) Declared ethnic background				
(1) White	2,279	1,475	1,386	2,539
(2) Black African Caribbean descent	209	37	22	23
(3) Indian sub-continent descent	104	66	72	11
(4) None of those	429	167	206	301
(5) Not declared	83	28	49	41
(e) Declared disability	160	51	95	58
Entered first practical experience placements in March	120	96	99	116
In practical experience (not cumulative total) placements at latest date (end March)	546	325	368	527
Cumulative leavers	2,159	1,295	1,203	2,173
March Leavers—non cumulative	272	184	130	227

Notes:
1. Due to difficulties in data collection some of the information given above is incomplete.
2. In the main, new job training scheme trainees undertake individually designed packages of training and practical experience, flexible in nature and of varying length. The scheme does not offer courses as such and trainees may and do leave at any time to pursue other opportunities.

Table 3
TC—Birmingham, Solihull and Great Britain

	Birmingham and Solihull	*Great Britain*
No of entrants in latest available period (March)	264	10,806
Cumulative entrants since scheme started (April–March)	3,044	100,107
Cumulative		
(a) Male	2,164	70,059
(b) Female	880	23,690
(c) Length of time out of work		
(1) 6 to 12 months	1,147	40,680
(2) Over 12 months	706	22,001
(3) Over 24 months	1,191	10,844
(d) Declared ethnic background		
(1) White	1,784	75,908
(2) Black–African Caribbean descent	511	4,875
(3) Indian sub-continent descent	413	3,583
(4) None of those	275	7,155
(5) Not declared	61	2,356
(e) Declared disability	50	3,567
Entered first practical experience placement in March	102	3,961
In practical experience (not cumulative total) placements at latest date (end March)	517	18,018
Cumulative leavers	2,160	61,057
March leavers—non cumulative	245	7,664

Footnotes:
1. Due to difficulties in data collection some of the information given above is incomplete.
2. In the main, new job training scheme trainees undertake individually designed packages of training and practical experience, flexible in nature and of varying length. The scheme does not offer courses as such and trainees may and do leave at any time to pursue other opportunities.

EETPU (General Secretary)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the general secretary of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union on a visit to the EETPU's training centre on 19 April.

Low-income Households

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take action to include details of *(a)* travel-to-work expenses, and *(b)* work-related childcare costs in the family expenditure survey with a view to their being taken into account in the equivalent scales used in future editions of "Households Below Average Income", and in the assessment of replacement ratios.

Mr. Lee: The quality of the family expenditure survey results depends on there being strict limits on the amount and kind of information that is collected. The detailed information obtained is designed to meet a wide range of different requirements and is agreed between Government Departments. Travel-to-work expenses and work-related child care costs are included in expenditure but are not separately identified. My Department is prepared to consider any changes to the contents of the survey provided there is sufficient support for these and compensating reductions can be made elsewhere.

Equivalence scales as used in "Households Below Average Income" and replacement ratios are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Plant Health Inspectorate

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the light of the recent discovery of another outbreak of rhizomania, he proposes to increase the resources directed to the plant health inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are taking a number of steps to protect the United Kingdom sugar beet crop from further outbreaks of rhizomania. These include the fumigation of and quarantine conditions imposed on the Suffolk farm where the 1987 outbreak occurred, the very extensive surveying of beet-producing areas since 1983, the monitoring of particular imports where rhizomania could be a risk, however small, the reduction of soil tolerances on imports of potatoes and other vegetables and the disposal of waste fom imported vegetables to approved sites only. Rhizomania was recently discovered in soil from the wrapped root balls of Acers imported from the Netherlands. This single finding of rhizomania did not constitue an outbreak of the disease. The discovery was a result of the vigilance of the plant health inspectorate, and I am satisfied that the resources available to the inspectorate are sufficient to enable it to carry out its task effectively.

Durum Wheat

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the Council of Ministers agreed to a 12·5 per cent. increase in the aid to producers of durum wheat to coincide with the 5·2 per cent. reduction in the intervention price; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The EC Commission's proposal on durum wheat, to which 11 Member states have provisionally agreed as part of the price-fixing package, is in line with the Commission's continuing policy of gradually reducing the durum wheat intervention price to reach a relationship of 120 per cent. with the common wheat intervention price by 1992-93. Durum wheat is a surplus product. However, durum production is important in certain less-favoured regions, in southern Europe where it is the only option for large numbers of farmers. The increase in the production aid per hectare, which is paid only in these less-favoured regions is intended by the Commission to cushion the impact of the intervention price reduction on these farmers' incomes. We have

consistently argued that this aid is not an appropriate measure for dealing with what is largely a social and structual problem.

Toxic Waste

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of the hazard to fishing vessels from the burning of toxic waste in ships on the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have no evidence to indicate that the burning of toxic waste in ships on the North sea in accordance with the established rules poses any hazard to fishing vessels. There is only one internationally approved sea incineration site which is located in Dutch waters about 100 miles from the Netherlands coast and about 150 miles from the British coast. This site is out of the way of established shipping lanes and fishing grounds. Furthermore, incineration vessels are subject to controls to prevent incineration taking place within range of other vessels.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list those public agencies answerable to his Department which are jointly or solely responsible for the enforcement of legislation, by title and purpose, concerned with the welfare of farm animals in general, at farms, in transit, at markets and slaughterhouses; and if he will give, for each of the last three years for which figures are available, the budget and staffing of each agency.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The state veterinary service, which is part of my Department, is the main body responsible for animal welfare on the farm. It also co-operates with local authorities, which are principally responsible for enforcement of the legislation on welfare in transit, in markets and in abattoirs. My Department's budget and staffing for animal welfare work, most of which is accounted for by the state veterinary service, is estimated to be as follows:

	Cost £ million	*Manpower*
1985-86	3·4	127
1986-87	3·1	124
1987-88	3·4	132

New Zealand Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Commission of the European Economic Community is meeting to discuss New Zealand butter access; and if he has advised the Commission of the views of Her Majesty's Government on the issue.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 11 July. The EC Council of Ministers, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, is due to take a decision on future access for New Zealand butter before 1 August 1988.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any request from representatives of the New Zealand Government to inform the European Economic Community of the views of Her Majesty's Government on New Zealand butter access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes; and I will ensure that those views are communicated to the European Commission at the appropriate time.

Food (Information)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure that Government and industry provide full and open access to all relevant information about food, in particular safety and technical data.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government regularly publish the reports of their advisory committees on food safety, notably the food advisory committee, the committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment, and the steering group on food surveillance.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many ministerial visits were undertaken by his colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Tom King: The figure is estimated at something in excess of 1,000, as Ministers regularly visit all parts of the Province as part of their duties.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many ministerial visits were undertaken in Northern Ireland by all Ministers in the four years prior to November 1985.

Mr. Tom King: I do not have details of all the visits by Ministers in 1981-85, but I understand that they maintained the same practice of frequent visits to all parts of the Province.

Belvoir Park Hospital

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the impact of the decline of the number of physicists and technicians in the radiotherapy unit in Belvoir park hospital, Powdersburn on the treatment of patients and servicing the unit.

Mr. Needham: I am not aware of any decline in the number of physicists and technicians at the radiotherapy unit in Belvoir park hospital.

Belvoir Estates, Castlereagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the water trench was excavated across the roadway in Belvoir Estates, Castlereagh, opposite 11 Castledillon road; and what proposals there are to reinstate the roadway surface over this trench.

Mr. Needham: Excavations to lay a water main in Castledillon road were made on 4 June 1986, and the

trench reinstated the same day. As the road surface is satisfactory, the Department has no plans to carry out further reinstatement works.

Winnie Thompson

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how long has Winnie Thompson of Victoria gardens, Ballyhalbert, County Down, been on the waiting list at Musgrave hospital, Belfast for a hip replacement operation; and when this operation is expected to take place.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Eastern health and social services board. However, I understand Mrs. Thompson's GP wrote to Musgrave park hospital on 23 April 1988 to make an appointment for her to be examined and assessed by an orthopaedic consultant. Because of the heavy demands on the orthopaedic service, the Eastern board has not yet been able to arrange such an appointment. It is therefore not possible at this stage to say whether a hip replacement operation would be appropriate in Mrs. Thompson's case and if so when it is likely to take place.

Fair Employment

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the practising definition of affirmative action which his Department will use in relation to fair employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The White Paper on Fair Employment (paragraph 3.20) defines affirmative action as

"special measures taken to promote a more representative distribution of employment in the workforce and designed to give all sections of the community full and equal access to employment opportunities".

Affirmative action programmes thus provide the framework within which appointment on merit can properly operate, by removing any unnecessary obstacles which are preventing a wider range of applicants from coming forward, and by broadening the field from which employees are drawn.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions of additional staff have been made for the Fair Employment Commission to carry out its increased work load and responsibility.

Mr. Viggers: The staffing of the Fair Employment Agency has already been doubled over the past three years. This provision will be kept under review to ensure that the resources provided for the new Fair Employment Commission are fully commensurate with its functions and responsibilities.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost to an average employer of implementing the Government's required monitoring system.

Mr. Viggers: It is difficult to define an average employer. All public sector and most private sector employers will be required to monitor. The cost in any particular case will depend on the size of the work force and the nature of the employer's personnel information system.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which meetings of the Fair Employment Tribunal will be open to the public and press; and what criteria will be used to decide whether to hold the proceedings in camera.

Mr. Viggers: Para 2.23 of the White Paper indicated that the procedures and general approach of the Fair Employment Tribunal will be similar to those which apply in sex discrimination cases before the industrial tribunals. Like the industrial tribunals, the Fair Employment Tribunal will have a discretion to hear cases in private if the tribunal considers this appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions will be made for the individual claimant unable to afford the cost of prosecuting a case to the new Fair Employment Tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The White Paper indicated (paragraphs 2.13-2.14 and 2.23) that the Fair Employment Commission will have a discretion to assist individual complainants before the new tribunal where a question of principle arises; where it would be unreasonable to expect the individual to pursue the case; and where any other special considerations apply. Whether a case is taken directly or assisted by the commission, the commission will also be able to give general advice to any individual about the anti-discrimination law and about how a case can be pursued.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evaluation process will be used to determine the success of the Fair Employment Commission after it has been established; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The White Paper indicated that the effectiveness of the new legislation will be continuously evaluated and formally reviewed after five years. That process will include an evaluation of the commission's experiences in conducting pattern and practice cases, as well as other information on improvements in employment and recruitment practices. The impact of the new legislation and the commission established under it will best be measured by assessing the changes that take place in the future experiences of under-represented groups in gaining access to employment.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what time scale he will be expecting compliance from employers on matters of registration and monitoring in relation to fair employment policies.

Mr. Viggers: The Government's intention is that there should be prompt compliance with the new legislation, and there will be statutory time limits both for registration and for the submission of monitoring returns. The detailed provision will be addressed when the Bill is before the House.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to ensure the protection of other religious minorities besides Catholics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The present legislation already affords protection against discrimination to persons of all religious beliefs. The intention is that the substantially strengthened provisions of the proposed new legislation should continue to afford protection to persons of all religious beliefs.

Royal Ulster Constabulary Disciplinary Hearing

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will announce the choice of chief constable to conduct the Royal Ulster Constabulary disciplinary hearing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The choice of a chief constable to conduct any disciplinary hearing in respect of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is a matter for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I understand that he intends to announce a chief constable to hear the disciplinary charges arising out of the report by Mr. Charles Kelly as soon as possible.

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and total value of social fund payments in each social security office in Northern Ireland from April 1987 to April 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The available information is as follows:

Social Fund payments
6 April 1987 to 8 April 1988

Social security office	*Total Number*	*Total paid £*
Andersonstown	476	67,370
Antrim	363	50,614
Armagh	380	67,361
Ballymena	389	58,230
Ballymoney	330	56,955
Ballynahinch	80	11,092
Banbridge	238	46,381
Bangor	204	33,266
Carrickfergus	187	26,683
Coleraine	306	44,352
Cookstown	317	62,740
Corporation Street	772	117,957
Downpatrick	196	23,207
Dungannon	396	79,943
Enniskillen	478	80,383
Falls Road	754	134,005
Holywood Road	443	73,800
Kilkeel	107	18,406
Knockbreda	251	38,404
Larne	179	27,212
Limavady	281	40,543
Lisburn	315	63,859
Londonderry	1,327	201,731
Lurgan	457	86,173
Magherafelt	329	59,677
Newcastle	129	18,705
Newry	658	106,904
Newtownabbey	285	41,998
Newtownards	243	36,032
Omagh	384	61,439
Portadown	212	42,848
Shaftesbury Square	323	50,771
Shankill	303	51,103
Strabane	471	93,465
TOTALS	12,563	2,073,609

Because of industrial action in June 1987 the figures are incomplete. Five offices having failed to provide information.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the claims to the social fund and loans and grants paid by the social fund in each social security office since 11 April; and what was the budget for that period;

(2) what is the number and value of community care grants made by each social security office since 11 April.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* Details of the claims to the social fund were given in my reply of 8 July 1988. Information about the numbers and amounts of awards and the budgets for the period 11 April 1986 to 31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) is given in the table.

From 11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988

Social Security Office	*Awards*				*Amounts*			*Budget*		
	Budget Loans	*Crisis Loans*	*Community Care Grants*	*Total*	*Loans (£)*	*Grants (£)*	*Total (£)*	*Loans (£)*	*Grants (£)*	*Total (£)*
Andersonstown	100	61	34	195	32,790·33	4,835·05	37,625·38	96,883·83	50,577·08	147,460·91
Antrim	154	97	12	263	39,538·07	3,644·25	43,182·32	46,161·97	19,583·00	65,744·97
Armagh	13	18	16	47	3,959·40	2,793·09	6,752·49	34,724·18	18,304·88	53,029·06
Ballymena	92	70	6	168	25,455·18	863·00	26,318·18	40,650·92	21,477·97	62,128·89
Ballymoney	42	16	3	61	10,887·58	215·72	11,103·30	29,033·37	15,351·95	44,385·32
Ballynahinch	10	3	5	18	1,984·24	1,392·80	3,377·04	4,492·86	2,429·48	6,922·34
Banbridge	11	8	2	21	4,567·34	129·60	4,696·94	17,066·54	9,110·79	26,177·33
Bangor	61	37	25	123	13,764·13	7,272·12	21,036·25	18,889·72	10,056·67	28,946·39
Carrickfergus	51	42	19	112	14,337·78	3,726·05	18,063·83	17,647·97	9,283·34	26,931·31
Coleraine	72	54	17	143	15,174·75	8,007·25	23,182·00	45,768·93	24,079·54	69,848·47
Cookstown	34	19	13	66	9,297·71	3,451·40	12,749·11	27,902·28	14,600·11	42,502·39
Corporation Street	107	142	15	264	31,446·01	6,517·12	37,963·13	115,667·90	60,615·29	176,283·19
Downpatrick	31	29	17	77	7,542·66	358·41	7,901·07	17,615·43	9,300·74	26,916·17
Dungannon	30	21	11	62	12,694·23	2,261·90	14,956·13	43,372·34	22,962·73	66,335·07
Enniskillen	29	21	3	53	6,824·79	2,368·20	9,192·99	32,389·43	17,401·26	49,790·69
Falls	108	137	12	257	25,388·01	1,119·65	26,507·66	80,591·58	42,174·01	122,765·59
Holywood Road	103	60	22	185	24,735·21	4,655·15	29,390·36	52,259·04	27,651·54	79,910·58
Kilkeel	5	0	15	20	1,486·95	865·92	2,352·87	5,317·12	2,844·48	8,161·60
Knockbreda	49	20	17	86	12,525·39	4,469·65	16,995·04	28,513·47	15,317·34	43,830·81
Larne	61	36	5	102	13,365·61	615·40	13,981·01	17,310·01	9,031·00	26,341·00
Limavady	46	3	21	70	11,116·21	3,347·31	14,463·52	16,239·00	7,839·95	24,078·95
Lisburn	196	40	22	258	46,508·15	4,844·10	51,352·25	77,658·53	41,383·28	119,041·81
Londonderry	42	68	41	151	15,475·60	16,821·53	32,297·13	125,006·50	65,191·47	190,197·97
Lurgan	19	72	18	109	8,449·98	1,005·92	9,455·90	90,950·64	47,849·89	138,800·53
Magherafelt	13	13	37	63	3,540·19	9,337·76	12,877·95	46,790·00	24,623·00	71,413·00
Newcastle	7	12	7	26	1,968·37	326·60	2,294·97	8,252·36	4,374·79	12,627·15
Newry	36	23	38	97	11,267·14	5,256·05	16,523·19	74,819·00	39,297·00	114,116·00
Newtownabbey	68	137	25	230	18,710·69	1,500·70	20,211·39	29,128·80	15,434·36	44,563·16
Newtownards	28	21	4	53	7,220·10	675·50	7,895·60	15,301·45	8,170·92	23,472·37

Social Security Office	Awards: Budget Loans	Awards: Crisis Loans	Awards: Community Care Grants	Awards: Total	Amounts: Loans (£)	Amounts: Grants (£)	Amounts: Total (£)	Budget: Loans (£)	Budget: Grants (£)	Budget: Total (£)
Omagh	43	19	6	68	15,028·34	1,110·60	16,138·94	42,535·49	22,381·65	64,917·14
Portadown	20	34	18	72	7,382·20	3,020·00	10,402·20	22,448·30	11,960·00	34,408·30
Shaftesbury Square	50	80	14	144	15,122·46	4,773·89	19,896·35	62,607·70	32,745·25	95,352·95
Shankill	114	105	18	237	33,131·76	2,928·11	36,059·87	40,636·26	21,613·19	62,249·45
Strabane	42	26	15	83	13,251·39	4,852·47	18,103·86	43,033·40	22,689·39	65,722·79
TOTAL	1,887	1,544	553	3,984	515,937·95	119,362·27	635,300·22	1,467,666·31	767,707·34	2,235,373·65

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by office for each complete month since the introduction of the social fund the actual expenditure and the expenditure as a percentage of the monthly budget on budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Social security offices do not have monthly budgets but managers do draw up monthly profiles of anticipated expenditure. On the basis of these profiles, the information for the periods 11 to 30 April 1988 and 1 to 31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) is given in the table.

Expenditure on Budgeting and Crisis Loans
11 April—30 April 1988

Social Security Office	Expenditure	As a Percentage of Profile	May 1988: Expenditure	May 1988: As a Percentage of Profile
Andersonstown	5,827·41	32·33	26,962·92	34·19
Antrim	7,105·88	82·08	32,432·19	86·47
Armagh	115·91	1·80	3,843·49	13·58
Ballymena	1,674·15	22·17	23,781·03	71·84
Ballymoney	2,093·59	38·72	8,793·99	37·21
Ballynahinch	—	—	1,984·24	54·18
Banbridge	455·26	14·38	4,112·08	29·58
Bangor	1,712·73	48·61	12,051·40	78·42
Carrickfergus	1,487·80	45·22	12,849·98	89·49
Coleraine	3,669·81	43·02	11,504·94	30·89
Cookstown	931·14	17·98	8,366·57	36·81
Corporation Street	3,827·13	17·82	27,618·88	29·31
Downpatrick	491·30	15·03	7,051·36	49·14
Dungannon	2,749·60	34·07	9,944·63	28·16
Enniskillen	740·65	12·33	6,084·14	23·05
Falls	5,004·25	33·37	20,383·76	31·07
Holywood Road	3,937·69	40·45	20,797·52	48·90
Kilkeel	—	—	1,486·95	35·79
Knockbreda	1,704·91	30·17	10,820·48	47·32
Larne	943·45	28·97	12,422·16	88·38
Limavady	605·00	21·28	10,511·21	78·46
Lisburn	10,135·71	69·73	36,372·44	57·62
Londonderry	3,139·42	13·54	12,336·18	12·11
Lurgan	3,182·65	18·85	5,267·33	7·11
Magherafelt	816·42	9·41	2,723·77	7·14
Newcastle	110·76	7·24	1,857·61	27·62
Newry	2,017·05	14·53	9,250·09	15·17
Newtownabbey	3,325·53	61·07	15,385·16	64·96
Newtownards	727·55	25·59	6,492·55	52·11
Omagh	445·24	5·65	14,583·10	42·07
Portadown	485·00	11·65	6,897·20	37·71
Shaftesbury Square	2,547·43	21·91	12,575·03	24·66
Shankill	4,208·20	55·45	28,923·56	87·51
Strabane	2,406·03	30·07	10,845·36	30·95

Expenditure on Community Care Grants

Social security office	11 April—30 April 1988: Expenditure	11 April—30 April 1988: As a per cent. of profile	May 1988: Expenditure	May 1988: As a per cent. of profile
Andersonstown	1,313·10	13·99	3,521·95	8·54
Antrim	nil	nil	3,644·25	24·22
Armagh	nil	nil	2,793·09	18·72
Ballymena	6·00	0·15	857·00	4·89
Ballymoney	nil	nil	215·72	1·72
Ballynahinch	nil	nil	1,392·80	70·36
Banbridge	nil	nil	129·60	1·74
Bangor	1,675·60	88·75	5,596·52	68·51
Carrickfergus	1,012·65	58·36	2,713·40	35·94
Coleraine	1,090·00	24·36	6,917·25	35·28
Cookstown	1,260·80	46·31	2,190·60	18·44
Corporation Street	2,595·00	23·05	3,922·12	7·94

Social security office	11 April—30 April 1988 Expenditure	11 April—30 April 1988 As a per cent. of profile	May 1988 Expenditure	May 1988 As a per cent. of profile
Downpatrick	140·61	8·16	217·80	2·87
Dungannon	229·00	5·38	2,032·90	10·86
Enniskillen	nil	nil	2,368·20	16·69
Falls	521·40	6·67	598·25	1·74
Holywood Road	1,564·99	30·43	3,090·16	13·72
Kilkeel	nil	nil	865·92	38·96
Knockbreda	2,061·95	67·47	2,407·70	19·63
Larne	23·50	1·38	591·90	8·07
Limavady	1,325·00	90·01	2,022·31	31·75
Lisburn	892·00	11·62	3,952·10	11·72
Londonderry	69·02	0·57	16,752·51	31·53
Lurgan	187·60	2·11	818·32	2·09
Magherafelt	1,150·42	25·14	8,187·34	40·83
Newcastle	164·60	20·27	162·00	4·54
Newry	929·80	12·75	4,326·25	13·51
Newtonabbey	23·00	0·80	1,477·70	11·74
Newtownards	390·00	25·69	285·50	4·29
Omagh	550·00	13·24	560·60	3·07
Portadown	485·00	21·91	2,535·00	26·00
Shaftesbury Square	990·00	16·28	3,783·89	14·19
Shankill	340·80	8·50	2,587·31	14·69
Strabone	nil	nil	4,852·47	26·24

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by office for each complete month since the introduction of the social fund the types of needs for which budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants were awarded and the number of awards falling under each type of need, and the proportion of expenditure on budgeting loans and crisis loans provided to assist *(a)* claimants making new and fresh applications for income support who are being paid in arrears, *(b)* payments towards board and lodging expenses and *(c)* payments towards rent in advance.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by office for each complete month since the introduction of the social fund the number of applications for budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants rejected and the reasons for such rejection, and the number of applications rejected on the grounds of inability to repay *(a)* crisis loans and *(b)* budgeting loans, and the status of those rejected, including the number of pensioners, unemployed and single parents who were rejected.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The numbers of applications for budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants which have been rejected during the periods 11-30 April 1988 and 1-31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) are shown in the table.

Applications Rejected—May 1988

Social security office	Budgeting Loans	Crisis Loans	Community care grants	Total
Andersonstown	23	4	7	34
Antrim	53	2	2	57
Armagh	9	1	9	19
Ballymena	51	nil	1	52
Ballymoney	13	1	1	15
Ballynahinch	3	1	2	6
Banbridge	3	nil	2	5
Bangor	19	nil	4	23
Carrickfergus	32	2	9	43
Coleraine	30	5	4	39
Cookstown	6	nil	5	11
Corporation Street	30	1	14	45
Downpatrick	9	nil	7	16
Dungannon	4	nil	3	7
Enniskillen	8	4	12	24
Falls	30	nil	4	34
Holywood Road	29	5	8	42
Kilkeel	2	nil	2	4
Knockbreda	45	nil	5	50
Larne	33	1	2	36
Limavady	29	10	13	52
Lisburn	75	nil	2	77
Londonderry	27	1	33	61
Lurgan	9	7	9	25
Magherafelt	6	nil	nil	6
Newcastle	2	nil	3	5
Newry	17	6	14	37
Newtonabbey	33	1	12	46
Newtownards	11	nil	3	14
Omagh	5	nil	4	9
Portadown	20	nil	7	27
Shaftesbury Square	32	3	9	44
Shankill	100	2	7	109
Strabane	11	nil	2	13
Total	809	57	221	1,087

Applications rejected: April 1988

Social security office	Budgeting loans	Crisis loans	Community care grants	Total
Andersonstown	2	4	6	12
Antrim	26	nil	1	27
Armagh	1	nil	nil	1
Ballymena	7	nil	1	8
Ballymoney	5	2	1	8
Ballynahinch	nil	nil	nil	nil
Banbridge	4	nil	nil	4
Bangor	12	1	3	16
Carrickfergus	14	3	6	23
Coleraine	17	7	1	25
Cookstown	2	nil	2	4
Corporation Street	7	6	1	14
Downpatrick	1	2	2	5
Dungannon	3	nil	nil	3
Enniskillen	4	1	2	7

Social security office	Budgeting loans	Crisis loans	Community care grants	Total
Falls	5	1	nil	6
Holywood Road	8	2	1	11
Kilkeel	nil	2	nil	2
Knockbreda	4	6	1	11
Larne	3	nil	nil	3
Limavady	2	8	nil	10
Lisburn	8	nil	nil	8
Londonderry	2	1	4	7
Lurgan	5	7	1	13
Magherafelt	nil	nil	nil	nil
Newcastle	3	2	3	8
Newry	6	nil	4	10
Newtonabbey	11	7	5	23
Newtownards	5	2	nil	7
Omagh	nil	nil	nil	nil
Portadown	nil	2	nil	2
Shaftesbury Square	1	7	nil	8
Shankill	8	2	5	15
Strabane	7	1	nil	8
Total	183	76	50	309

Single Payments

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and total value of single payments made by each social security office in Northern Ireland in 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The information is given in the table.

Details for the period: 16 December 1987 to 31 May 1988[1]

Social security office	Number of payments	Value (£)
Andersontown	5,942	943,629.13
Antrim	8,168	690,811.97
Armagh	5,196	531,834.98
Ballymena	4,944	451,472.80
Ballymoney	2,607	287,789.63
Ballynahinch	613	61,945.13
Banbridge	3,945	391,585.34
Bangor	1,930	189,736.69
Carrickfergus	2,107	193,618.30
Coleraine	4,323	471,925.66
Cookstown	2,948	517,060.82
Corporation Street	11,650	1,312,717.70
Downpatrick	2,352	253,136.53
Dungannon	3,466	700,371·48
Enniskillen	3,449	326,191.87
Falls Road	13,262	1,364,383.70
Holywood Road	7,659	835,818.55
Kilkeel	1,277	155,174.05
Knockbreda	3,408	288,883.94
Larne	3,106	253,250.76
Limavady	4,202	457,403.89
Lisburn	7,727	976,914.57
Londonderry	7,636	1,098,950.69
Lurgan	6,002	926,881.54
Magherafelt	2,925	590,827.48
Newcastle	2,038	181,315.07
Newry	11,855	1,332,727.39
Newtownabbey	2,760	227,554.77
Newtownards	1,364	156,202.99
Omagh	2,889	421,173.90
Portadown	4,618	466,008.97
Shaftesbury Square	9,744	883,158.60
Shankill	4,229	390,405.14
Strabane	3,359	561,643.99
Total	163,700	18,892,508.02

[1] Data were collected on a four-week basis prior to 11 April 1988 and on a calendar month basis since that date.

Homelessness

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify submissions in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order 1988 which expressed concern about the lack of funding for voluntary organisations providing accommodation for the homeless.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Submissions on the draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order received from the following 23 groups or individuals expressed concern about the lack of funding for voluntary organisations providing accommodation for the homeless.

Alliance Party
Belfast Housing Aid
Coleraine Borough Council
Council for the Homeless
Dungannon and District Housing Association Ltd.
Gingerbread
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
Limavady District Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Newry and Mourne District Council
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/Tenants Participation Advisory Service
Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Omagh District Council
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Salvtion Army Social Services
Simon Community (Northern Ireland)
Sinn Fein
R. Story, Esq.
Youth Homelessness Group

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify submissions in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order which expressed concern about the quality of temporary accommodation or the length of time which homeless people will have to spend in such accommodation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Submissions on the draft Housing (NI) Order received from the following 36 groups or individuals expressed concern about the quality of temporary accommodation or the length of time which homeless people will have to spend in such accommodation.

Age Concern
Alliance Party
Association of District Committees for the Health and Personal Social Services (NI)
Belfast Housing Aid
Belfast Law Centre
Coleraine Borough Council
Council for the Homeless
Down District Council
Gingerbread
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
Labour Party
Limavady District Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Rev. W. McCrea MP
National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland
Newry and Mourne District Council
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
NI Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions
NI Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Youth Committee)

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/Tenants Participation Advisory Service
NI Youth Forum
Omagh District Council
Open Door Housing Association
Probation Board for NI
Salvation Army Social Services
Shelter NI
Simon Community NI
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic Labour Party
R. Storey Esq
SHAC (Students Housing Association Co-op Ltd)
Western Group Environmental Health Committee
The Workers Party
Youth Homelessness Group NI

Housing Order

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the organisations or individuals who submitted written comments in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* The following 58 groups submitted written comments during the consultation period of the draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order.

Age Concern
Alliance Party Association of District Committees for the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland)
Ballymena Central YMCA
Belfast Housing Aid
Belfast Law Centre
Coleraine Borough Council
Community Technical Aid
Contact Youth Counselling Services
Council for the Homeless
Down District Council
Dungannon and District Housing Association Ltd.
Eastern Group Public Health Committee
Fermanagh District Council
Gingerbread
Institution of Environmental Health Officers
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
Labour Party
The Law Society of Northern Ireland
Limavady District Council
Lisburn Borough Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Rev. W. McCrea MP
National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland
Newry and Mourne District Council
North Down Borough Council
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Committee/Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Committee/Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Youth Committee)
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/Tenants Participation Advisory Service
NI Federation of Housing Associations
Northern Ireland Housing Council
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Omagh District Council
Open Door Housing Association
The Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Queen's University Social Work Department
Rent Officer for Northern Ireland
Salvation Army Social Services
Shelter (Northern Ireland)
Simon Community (National Office)
Simon Community (Northern Ireland)
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Southern Group Public Health Committee
R. Storey, Esq.
Strabane District Council
SHAC (Students Housing Association Co-op Ltd.)
A. Cecil Walker MP
Western Group Environmental Health Committee
Western Health and Social Services Board
Women's Forum Northern Ireland
The Workers Party
Youth Homelessness Group

Housing Benefit

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's central computerised system of payment will be used to operate the system of transitional protection for housing benefit claimants;

(2) if during the period of transitional protection for housing benefit claimants he intends to operate an opting-in system.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* The housing benefit transitional payment scheme will be administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for tenants and by the Department of the Environment rating division for owner-occupiers. As far as possible both organisations will identify housing benefit losers likely to qualify for transitional payments and will issue invitations to them to apply.

A leaflet will also be made available, including an application form, for any housing benefit loser who has not been contacted by the end of August and thinks he or she may qualify.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the numbers of gainers and losers in Northern Ireland as a result of the housing benefit changes as a whole, and the numbers of people who have gained *(a)* more than £5, *(b)* between £4 and £5, *(c)* between £3 and £4, *(d)* between £2 and £3, *(e)* between £1 and £2, and *(f)* less than £1, and the numbers who have lost (i) less than £1, (ii) between £1 and £2, (iii) between £2 and £3, (iv) between £3 and £4, (v) between £4 and £5, (vi) between £5 and £10, (vii) £10 and £15 and (viii) more than £15.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The only information readily available is as follows:

Ranges	*Gainers*	*Losers*
Under £1 pw	39,672	11,320
£1 to £1·99	30,476	6,977
£2 to £2·99	3,250	3,351
£3 to £3·99	2,498	1,880
£4 to £4·99	2,279	1,236
£5 and over	6,057	6,633
Totals	84,232	31,397

Note:
The figures relate to tenants who renewed their claims to housing benefit in April 1988 and take no account of awards expected to be made by way of transitional protection.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements will be made in Northern Ireland to limit the losses caused by the changes in housing benefit implemented in April.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* A housing benefit transitional payments scheme, similar to the

scheme announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 27 April 1988, will operate in Northern Ireland.

The scheme will be administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Budgeting Loans

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and total value of budgeting loans given by each social security office since 11 April.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* The information for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) is given in the table.

Budgeting Loans Awarded: 11 April 1988—31 April 1988

Social Security Office	*Number*	*Amounts (£)*
Andersonstown	100	27,780·02
Antrim	154	34,389·61
Armagh	13	3,388·09
Ballymena	92	22,255·18
Ballymoney	42	10,127·58
Ballynahinch	10	1,826·00
Banbridge	11	3,903·94
Bangor	61	12,503·58
Carrickfergus	51	12,337·86
Coleraine	72	12,825·84
Cookstown	34	8,757·38
Corporation Street	107	25,048·80
Downpatrick	31	6,484·00
Dungannon	30	11,237·06
Enniskillen	29	6,140·00
Falls	108	19,677·38
Holywood Road	103	22,156·21
Kilkeel	5	1,486·95
Knockbreda	49	11,092·54
Larne	61	11,643·70
Limavady	46	10,991·10
Lisburn	196	44,781·83
Londonderry	42	10,124·60
Lurgan	19	4,553·01
Magherafelt	13	3,113·30
Newcastle	7	1,451·00
Newry	36	10,225·53
Newtownabbey	68	11,980·86
Newtownards	28	6,470·94
Omagh	43	13,656·96
Portadown	20	5,615·20
Shaftesbury Square	50	11,697·51
Shankill	114	26,916·03
Strabane	42	10,869·60
Total	1,887	437,509·19

Income Support

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total amount of weekly payments of income support paid by each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* I regret that the information is not readily available.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of people in receipt of income support in each social security office in a given week.

Mr. Needham: *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Number of people receiving Income Support on 31 May 1988

Social security office	*Number*
Andersontown	7,538
Antrim	5,275
Armagh	4,679
Ballymena	5,701
Ballymoney	4,303
Ballynahinch	1,377
Banbridge	3,212
Bangor	4,304
Carrickfergus	2,795
Coleraine	5,830
Cookstown	3,488
Corporation Street	11,873
Downpatrick	2,247
Dungannon	5,885
Enniskillen	7,464
Falls Road	8,946
Holywood Road	8,189
Kilkeel	1,332
Knockbreda	5,965
Larne	2,651
Limavady	3,133
Lisburn	5,909
Londonderry	14,671
Lurgan	5,343
Magherafelt	4,979
Newcastle	1,792
Newry	9,720
Newtownabbey	5,181
Newtownards	3,849
Omagh	5,248
Portadown	3,661
Shaftesbury Square	6,362
Shankill	5,072
Strabane	5,867
Total	183,841

Benefits

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest figures available for the take-up in Northern Ireland of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* family income supplement and *(c)* housing benefit, in the private and public sectors.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The available information is 65 per cent.[1] for family income supplement and 88 per cent.[2] for housing benefit in the public sector.

[1]The figure relates to employees only, the sources being data from the Family Resources and Household Finances Surveys (1979-80).

[2]The figure relates to tenants, the source being a survey undertaken on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in 1984.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide the latest estimates for unclaimed benefit as a whole in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* I regret that no such information is available.

Family Credit

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide figures of the number of people in Northern Ireland who have lost entitlement to free school meals and free milk and vitamins as a result of the change from family income supplement to family credit.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Precise figures are not available but just under 15,000 families who were in receipt of family income supplement immediately prior to its replacement in April by family credit would have lost entitlement to either free school meals or free welfare foods (or both). Cash help of £2·55 a week for each child was included by way of compensation for this loss in the succeeding family credit award.

Widow's Pension

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland are likely to lose money as a result of the raising of the age of entitlement to widow's pension from 40 to 45 years on 11 April; and how many will lose as a result of the increase in the age for reduction of widow's pension introduced in April.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* It is estimated that 40 people a year in Northern Ireland will not be entitled to widow's pension as a result of the raising of the age of entitlement from 40 to 45 from 11 April 1988. It is also estimated that 180 people a year will have a reduced rate of widow's pension as a result of the raising of the age of entitlement to the full rate from 45 to 50 from that date. All such people will be entitled to the new lump sum widow's payment of £1,000.

Sewage Pumping Station (Donaghadee)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are to construct a sewage pumping station at Quarry green, near Copelands marina, Donaghadee; when he expects to receive an application for planning approval for this proposal; in what way the public of Donaghadee will be consulted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* A proposal to construct a pumping station at Quarry green, Donaghadee, as part of a sewerage improvement scheme, has been discussed with Ards borough council on two occasions and with individual councillors and county officials. Further meetings with councillors and representatives of the local residents' association are planned. An application for outline planning permission was made on 27 June, and this will be advertised in the local press and notified to the immediate neighbours in the normal way.

Salmon Fishing (Foyle)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* the commercial catch and *(b)* the rod catch of salmon in the Foyle system for each of the last 15 years, indicating for each year what percentage of the total catch was taken by rod fishermen, and the sums collected from (i) rod licences and (ii) commercial fishermens' licences.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* The information requested for commercial and rod catches, the percentage of rod catches and the revenue from rod and commercial licences for the years 1973-87 is provided in the table. It must be borne in mind that very few rod anglers make returns, whereas all commercial fishermen are required to make returns.

Foyle Fisheries Commission—Salmon catches plus licence revenue 1973 to 1987

	Numbers of commercial caught salmon	Numbers of rod caught salmon	Percentage of catch taken by rod	Commercial licence revenue (£)	Rod licence revenue (£)
1973					
61,7	1,018	1·6	12,661	6,718	
95					
1974	78,051	1,967	2·5	12,406	8,357
1975	54,904	792	1·4	12,431	9,268
1976	38,931	663	1·7	17,707	9,848
1977	39,258	886	2·3	17,739	12,770
1978	47,911	1,907	4·0	22,625	18,547
1979	37,003	966	2·6	21,740	20,262
1980	49,223	1,134	2·3	23,257	27,678
1981	34,781	1,517	4·4	25,232	28,916
1982	60,157	2,125	3·5	27,338	28,691
1983	83,252	831	1·0	32,763	29,800
1984	29,532	379	1·3	35,488	29,455
1985	40,521	1,814	4·5	36,314	38,942
1986	46,354	1,172	2·5	37,307	44,113
1987	18,483	390	2·1	35,750	47,907

ENERGY

Electricity Producers Insurance Company

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he had with the chairmen of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board prior to the establishment of the Electricity Producers Insurance company Ltd.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board informed my Department of its intention to set up the company jointly with the South of Scotland Electricity Board. The decision to set up the company was a commercial matter for the boards.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for the Electricity Producers Insurance company in the light of the proposed privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: That is a matter on which we are consulting the industry.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to which electricity boards own shares in the Electricity Producers Insurance company

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board's report and accounts for 1986-87 state on page 11 that the Electricity Producers Insurance company is jointly owned by the board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has as to why the Electricity Producers Insurance company is incorporated in the Isle of Man;

(2) what information he has as to who are the directors of the Electricity Producers Insurance company.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are commercial matters for the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board. I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to the hon. Member.

Non-fossil Fuels

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, when setting the non-fossil fuel obligation for the electricity industry, he will include electricity generated from methane produced from sewage, biomass, municipal waste and other sources not derived from natural gas.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The details of the non-fossil fuel obligation are still under discussion. However, my current intention is that methane produced from sources other than natural strata should be classified as a non-fossil fuel.

Piper Alpha Disaster Fund

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements he intends to make with respect to payments of the Government's contribution to the Piper Alpha disaster fund.

Mr. Parkinson: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 8 July, the Government intend to contribute £1 million to the Piper Alpha disaster fund. Parliamentary approval for this expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the Department of Energy's class VI, vote 2. Pending that approval, urgent payment of the full contribution will be made by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Law and Order (Inner Cities)

3. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning inner-city policy in relation to law and order issues; and if he will make a statement.

24. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning law and order and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

72. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning inner-city policy and law and order issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have had a number of discussions with those involved in inner-city regeneration and the action for cities campaign. The Government are agreed on the importance of a safe secure environment in attracting investment and raising the confidence of inner-city residents. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has launched a number of key initiatives on crime prevention measures and has already established the first three safer cities projects in urban areas to reduce crime, lessen the fear of crime and encourage enterprise and a sense of community.

Transport (Inner Cities)

8. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning transport in relation to inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Inner city transport is, of course, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but transport issues are raised from time to time in discussions I have with inner-city business men.

Inward Development

16. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department has any plans to provide assistance to inward development schemes.

Mr. Atkins: Regional selective assistance is available to attract inward investment projects which meet the scheme's criteria.

Enterprise Initiative

17. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the response to the enterprise initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The enterprise initiative continues to be a tremendous success. We remain on course to achieve our White Paper target of 1,000 supported consultancies per month in 1988-89.

Departmental Logo

19. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received seeking the withdrawal of the logo currently used by his Department and the restoration of an insignia which clearly indicates that he and his Department are in the service of the Crown, including reference to the position of the Secretary of State as President of the Board of Trade; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received no such representations.

Distribution Industry (Investment)

20. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has regarding the investment intentions in 1988 of the distribution industry; and what are the comparable figures for 1987.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Trade and Industry carries out a regular survey of industry's investment intentions. While the survey does not include estimates for the distribution industries alone, the latest survey indicates a level of investment in 1988 by the construction, distribution and selected service industries of £16·3 billion in 1980 prices. This represents an increase of 10 per cent. on the record 1987 level of £14·8 billion.

Barlow Clowes

21. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about his Department's role in relation to Barlow Clowes fund management companies since his statement of 13 June, *Official Report*, columns *24-32*.

Mr. Maude: Over the last month my Department has received a very large number of representations from hon. Members and from the public, many of which refer to my Department's role in relation to Barlow Clowes.

77. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to be able to publish the findings of Sir Godfray Le Quesne's inquiry into his Department's handling of Barlow Clowes' licences.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) of 29 June 1988, at columns *237-38*. Subject to no legal impediment as to content or timing, I propose to publish Sir Godfray Le Quesne's report as soon as practicable after it is completed.

Inner Cities

22. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evidence from abroad he has considered in deciding on his policy towards inner cities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I see a good deal of material about inner-city policy abroad, including information about various initiatives and projects in the United States, some of which I visited last January.

Exporters (Performance)

23. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the performance of Britain's exporters over the last year.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended May total export volume increased by 2½ per cent.

Steel Quotas

25. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the removal of steel quotas within the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Over the last 12 months I have received a number of representations on behalf of consumers pressing for the early removal of the European steel production quota system. I attended the Industry Council's meeting on 24 June when we decided that quotas should expire at the end of last month.

91. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the effects of the ending of European steel quotas on steel consumers and users.

Mr. Atkins: The ending of the European steel production quota system will be of significant benefit to steel users. It is expected that quota liberalisation will increase consumer choice, and reduce costs since producers will no longer be liable to fines for exceeding production limits.

European Regional Development Fund

26. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total United Kingdom level of receipts from the European regional development fund, in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: United Kingdom receipts from the European regional development fund totalled £391 million in 1987. I look forward to the fund continuing to make its important contribution to British regional development.

Trade Gap

27. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on measures being proposed to reduce Britain's visible trade gap.

Mr. Alan Clark: The trade balance can be affected by a variety of market factors, but the Government will stick to the firm monetary and fiscal policies essential to strong economic performance. Wherever practicable my Department is ready to give assistance to firms seeking to improve their competitive strength and trade performance, as, for example, through the recently introduced enterprise initiative.

52. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's visible trade gap.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the five months ended May 1988 there was a deficit on visible trade of £7 billion.

Japan

28. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent steps he has taken to ensure that trade with Japan is on a fully reciprocal basis.

Mr. Alan Clark: As a result of pressure from the United Kingdom and our trading partners, Japan has stimulated domestic demand-led growth, and imports have increased rapidly. United Kingdom exports to Japan are up by almost 30 per cent. over the last 12 months. We and the European Community are continuing to press the Japanese authorities to remove the remaining problems of market access.

Action for Cities (Campaign)

29. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the response of the private sector to the six action for cities breakfast presentations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Over 1,200 senior business men attended the six working breakfasts and about a quarter have already made specific offers of help. The offers included secondments, managed workshop space, industry/education links and free advice to inner city businesses. These offers are being pursued by the city action teams and I am receiving reports on the progress made in taking them up.

Imports

30. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in the volume of imports in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Total import volume in the year ended May was 9 per cent. above that in the previous year.

Eureka Programme

31. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the average time taken from originating application to final go-ahead to approve applications for funding under the Eureka programme.

Mr. Butcher: It has taken, on average, six months, from date of receipt to date of formal offer for my Department to process applications for funding Eureka projects.

78. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many United Kingdom firms and research

institutes are associated with Eureka projects; how many projects now have full United Kingdom participation; and what is the total value of these projects.

Mr. Butcher: About 140 firms and research organisations from the United Kingdom are currently associated with Eureka projects: 74 Eureka projects—with a total value of £1·2 billion—now have full United Kingdom participation.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many projects are currently being researched in the United Kingdom under the auspices of the Eureka programme; if he will list those projects in the *Official Report*; and if he will make a statement relating to their progress.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* As detailed, firms and research organisations from the United Kingdom are currently participating in 74 agreed projects and 13 EUREKA proposals. In addition, there are formal expressions of interest from United Kingdom industry in a further 22 EUREKA projects. I am placing in the Library of the House a synopsis of all EUREKA projects and proposals.

The indications are that projects are progressing satisfactorily. However, EUREKA is a comparatively new initiative with projects tending to come to fruition some three to four years after they start. Therefore, the majority of these projects are just beginning to get under way, are in their definition phases, or are in the very early stages of their implementation phases.

York Borg Warner, Basildon

32. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from York Borg Warner of Basildon about the implications for British industry of the proposed European Economic Community regulations on the standardisation of components for the air-conditioning and cooling system industry.

Mr. Maude: A letter has been received from the director of manufacturing at York International about the difficulties it has experienced when trying to export to certain EEC countries because of various national inspection codes. My Office has written to the company and the official responsible for such matters will also follow up his earlier contact.

It is because of such difficulties that my Department places so much importance on the efforts now being made towards the completion of the single market by 1992 and proposed measures aimed at both pressure vessels and machinery safety should help to make it easier for manufacturers of air-conditioning equipment to sell their products into the European Community.

Manufacturing Output

33. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and what was the figure for the same month in 1973.

Mr. Atkins: In April 1988 manufacturing output was at a level of 114·8, based on 1980 equal to 100. This is 2 per cent. more than the level of 112·6 for April 1973. But my hon. Friend will appreciate that monthly data can be erratic. A firmer basis for comparison would be that in the three months to April 1988 manufacturing output was broadly unchanged from the same period in 1973 though over 21 per cent. higher than in the trough of the recession in 1981.

Single Market

34. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make a statement on the completion of the single market in the light of the outcome of the Hanover summit.

Mr. Maude: The Hanover European Council agreed that the objective of completing the single market is now irreversible. Almost 200 separate measures have already been agreed, including over 50 in the first half of this year alone. Notable agreements reached over the last month on the liberalisation of capital movements, the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and the opening up of the international road haulage market are a clear demonstration that barriers to trade in the Community are being cut, to the benefit of both business and the consumer. The Council also set out four priority areas for further work: opening up of public purchasing; further liberalisation of banking and other financial services; common standards for manufactured products; and intellectual property. We strongly endorse these priorities, and will be working to ensure that the momentum is maintained towards completion of the single market.

Northern Region

35. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many companies in the northern region have taken advantage of his Department's new initiatives.

Mr. Atkins: In the period from 13 January 1988, when the DTI's enterprise initiative was launched, to 30 June 1988, the DTI received from firms in the northern region 467 applications for the consultancy initiatives and 64 applications for regional enterprise grants. In addition, there have been 85 applications from firms in the region for DTI's competition for innovation, the small firms merit award for research and technology.

36. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will next be visiting the Northern Council of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss investment and industry in the northern region.

43. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will next be visiting the Northern Council of the Confederation of British Industry.

90. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will next be visiting the Northern Council of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss regional policy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no present plans to visit the Northern Council of the CBI although I do meet regularly northern businesses both here and during my frequent visits to the region. In my two recent visits to Teesside and to Newcastle I was encouraged to hear business people themselves confirming the reports of industrial progress and prospects for further growth which have figured in successive CBI surveys.

39. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the shortage of factory space in the northern region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My colleagues and I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about the rising demand for factory space in the northern region, which is one consequence of the general improvement in economic conditions in the area.

71. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the average level of rents for factory units above 7,000 sq ft in the northern region.

Mr. Atkins: Rents for work space in the northern region vary widely according to their type, size, age and location. I understand that the rents currently charged or being sought by English Estates for units about 701 sq metres (7,546 sq ft) in the region between about 40p and 650p per sq ft.

94. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on behalf of constituents of the hon. Member for Durham, North concerning the shortage of factory space in the northern region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My colleagues and I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about the rising demand for factory space in the northern region which is one consequence of the general improvement in economic conditions in the area. These include the paper submitted by the hon. Member himself.

Financial Services Act

37. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to assess the workings of the Financial Services Act; and if he will make a statement.

57. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to measure the success of the working of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: The Secretary of State and the chairman of the SIB have agreed to take stock on a regular basis to assess the development of the new regulatory regime and its impact on investment businesses.

95. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received regarding the operation of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: I continue to receive comments on the operation of the Act, many of which are for the SIB to deal with.

Securities and Investments Board

38. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent discussions he has had with the newly appointed chairman of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Maude: I last met the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board on Monday 4 July.

RB 235.524 L Engine

40. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received an application for launch aid from Rolls-Royce for the RB 235.524 L engine.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. I am considering the application.

OFTEL

41. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will urgently introduce legislation to strengthen the powers of Oftel in relation to the protection of domestic and commercial telephone consumers against overcharging and service deficiencies.

Mr. Butcher: No. Consumers are already benefiting from Oftel's activities in these areas. The Director General of Telecommunications has wide-ranging powers which he exercises very effectively and he has not asked for these to be augmented.

Girobank (Sale)

42. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations he has had with representatives of sub-postmasters and mistresses about the forthcoming sale of Girobank.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office is selling Girobank, and consultations with its agents and employees are a matter for the Post Office.

70. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on the privatisation of Girobank.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office has informed me that 100 bodies have registered an interest in buying Girobank.

Balance of Trade

44. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative balance of trade for the last 12 months; and what measures are being taken to improve it.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended May, the current account was in deficit by £7·1 billion. The trade balance can be affected by a variety of market factors, but the Government will stick to the firm monetary and fiscal policies essential to strong economic performance. Wherever practicable my Department is ready to give assistance to firms seeking to improve their competitive strength and trade performance, as, for example, through the recently introduced enterprise initiative.

Regional Policy

45. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on recent developments in the Government's regional policy.

47. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on recent developments in the Government's regional policy.

Mr. Atkins: The recent DTI White Paper announced significant changes to regional policy designed to make it more effective. My Department's enterprise initiative aims to encourage enterprise and growth throughout the country, but recognises that special help is needed in some areas. Regional selective assistance continues to be available to firms in the assisted areas; regional enterprise

grants to support investment and innovation projects are available for firms in the development areas with fewer than 25 employees; and in all assisted and urban programme areas the DTI will pay a higher level (two thirds) of the cost of consultancy projects designed to improve key management functions.

Motor Industry (Estimating Work)

46. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer to the Director General of Fair Trading the practice by certain motor agents and dealers of charging consumers for giving an estimate.

Mr. Butcher: No. I am not aware of this practice being widespread or giving rise to consumer complaints. The Director General of Fair Trading has a duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to keep under review trading practices which may adversely affect the economic interests of consumers, and I am sure that he would look into this practice if he considered it appropriate to do so.

Trade Deficit

48. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of the trade deficit for the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended May, the current account of the balance of payments was in deficit by £7·1 billion.

66. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which European Economic Community countries Britain is currently running a trade deficit.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months to May 1988 United Kingdom visible trade was in deficit with the following EC member states:

Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Denmark, Belgium-Luxembourg and Portugal.

83. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative trade deficit over the past 12 months; and what steps are being taken to improve it.

87. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative trade deficit over the past 12 months; and what steps are being taken to reduce it.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended May, the current account was in deficit by £7·1 billion. The trade balance can be affected by a variety of market factors, but the Government will stick to the firm monetary and fiscal policies essential to strong economic performance. Wherever practicable my Department is ready to give assistance to firms seeking to improve their competitive strength and trade performance, as, for example, through the recently introduced enterprise initiative.

100. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative trade deficit so far in the current year.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the five months ended May, the current account of the balance of payments was in deficit by £4·7 billion.

Post Office Counters

49. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of Post Office Counter Services.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office's proposals for the future of its counters subsidiary will be considered in the context of the revised counters business plan which will be submitted to me later this year.

99. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he will make to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on Post Office Counters.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office is currently considering the MMC's many recommendations. A statement setting out an initial response to the MMC's findings will be made within three to four months of the report's publication, in the light of the Post Office's reactions.

Next Step Strategy

50. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to implement the next steps strategy within his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I intend to apply the recommendations in the report "Improving Management in Government: The Next Steps" as rapidly and extensively as possible. We announced in February that the Companies Registration Office was a candidate for transformation into an agency. We hope that the agency will be operational later this year. The Department contains a number of other units which are principally involved in the delivery of services and are potential candidates for transformation into executive agencies. They include the DTI research establishments other than the national engineering laboratory, the insolvency service, and business statistics office, the patent office, export services, radiocommunications division, and DTI regional offices. We will be considering over the next year or two whether these units will benefit from conversion into agencies.

United States Export Administration Act

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further measures he proposes to take to minimise the adverse repercussions for United Kingdom trade of the United States of America's Export Administration Act.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government have rejected on many occasions United States claims to extraterritorial jurisdiction—including those in the United States Export Administration Act—which infringe on United Kingdom sovereignty. Any British firm experiencing difficulties in the course of legitimate trading in or from the United Kingdom should contact the Department of Trade and Industry. Measures to help resolve specific problems will be considered on a case-by-case basis as they arise. Under the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980, the Secretary of State has discretionary powers to prevent United Kingdom companies complying with foreign claims to jurisdiction in the United Kingdom.

Manufacturing Industry (Investment)

54. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has regarding the investment intentions in the current year of manufacturing industry; and what was the comparable figure in 1987.

Mr. Maude: The latest investment intentions survey carried out by my Department indicates that in 1988 investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, will amount to about £8·7 billion at 1980 prices. Investment in 1987 was £7·4 billion at 1980 prices.

58. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current level of manufacturing investment; and what was the level in 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The latest year for which investment statistics are available is 1987 when investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, was £7·4 billion at 1980 prices. The corresponding investment in 1979 and 1983 was £8·2 billion and £5·6 billion, respectively, at 1980 prices.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to increase investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Atkins: Investment decisions are for firms themselves to make. But the excellent prospects for growth in manufacturing investment reflect the success of policies designed to provide a climate in which industry can perform effectively, which we shall continue to pursue. This success is demonstrated by the strong growth in manufacturing investment since early last year, as well as by the results of my Department's latest survey of investment intentions.

Inner Cities (Employment)

55. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning employment and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

84. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning employment and training and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Employment and training initiatives form an important part of the work undertaken by the inner city task forces and city action teams. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is introducing measures to appoint specialist Training Commission and employment service staff in inner city areas, extend and improve basic skills training and encourage more employers to become training providers. My right hon. Friend is also introducing the new employment training programme for adults which will provide substantial new help to enable inner city residents to obtain the skills they need to take up job opportunities.

Corporate Headquarters

56. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of corporate headquarters whose ownership has been transferred from the regions and nations to London and the south-east since 1979.

Mr. Aitkins: I regret that this information is not available.

OECD Countries (Deficit)

59. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development countries are running a greater trade deficit than the United Kingdom per head of population.

Mr. Alan Clark: The most recent data for OECD countries generally relate to 1987. In that year the following countries had larger estimated current account deficits per capita:

Norway, the United States, Denmark, Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Iceland, Canada, Greece, Sweden and France.

Open for Business Campaign

60. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what results his Department's Europe open for business campaign has achieved to date.

Mr. Maude: Since our campaign was launched in March, there has been a major increase in awareness of the single market.

Over 100,000 inquiries for further information have been received, most via our 1992 telephone hotline, and business awareness of the 1992 target date is now about 80 per cent.

The next step is to ensure that firms take action to seize the single market opportunities.

Airbus Project

61. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the progress being made at Airbus Industrie in relation to the Airbus project.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At the last meeting of the aerospace Ministers of the Airbus partner countries which I attended, the partners in Airbus Industrie were asked to report progress on implementing the recommendations of the Airbus "wise men's" report when the Ministers next meet, in early September. I look forward to hearing that report which I hope will confirm that the partners are on course to the introduction of the new arrangements for management of the project by the agreed deadline of the end of this year.

Inner Cities (Environmental and Local Government Policy)

62. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning environmental and local government matters and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

65. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning environmental and local government issues and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Environmental and local government matters are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment but are frequently raised in discussions I have with local business

men and others involved in inner-city regeneration and the action for cities campaign. In these discussions we agree about the importance of improving the environment of inner cities in order to attract investment and encourage development. The Government support this through, for example, the urban programme, derelict land grant and the new city grant, which are aimed at attracting private investment. Business men also raise with me the need for local authorities to help create the right climate for enterprise by removing unnecessary obstacles to growth and reducing the rate burden on business. The Government are supporting this objective through, for example, the proposal for a national non-domestic rate which will directly benefit many inner-city businesses.

British Shipbuilders

63. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met Mr. Lister on Thursday 7 July. We discussed the present position of British Shipbuilding and its various businesses in some detail.

Commercial Vehicle Production

64. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the level of commercial vehicle production in May 1988; and what are the comparable figures on output and export figures for *(a)* the six months to May 1988 and *(b)* the previous six month period.

Mr. Atkins: Provisional figures show that in May 27,384 commercial vehicles were produced in the United Kingdom, 8,462 of which were for export.

For the six months to May, 139,422 commercial vehicles were produced, 38,080 for export; comparable figures for the previous six months are 125,911 and 29,619 respectively.

Mercury Telecommunications Systems

67. **Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evaluation of Mercury Telecommunications Systems has been undertaken with respect to the possible use by his Department; what were the results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: In conjunction with the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA), an evaluation of the use of Mercury Telecommunications Systems exchange lines was carried out by my Department based on telephone traffic for our headquarters building at 1-19 Victoria street. This established that worthwhile savings could be made. Mercury telephone lines were therefore installed at 1-19 Victoria street in February 1988. The first account received has confirmed that savings are being made and the Department is therefore now liaising with CCTA for the early introduction of Mercury to other DTI buildings in the Whitehall area. Discussions are also currently taking place with Mercury for possible connection of other DTI buildings outside the Whitehall area.

Overseas Earnings

68. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what forecast he has for the overseas earnings of *(a)* the courier and express service industry, *(b)* the ship broking industry, *(c)* the education services industry and *(d)* the investment management industry.

Mr. Maude: There are no official forecasts of the overseas earnings of these sectors. However, the British Invisible Exports Council surveys the prospects of the overseas earnings of a number of service sectors and publishes its findings.

Industrial Competitiveness

69. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has recently received from the Confederation of British Industries on the competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Most of the contacts that my Department has with the Confederation of British Industry involve matters with a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness in one way or another.

British Firms (American Acquisitions)

73. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to acquisitions of American companies by British firms.

Mr. Maude: The available information relates to the value of the acquisitions of share and loan capital of United States companies by United Kingdom companies. Only those funded from the United Kingdom are included. The acquisition of holdings of 20 per cent. and above of United States companies' share capital and increases in existing holdings are shown indistinguishably. Information about takeovers of United States companies (the acquiring of more than 50 per cent. of United States companies' share capital) could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The following is the information:

	£ million
1981	1,633[1]
1982	946[1]
1983	1,082[1]
1984	1,565
1985	1,754
1986	4,481

[1] Excludes acquisitions by oil companies.
Source: Table 3.5 Business Monitor MA4.

Telecommunications Hardware

74. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the balance of trade in telecommunications hardware between the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Economic Community; and what was the figure in 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The crude balance of trade with the United Kingdom's 11 EC partners in telecommunications hardware, as defined by the principal products of the standard industrial classification activity heading 3441, for 1987 showed a deficit of £60·2 million. In 1984 the crude balance of trade was £20·8 million in deficit.

Inner-City Policy

75. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held with representatives of the Confederation of British Industry concerning the co-ordination of inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

82. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Chancellor to the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held with representatives of the Confederation of British Industry concerning the co-ordination of inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met representatives of the CBI on 6 May to discuss proposals for a special CBI initiative to encourage inner-city regeneration and business leadership. I very much welcome this initiative, which was launched in Newcastle on 14 June.

Polypropolene Filament Yarn

76. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to halt the allegedly illegal subsidy by the French Government to Filature du Hainaut in the light of the implications for competition for British manufacturers of polypropolene filament yarn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are considering the position. The EC Commission has been investigating whether the proposed aid is consistent with the objectives of the EC synthetic fibres discipline in relation to state aid and it has yet to announce its conclusions.

Trade Figures

79. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his Department is planning to make any changes in the way United Kingdom trade figures are presented after the completion of the European single market in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The presentation of United Kingdom trade statistics after the completion of the European single market in 1992 has yet to be decided. Member states are currently involved in discussions with the European Communities' statistical office about possible alternative methods of collecting the figures if Customs' documentation—the current source of the figures—should disappear with the removal of customs boundaries.

It is hoped that a draft proposal for a method of collecting trade statistics after 1992, to be applicable in all member states, will be available later this year.

Commercial Developments

80. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations from chambers of commerce about proposed commercial developments he has received in the past two months.

Mr. Atkins: I have received no such representations.

Caravans (Fire Safety)

81. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from the caravan industry concerning the impact of the proposed Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations upon the sale of new and secondhand units; and when he expects to make an announcement upon the subject.

Mr. Butcher: I made an announcement on 29 June at columns 382-3.

Mobile Phones

85. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the need for further research in the field of mobile phone technology.

Mr. Butcher: The dynamic growth of the United Kingdom cellular radio market demonstrates the demand for mobile telephony. Despite the advent of digital cellular technology in 1991, new technologies and means of exploiting new radio frequencies will be needed to meet the growth of demand well into the 1990s.

Relevant research of limited scope is provided for under the EC RACE programme, but the main RACE priority is integrated broadband networks. The LINK programme of research in personal communications which we recently announced is therefore designed to supplement the RACE activity. Our ambition is nothing less than offering the consumer a real choice of local telephone connection much sooner as a result of intensifying collaborative research. I hope our European partners will put increased resources into mobile radio R and D in due course.

Electrical Appliance (Plugs)

86. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce regulations to require the fitting of electrical plugs to all household electrical appliances as standard by the manufacturers of such products.

Mr. Butcher: No. This is a question for manufacturers or retailers to decide in the light of consumer demand.

Support for Design Scheme

88. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evaluation there has been of his support for design scheme.

Mr. Butcher: An independent evaluation report on the support for design scheme was published on 21 June. It shows the scheme to have been beneficial and cost effective. Full account was taken of it in planning the consultancy elements of the enterprise initiative. Such evaluation is important to ensure that our services to industry are an effective use of public funds.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Research and Development

92. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the total expenditure on civil research and development during the last three years in the United Kingdom; and what equivalent figures he has for *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany, and *(b)* France.

Mr. Butcher: The available information relates to 1985. For that year the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated gross expenditure on research and development (R and D),

performed in a number of member countries, excluding expenditure on R and D for defence purposes, financed by national Defence Ministries. For the United Kingdom this was £6·4 billion, for the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) £10·8 billion and for France £6·8 billion. Expenditure for the FRG and France has been converted from national currencies to pound sterling using purchasing power parities calculated by OECD.

Knitwear and Hosiery Industry, Leicester

93. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make a statement concerning his policy towards support for the knitwear and hosiery industry in Leicester.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's policy is to help firms to help themselves. Eligible firms are able to apply for assistance with consultancies under the enterprise initiative. They may, for example, seek help for exporting, research and technology, and for consultancy support for further development of their business.

Financial support under the textile and clothing education equipment scheme has been provided to Leicester polytechnic. In the inner cities context, the potential for the possible development of training and employment packages has been explored with local organisations by the Government's Highfields task force. As a result the task force is supporting a number of projects including the refurbishment of new premises for the Textile Arts Centre Ltd.; this will offer an additional 15 weaving and knitting YTS places and in-house training to City and Guilds standard. Task force support for the local Shama women's centre has resulted in 70 hosiery and knitwear overlocking and lock-stitching training places being provided.

The knitwear industry also benefits from the provisions of the multi-fibre arrangement and other trade agreements limiting imports from low-cost countries.

Gas Prices (Report)

97. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas prices for industrial consumers to be published.

Mr. Maude: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is due to submit a report to my right hon. and noble Friend on the supply of gas to contract customers by 24 August 1988. The report will be published as soon as practicable after it has been submitted and considered.

Manufacturing Trade Deficit

98. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative trade deficit in manufactures so far in the current year.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the five months ended May, trade on manufactures was in deficit by £5·2 billion.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cumulative trade deficit in manufactures so far this year; and what steps are being taken to improve it.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended May, the current account was in deficit by £7·1 billion. The trade balance can be affected by a variety of market factors, but the Government will stick to the firm monetary and fiscal policies essential to strong economic performance. Wherever practicable my Department is ready to give assistance to firms seeking to improve their competitive strength and trade performance, as, for example, through the recently introduced enterprise initiative.

Manufacturing Trade Balance

101. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in the manufacturing trade balance since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade in manufactures on a balance of payments basis was in surplus by £2·8 billion in 1979 and in deficit by £6·5 billion in 1987.

Furs (Labelling)

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the labelling of furs.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 20 June, at columns *404-405*, in which I indicated that, because of legal difficulties which had been raised, it would not be possible to proceed with the proposed Fur Marking Order in the way originally envisaged. I understand, however, that the European Commission is considering action on this subject. Commissioner Clinton Davis announced on 5 July that it was looking carefully at the idea that furs imported into Europe should bear labels indicating whether those who trapped the animals used leg-hold traps.

Education and Teaching (Inner-city Policy)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning education and teaching and inner-city policy and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Existing and potential inner-city employers frequently emphasise to me the importance of education and training in enabling inner-city residents to take advantage of the growing number of employment opportunities. The Government are encouraging links between inner-city schools and employers through, for example, compacts which assure school leavers who reach required standards of a job or job interview. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is offering financial support for a further 12 compacts in inner-city areas in England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has recognised the importance of providing good science and technology-based education for inner-city children by promoting city technology colleges and all inner-city schools will benefit from his education reforms and introduction of the new national curriculum.

Safety Footwear

Mr. Fry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to ensure that the proposed common European standard for safety footwear will allow for all types of construction, particularly welted footwear.

Mr. Butcher: The BSI will ensure that United Kingdom safety footwear manufacturers' interests are taken into account in the framing of a common European standard.

Departmental Shareholdings

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all shareholdings in public and private companies still held by his Department.

Mr. Butcher: Listed are details of all shares and other securities held by my Department as at 31 March 1988. Also shown are the details for 31 March 1987. This information is published annually in the "Supplementary Statements to the Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund".

Department of Trade and Industry
Details of shares and other securities held

Description of holdings	*Nominal amount* 31 March 1987 £	31 March 1988 £
John Bastie of Greenock (Holdings) Ltd.		
£1 'B' Redeemable Participating Preference Shares	40,000	[1]—
£1 'C' Redeemable Preference Shares	310,000	[1]—
Standard Mills (Rochdale) Ltd.		
£1 'A' Redeemable Preferences Shares	300,000	300,000
British Aerospace plc.		
£1 Special Rights Preference Share	1	1
Jaguar plc.		
£1 Special Rights Redeemable Share	1	1
Rolls-Royce plc.		
25p Ordinary Shares	127,000,000	[2]—
20p Ordinary Shares	—	[2]50,000
£1 Special Share	—	1
Short Brothers Ltd.		
£1 'A' 12 per cent. Preference Shares	4,840,000	4,840,000
£1 Ordinary Shares	342,000	342,000
Rover Group plc.		
50p Ordinary Shares	2,755,841,688	2,755,841,688
British Telecommunications plc.		
£1 Special Rights Redeemable Preference Share	1	1
25p Ordinary Shares	7,596	[3]5,502

[1] These shares were transferred to Vickers plc. for a nominal consideration.
[2] The holding of 25p ordinary shares reported at 31 March 1987 was converted to 20p ordinary shares as a prelude to the April 1987 privatisation.
[3] The 31 March 1987 holdings, previously reported with a nominal value of £4,753, have since been found to have been understated.

Export Promotion

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the main conclusions reached by his Department's central policy unit in its review of export promotion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. The review was part of my Department's advice upon the policy that my right hon. and noble Friend could consider adopting towards export services.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Butcher: Currently there are 4,000 computer work stations in the DTI. The ratio of work stations to civil servants is about 1:3. In five years' time the number of work stations could double to 8,000, resulting in a ratio of two work stations for every three civil servants. However, these future estimates are speculative.

Senior Information Technology Strategy Committee

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's resource management group (RMG) oversees strategic decisions on departmental IT on the recommendations of the departmental committee on information technology (DECIT). RMG consists of the permanent secretary and deputy secretaries in the Department. DECIT has representatives from all the major IT user areas as well as the IT directorate and has a CCTA representative. If my hon. Friend wishes to have a full list of members, perhaps he will let me know and I will write to him. Ministers do not attend these committees but may discuss developments with senior officials as necessary.

Departmental Staff Training

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Butcher: In the financial year 1987-88 five staff at grade 3 level received training in information technology management.

Counsel's Opinion

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions his Department has sought the opinion of independent counsel since 1979; and if he will list the subjects concerned.

Mr. Butcher: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Furthermore, the details of any subjects upon which the opinion of independent counsel has been sought by the solicitor to the Department since 1979 are confidential, and therefore could not be disclosed.

Legislative and Policy Plans

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's practice with regard to progressing any legislative or policy plans where it is advised that they may be challenged under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mr. Butcher: When consideration is being given to legislative and other proposals, full account is taken of the United Kingdom's obligations under the European convention on human rights and of any risk of challenge thereunder.

Allen and Hanbury Ltd v Generics (UK)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what advice he has received from independent counsel as to whether the judgment of the House of Lords in Allen and Hanbury Ltd. *v.* Generics (UK) is conclusive of the question whether applications to settle terms for a licence of right under the Patents Act 1977 would give rise to property within the meaning of the European Convention on Human Rights; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: It is not the practice of the Government to respond to inquiries about the source of their legal advice.

Education (Inner-city Policy)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning education and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Existing and potential inner-city employers frequently emphasise to me the importance of education and training in enabling inner city residents to take advantage of the growing number of employment opportunities. The Government are encouraging links between inner-city schools and employers through, for example, compacts, which assure school leavers who reach required standards of a job or job interview. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is offering financial support for a further 12 compacts in inner-city areas in England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has recognised the importance of providing good science and technology based education for inner-city children by promoting city technology colleges and all inner-city schools will benefit from his education reforms and introduction of the new national curriculum.

Privatisation

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his assessment of the results of his privatisation policy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's privatisation policy has been a considerable success. Companies exposed to the commercial disciplines and freed from political control become more efficient, self-reliant, flexible and responsible to their customers' needs. Privatisation has also led to wider share ownership giving people including employees in some of the industries concerned a direct stake in the success of British industry. I am pursuing the policy with plans for the privatisation of British Steel and Girobank, which I have already announced to the House, and my right hon. and noble Friend has successfully negotiated the return of the Rover Group to the private sector.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Carers

Mr. Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the most recent estimate available to him of the number of carers in Britain; and what proportion of these are known to service agencies and supported in their efforts.

Mrs. Currie: The most recent estimate of the number of carers in Britain comes from the carers data collected in the 1985 general household survey. This shows that one adult (that is, people in private households aged 16 years and over) in seven (14 per cent.) was providing informal care. Information on the proportion of these who are known to service agencies is not held centrally. However, the survey showed that 47 per cent. of the main dependants of carers received regular visits from a variety of health, social and voluntary services. Further information is contained in the informal carers report published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Marginal Tax Rates

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* earners, *(b)* families and *(c)* families with children, have effective marginal tax rates in excess of 40 per cent. taking into account income tax, national insurance contributions and the withdrawal of income-related benefits.

Mr. Portillo: On the basis of the assumptions set out in "Impact of The Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" October 1987 (copies of which are in the Library), 585,000 couples and single people below pension age where the principal earner is in full-time work are estimated to have combined income tax and benefit withdrawal rates in excess of 40 per cent. Of these, 525,000 have children. Among the couples, it is estimated that in broad terms there might be between 65,000 and 70,000 spouses who may have combined rates in excess of 40 per cent.

Unemployment and Poverty Traps

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect his social security reforms have had on the unemployment and poverty traps.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 12 July at columns *172-73*.

Benefits (Payment)

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what alternative arrangements he has made for the payment of benefits after the closure of the Abingdon street post office, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset.

Mr. Portillo: The main Burnham post office is only half a mile from the former Abingdon street post office, and additional staff have been provided there to cope with the increased callers.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that competitive tendering for support services within the National Health Service is operating on the basis of free and fair competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, I am satisfied. The Department's National Health Service procurement directorate, together with regional health authorities, has been charged with ensuring that this is so, with following up any complaints, and ensuring that corrective action is taken where appropriate. If my hon. Friend has any particular examples in mind I should be pleased to have details.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that health authorities should be required to give his Department prior notification of their intention to terminate a contract for hospital services with a private contractor; and if he will establish for those parties the right of appeal to his Department in the event of a dispute about the reasons for termination.

Mrs. Currie: This is essentially a contractual matter between the two parties involved. A district health authority is required to refer a proposal to terminate a contract prematurely to the appropriate regional health authority to ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to get the contract to work. If the region agrees with the proposal it then has to consult the Department, setting out the reasons for the proposal. The contractor is free to discuss such proposals both with the regional health authority, and with the Department's National Health Service procurement directorate, in cases of dispute.

National Health Service (Complaints)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether family practitioner committees are intended to monitor complaints which they receive in a similar manner to that specified for district health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Family practitioner committees are asked to review regularly the incidence and nature of complaints in their area. The decisions on all formal investigations are taken by the family practitioner committees. Reports of all cases dealt with informally are made to the family practitioner committees.

Life Expectancy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to implement to ensure that the equality of life expectancy is increased in the north with the south.

Mrs. Currie: Geographic variation in life expectancy is a complex and long-standing phenomenon which must be viewed against the background of a steady improvement in the overall health of the nation. Health inequalities between regions are to be found in many countries. In terms of equality in age at death, England stands up well in international comparison.

Unhealthy lifestyles and unhealthy diets create major risks to health. We are determined that all social groups throughout the country should have the information they need to make wise choices to protect their health.

The Government have taken a number of steps to promote good health and to ensure the equitable distribution of health care resources. The Government have pursued a policy of allocating health authority resources so as to ensure, over time, equal opportunity of access to health care for people in equal need, using the resource allocation working party's approach. Substantial progress has been made in bringing regions closer to their RAWP targets, and this year all regions are within 4 per cent. of target. The review of the RAWP formula carried out by the NHS management board has explored the scope for improving the way in which the current formula measures relative need across the country. The resulting recommendations are being considered and an announcement will be made shortly.

Patients (Confidentiality)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take against those health authorities which break patients' confidentiality, by passing on information to private health companies and other organisations.

Mrs. Currie: I am not aware of any such breaches of confidentiality by health authorities, but if the hon. Member has details of specific examples I would be happy to have inquiries made.

NHS (40th Anniversary)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much public money has been spent in England and Wales in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service; and if he will list the health authorities which have held such celebrations.

Mr. Moore: I am aware that many health authorities have celebrated the anniversary in a variety of ways. However, details of individual health authorities' celebrations and related expenditure are not held centrally. The Department has spent the following sums of money from its administration vote:

£12,750 on a reception for long-serving Health Service staff;

£34,500 supporting a video produced by the National Association of Health Authorities for training and

information purposes; and
£3,200 on an entrance hall exhibition for the reception and various headquarters buildings of my Department.

These sums relate to England only and I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for

Counsel's Opinion

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions his Department has sought the opinion of independent counsel since 1979; and if he will list the subjects concerned.

Mr. Moore: The Department regularly seeks the opinion of independent counsel over a wide range of civil litigation, criminal prosecutions, social security topics, health matters and employment law cases. The precise information requested is, however, not readily available and could be identified only at disproportionate cost. It would not be proper to reveal the precise nature of the problem on which the advice of counsel was sought in any particular instance.

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's practice with regard to progressing any legislative or policy plans where it is advised that they may be challenged under the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Moore: When consideration is being given to legislative and other proposals, full account is taken of the United Kingdom's obligations under the European convention on human rights and of any risk of challenge thereunder.

Students (Medical and Dental Treatment)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of difficulties and costs which would otherwise be incurred, he will advise full-time students to seek medical and dental treatement during term-time rather than during vacations wherever possible.

Mrs. Currie: In general, people should seek advice and treatement whenever they feel the need to do so. Student grants are deemed to cover their requirements during the short vacations but not the long vacations. They could however claim exemption from charges at any time of the year on the grounds of low income.

Health Authorities (Publications)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those health authorities which publish a newsletter or other periodical publications; and if he will list details of the cost thereof in each case.

Mrs. Currie: Many health authorities produce a variety of publications. Information on the numbers, types and frequency of publications and their associated production costs is not held centrally.

Sight Tests

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistical or other evidence, excluding that on trends in dental treatment, is available to him to support the Government's assertion that a charge will not deter people from having a sight test.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 11 February 1988 at column *351*. It is also relevant to note that a study by the Economist advisory group has shown that the great majority of those using spectacle vouchers, "top up" the voucher values by an average of between £14-24 depending on the type of voucher, despite the fact that spectacles are available within voucher values.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the major multiple opticians on their intentions over charging for sight tests; and what was their response.

Mr. Newton: I and my hon. Friends the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Lords have met representatives of a number of optical bodies including those representing the major corporate bodies, to listen to their views on the provisions of the Health and Medicines Bill relating to sight tests. The level of fees for private sight tests will be entirely a matter for the companies concerned. We have not received from them to date any specific indication of the fees they propose to charge.

Glaucoma and Diabetic Retinopathy

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the medical research which he has considered on referral rates for glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy;

(2) if he will list the medical research which he has considered on the early identification and treatment of macular degeneration.

Mr. Newton: We have recently received a considerable amount of information relating to research into the incidence of diseases of the eye. There has been extensive correspondence in the specialist journals concerning the results of various studies, much of which has been referred to in the course of proceedings on the Health and Medicines Bill.

Portsmouth and Havant (Drug Use)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of the report from the Policy Studies Institute about illicit drug use in Portsmouth and Havant, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have read the Policy Studies Institute report. The findings on the level of illicit drug use among school pupils and its greater incidence among smokers and drinkers are broadly in line with findings from the surveys commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security, copies of which are in the Library.

The view of the Policy Studies Institute that the school survey suggests

"that alarmist anti-drug publicity is more likely to attract vulnerable people to drugs than put them off"

is quite astonishing. It did not ask the school sample any questions at all about the anti-drug advertising. Instead it concludes that, because children who claimed more risky, anti-authority type behaviour were more likely to have tried drugs, anti-drug advertising will not work. In the development of all the Government's campaigns we have

been well aware of this risk and have therefore avoided creative executions with which young people could identify. The young man on the poster has not been used since 1986.

The Policy Studies Institute concludes that because most of the heroin users interviewed were critical of the campaign such publicity campaigns are counter-productive for many at risk. However, there is no evidence that it showed any of the advertising material to the drug users that it interviewed. Its sample did not represent the main target groups for the Government advertising. I understand that some 41 users were interviewed; all were hard drug users already heavily involved in drugs (31 were current heroin users, 40 had tried it. Fourteen were current needle users, 38 had used needles in the past). Nearly all were aged 20 or over.

Department of Health and Social Security research among drug users, conducted by Andrew Irving, has been far more extensive than the Policy Studies Institute research. In the most recent study 208 drug users, in five locations, aged between 14 and 24 were interviewed. The Government's anti-heroin campaign was mainly targeted at young people (aged 13 to 20) who might be tempted to try drugs, and surveys suggested that the most recent anti-injecting campaign also had a powerful effect on users.

Tracking by RBL involves regular sampling of about 700 young people. These evaluations show that the campaigns are being widely noticed, that young people are aware of the way in which heroin can damage their health, and relationships with other people, and that resistance to illicit drug use is high.

Whilst drug taking may be associated with under-age smoking and drinking, this does not imply that a combined campaign tracking all three issues would be appropriate. The Government's anti-drug campaign is not an isolated event and is but one element in its health promotion strategy. The HEA runs anti-smoking and anti-drinking educational programmes and so do local health and education authorities including those in Hampshire.

Endometriosis

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reported cases of endometriosis there have been, by health authority, for the past two years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The latest centrally available information is from a 10 per cent. sample of in-patients treated in NHS hospitals in 1984 and 1985. The numbers treated in individual health authorities are too small for reliable estimates to be made. Regional figures are given in the table.

Estimated number of in-patients with main diagnosis of endometriosis (ICD 617[1]), discharged from NHS hospitals, England, 1984 and 1985

Region of treatment	*1985*	*1984*
Northern	550	570
Yorkshire	620	570
Trent	710	610
East Anglian	320	460
North West Thames	430	490
North East Thames	880	620
South East Thames	350	520
South West Thames	560	440
Wessex	220	210
Oxford	480	450
South Western	330	320
West Midlands	690	440
Mersey	270	(140)
North Western	660	940
SHA's	(40)	(30)
England	7,110	6,810

[1] International classification of diseases—9th revision.

Figures in brackets should be treated with caution as they are based on small sample numbers.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 July 1988

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities (Equipment Donations)

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many bids for support were received by 29 April in response to the initiative of the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils on equipment donations to universities; what was the total value of bids submitted; how many external sponsors for projects were involved in the bids; what is the number of bids in which each external sponsor is involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The initiative was designed to encourage the donation, loan or sale on special terms of computing and communications equipment to universities. The aim is to enhance the existing equipment base in these areas. A scheme of matching support was adopted whereby universities were invited to bid for grants to cover the maintenance costs of equipment made available through the initiative. By the closing date of 29 April for the first round of assessment, 23 bids had been received from 14 universities covering additional equipment valued at an approximate total price of £3,500,000. This valuation takes into account normal educational discounts: the list price would be significantly higher. The number of external sponsors was 15; of these one was involved in four bids, five in two bids and the remaining nine in one bid each. Universities have also been invited to bid in a second round of the initiative, the closing date for applications being 28 October 1988.

Premature Early Retirement Compensation Scheme

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there are any plans to introduce a polytechnic premature early retirement compensation scheme in March 1989 or at any time prior to vesting day, after the September premature early retirement compensation scheme now in existence.

Mr. Jackson: Subject to the relevant statutory provisions, the offer of premature retirement terms will be for individual polytechnics to decide, under the provisions of the Education Reform Bill now before Parliament, once they assume responsibility for running their own affairs. The Government will consult the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and other interested bodies in due course about whether it would be desirable to establish collective arrangements for sharing the costs of premature retirement compensation within the new polytechnics and colleges sector.

History and Religious Studies

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the syllabus and standard of examination of history and religious studies at general certificate of secondary education level.

Mrs. Rumbold: A small number of letters has been received about aspects of particular GCSE syllabuses in history and religious studies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Butcher: It would be disproportionately expensive to provide the information requested; contracts awarded during 1987 were listed in my answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 31 March 1988, at columns *591-93*.

Public Companies (Shareholdings)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is considering seeking to lower the threshold of individual or corporate shareholdings at which a bid must be made.

Mr. Maude: There is no statutory provision requiring a bid to be made when a person's shareholding in a company reaches a certain threshold. The City code on takeovers and mergers contains provisions for mandatory offers to be made when a person or persons acting in concert own or control 30 per cent. or more of a company's voting shares. The City code is administered by the Panel on Takeovers and Mergers.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he gathers on the extent of individual or corporate shareholdings exceeding 20 per cent. in major British public companies; and if he will publish it.

Mr. Maude: Under the Fair Trading Act 1973 the Director General of Fair Trading advises the Secretary of State when he believes that the acquisition of a partial shareholding constitutes a merger qualifying for investigation under that Act. Apart from this my Department does not monitor information on shareholdings in British public companies.

Single Market

Sir David Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes will be necessary in United Kingdom legislation in order to satisfy the harmonisation requirements of the European Community for the achievement of the single market in 1992.

Mr. Maude: Some measures required to complete the single market may require implementation by way of primary legislation. In other cases the United Kingdom may give effect to its obligations by subordinate legislation, in particular by use of the powers conferred on the Government by the European Communities Act 1972. The need for implementing legislation, whether primary or subordinate, will be determined on a case by case basis.

Film Industry

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how much was paid by his Department to the National Film Development Agency in 1987-88; and what is the proposed payment for 1988-89;

(2) how much was paid by his Department to British Screen Finance Ltd. in 1987-88; and what is the proposed payment for 1988-89.

Mr. Butcher: In 1987-88 the Department of Trade and Industry spent £2 million on the film support schemes administered by British Screen Finance Ltd. and the National Film Development Fund. Of that sum, £1,760,000 was paid in respect of the feature films and short films financing schemes run by BSF, and the remaining £240,000 was paid in respect of the project development scheme managed by the NFDF.

There is provision, in any one year, for funds to be switched between the short films and project development schemes. I am not therefore in a position to give the breakdown of funding for 1988-89. However, I would expect that total expenditure on BSF and NFDF schemes combined will amount to the maximum of £2 million allocated for this purpose.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much the United Kingdom earned from the export trade of its commercial film industry in 1987-88.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information in respect of the overseas earnings of the United Kingdom film companies relates to 1986, details of which were published in *British Business*, 2 October 1987. Results for 1987 are expected to be published in *British Business* in September.

Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received seeking an amendment to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]* to provide that composers, publishers and authors should be entitled to compensation for royalty income lost through multiple rental of copyright works; what response he has made to such representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: We have had several representations from organisations seeking legal rights for authors and composers in respect of the rental of their works. However, we believe that the Bill's provisions are already sufficient to enable authors and composers to negotiate appropriate remuneration for such rental.

Nicaragua

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many trade missions supported by Government funds visited Nicaragua, for each year since 1974

Mr. Alan Clark: None. No applications for Government support were received during this period.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for East Kilbride on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *169*, if he will list those customers of the National Engineering Laboratory consulted by his Department and the date of those consultations;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for East Kilbride on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *169*, if he will list the countries from which information was sought and research carried out in those countries;

(3) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for East Kilbride on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *169*, if he will list the research organisations in the United Kingdom which were consulted by his Department and the date of those consultations.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 28 June, at column *169*.

Chile

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total amount of British investment in Chile for each year since 1970.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information relates to United Kingdom direct investment in Chile and is given in the table. Portfolio investment is not available by country.

United Kingdom direct investment in Chile

	£ million
1970	—
1971	1
1972	−2
1973	—
1974	1
1975	—
1976	1
1977	1
1978	2
1979	25
1980	4
1981	21
1982	−3
1983	3
[1]1984	29
[1]1985	37
[1]1986	13

[1] Includes oil companies, not included in earlier years.
— Nil or less than £0·5 million.

ENVIRONMENT

Rents

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the cumulative percentage increase for rents in the private sector since 1979.

Mrs. Roe: No direct measure is available of the increase in private housing rents since 1979, for the reasons outlined in my reply to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 27 June at column *156*. However, from the figures given in that reply for unfurnished tenancies other than housing association tenancies, it is estimated that private rents in England rose by about 128 per cent. from 1979 to 1987.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking

a Government commitment to reducing sulphur dioxide emissions from the United Kingdom by 26 per cent. by 1993, 46 per cent. by 1999 and 70 per cent. by 2003, based on the sulphur emission figures for 1980.

Mr. Moynihan: The figures quoted by the hon. Member are those which were initially proposed, for reductions in sulphur dioxide emissions from existing large combustion plants, by the German Presidency of the EC. As stated in my reply of 20 June to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) the United Kingdom recently reached agreement with its Community partners on a directive which will require the United Kingdom to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide from existing large combustion plants, from 1980 levels, by 20 per cent. by 1993, 40 per cent. by 1998 and 60 per cent. by 2003.

Structure Plans

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local structure plans approved by his Department were approved without change.

Mr. Waldegrave: I assume the hon. Member is referring to county structure plans. None has been approved without some modification, but the extent of modifications varies greatly from case to case.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the dates on which each current local structure plan was approved and *(b)* the period for which each current local structure plan is in force.

Mr. Waldegrave: The table gives the dates of approval of current structure plans and alterations, and the period for which housing provision is made. Other policies may have different or indefinite time periods.

Current Approved Structure Plans

	Date of approval of plan	*Date of approval of alteration*	*Time period for housing provision*
Avon	July 1985	—	1979-91
Bedfordshire	January 1980	December 1986	1981-96
Berkshire (Central)	April 1980	—	1976-91
Berkshire (East)	April 1980	—	1976-91
Berkshire (West)	February 1979	—	1976-91
Buckinghamshire	December 1979	April 1986	1981-91
Cambridgeshire	August 1980	—	1976-91
Cheshire	July 1979	July 1985	1979-91
Cleveland (East Cleveland)	October 1977	—	1971-91
Cleveland (Hartlepool)	March 1980	—	1976-91
Cleveland (Teesside)	October 1977	—	1971-91
Cleveland (West Cleveland)	October 1977	—	1971-91
Cornwall	July 1981	—	1976-91
Cumbria/Lake District National Park	December 1983	December 1987	1981-96
Derbyshire	July 1980	—	1976-96
Devon	April 1981	July 1987	1981-96
Dorset (South East)	February 1980	—	1976-96
Dorset (excluding South East)	July 1983	—	1980-96
Durham	January 1981	—	1979-91
East Sussex	May 1978	May 1985	1981-96
Essex	March 1982	—	1977-91
Gloucestershire	September 1981	—	1976-96
Greater London	July 1976	—	No quantified provision
Greater Manchester	March 1981	January 1986	1981-91
Hampshire (Mid)	September 1980	—	1977-91
Hampshire (North East)	October 1980	January 1986	1982-91
Hampshire (South)	March 1977	August 1987	1982-96
Hampshire (South West)	September 1982	—	1980-96
Hereford & Worcester Replacement	September 1985	—	1981-91
Hertfordshire Replacement	May 1988	—	1981-96
Humberside Replacement	July 1987	—	1984-96
Isle of Wight Replacement	May 1988	—	1985-96
Kent	March 1980	December 1983	1979-91
Lancashire (North East)	November 1979	—	1976-91
Lancashire (Central/North)	February 1983	—	1981-91
Leicestershire (excluding Rutland)	May 1976	July 1987	1981-96
Leicestershie (Rutland)	December 1979	July 1987	1981-96
Lincolnshire	November 1981	—	1976-91
Merseyside	November 1980	—	1976-86
Norfolk Replacement	February 1988	—	1981-96
Northamptonshire	January 1980	—	1976-91
Northumberland	September 1980	February 1988	1981-96
North Yorkshire	November 1980	January 1987	1981-96
Nottinghamshire	July 1980	—	1976-96
Oxfordshire	February 1979	April 1987	1981-96
Peak District National Park	December 1979	—	1976-91
Shropshire	February 1980	November 1987	1981-96
Somerset	February 1982	August 1986	1981-96
South Yorkshire	December 1979	—	1976-86
Staffordshire Replacement	April 1984	—	1979-91

	Date of approval of plan	Date of approval of alteration	Time period for housing provision
Suffolk	August 1979	February 1988	1984-96
Surrey	April 1980	—	1978-91
Tyne and Wear	September 1981	—	1978-91
Warwickshire Replacement	September 1987	—	1981-96
West Midlands	March 1982	January 1986	1981-91
West Sussex	June 1980	April 1988	1984-96
West Yorkshire	July 1980	—	1979-86
Wiltshire (South)	July 1980	—	1977-91
Wiltshire (West)	May 1981	—	1977-91
Wiltshire (North-East)	November 1981	—	1978-91

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each local structure plan currently in force, the number of homes originally proposed by the local authority and the number finally approved.

Mr. Waldegrave: For structure plan alterations and replacement plans approved since 1 July 1985, the information requested is as set out in the table. Details of plans approved before this date could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Submitted and approved housing provision for structure plans approved since 1 July 1985
In order of date of approval

Plan	Time period for housing policies	Submitted Date	Submitted Housing provision	Approved Date	Approved Housing provision
Cheshire Alteration No. 1	1979-91	August 1983	57,500	July 1985	55,090
Hereford and Worcester Replacement Plan	1981-91	February 1983	33,850	September 1985	36,160
Greater Manchester Alteration No. 1	1981-91	March 1984	94,800	January 1986	94,600
North-East Hampshire Alteration No. 1	1982-91	January 1984	18,100	January 1986	18,100
West Midlands No. 1	1981-91	June 1983	81,400-85,600	January 1986	81,400-85,600
Buckinghamshire Alteration No. 1	1981-91	December 1981	43,700	April 1986	38,800-43,400
Somerset Alteration No. 1	1981-96	August 1985	34,750	August 1986	36,750
Bedfordshire Alteration No. 1	1981-96	July 1984	32,800	December 1986	38,750
North Yorkshire Alteration No. 1	1981-96	January 1985	45,800	January 1987	42,000
Oxfordshire Alteration No. 2	1981-96	December 1983	38,000	April 1987	40,700
Leicestershire Alteration No. 2	1981-96	May 1985	53,100	July 1987	55,000
Rutland Alteration No. 1	1981-96	May 1985	1,900	July 1987	2,150
Devon Alteration No. 1	1981-96	September 1985	67,000	July 1987	68,400
Humberside Replacement Plan	1984-96	July 1985	45,000	July 1987	45,000
South Hampshire Alteration No. 1	1982-96	February 1984	57,100	August 1987	58,000
Warwickshire Replacement Plan	1981-96	October 1984	25,300	September 1987	28,950
Shropshire Alteration No. 1	1981-96	December 1984	32,000	November 1987	32,800
Cumbria/Lake District	1981-96	May 1986	23,600	December 1987	23,600
Northumberland Alteration No. 1	1981-96	February 1985	19,000	February 1988	19,500
Suffolk Alteration No. 1	1984-96	September 1986	35,500	February 1988	42,000
Norfolk Replacement Plan	1981-96	July 1986	57,000	February 1988	57,000
West Sussex Alteration No. 1	1984-96	January 1985	37,000	April 1988	37,900
Isle of Wight Replacement Plan	1985-96	March 1986	6,000	May 1988	6,000
Hertfordshire Replacement Plan	1981-96	May 1986	61,200	May 1988	62,500

Green Belt Land

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment if he will list by region and county the area of land designated as green belt up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in England.

Mr. Waldegrave: The table lists the area of approved green belts in each region in England in 1979 and in 1986, the latest date for which information has been collated (though there have been no major changes since then). Figures by county within a green belt could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. The general extent of each green belt is indicated in county structure plans. Detailed boundaries are defined in local plans, where they exist, or in old style development plans. Some detailed boundaries have not yet been settled, so areas are approximate.

Approved Green Belts

acres (approx)

Region	1979	1986
Northern:		
Tyne and Wear	98,800	200,000
North West:		
Greater Manchester, Central Lancashire, Merseyside, Wirral	[1]3,710	750,000
Lancaster and Fylde Coast	—	5,750
Yorkshire and Humberside:		
South and West Yorkshire	312,000	800,000
York	[1]	50,000
West Midlands:		
Stoke-on-Trent	[1]	125,000
West Midlands	352,000	650,000
East Midlands:		
Burton-Swadlincote	—	2,000
Nottingham/Derby	[1]	200,000
South West:		
Avon	155,160	150,000
Gloucester/Cheltenham	14,120	20,000
South East:		
Cambridge	4,320	26,550
London	757,740	1,200,000
Oxford	61,960	100,000

Region	1979	1986
South West Hampshire/South East Dorset	[1]	220,000
TOTAL	1,759,810	4,499,300

[1] Green Belt policies were applied on an interim basis to some additional areas.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the area of land, by region and county, designated as of outstanding natural beauty up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in England.

Mr. Moynihan: Because many areas of outstanding natural beauty straddle more than one county the information is not readily available by county and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. By DOE region, the relevant area designated under section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 is as follows:

	Area in 1979 (sq km)	Area in 1987 (sq km)
Northern	129	[1]1,479
North West	910	[1]1,560
Yorkshire and Humberside	115	320
East Midlands	520	520
West Midlands	1,128	1,128
South West	5,281	6,198
South East	4,233	5,751
Eastern	1,498	1,498
Greater London (Bromley)	3	3

[1] Includes North Pennines, designated in December 1978 and confirmed with modifications on 7 June 1988.

Council Home Sales

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to amend the description of special adaptations to council homes which enable a council to refuse the right to buy.

Mrs. Roe: Paragraph 8 of schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 excludes from the right to buy houses and flats which have been altered in certain ways to make them suitable for occupation by disabled people. The Housing Bill does not amend these provisions, but if amendments are tabled they will be considered very carefully.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the totals of council homes completed by northern councils in each year since 1979; and what are the estimated totals for the next five years.

Mrs. Roe: The total number of dwellings completed by local authorities in the northern region (excluding Cumbria) for each year since 1979 is:

	Number
1979	4,417
1980	4,344
1981	2,330
1982	1,476
1983	1,492
1984	1,462
1985	1,177
1986	528
[1]1987	445

[1] First nine months.

Estimated totals for the next five years are not available. Estimates for the two forthcoming financial years were included in the local authorities' housing investment programme forms in 1987 and these totalled:

	Number
1988-89	811
1989-90	1,509

South-East Regional Aggregate Working Party

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the membership of the south-east regional aggregate working party, the interest each member represents and the meetings held; and if he will publish a summary of their purposes, recent activities, decisions made and advice offered.

Mr. Trippier: The regional aggregates working parties are local authority groups which draw their membership from mineral planning authorities, the aggregate minerals industry and the appropriate Government Departments. The south-east regional aggregates working party is chaired by the county planning officer of Hertfordshire and the secretariat is provided by the London and South-East regional planning conference (Serplan). I have asked Serplan to provide my hon. Friend with the information he has asked for.

Prisons (Development)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all inquiries into proposed secure prisons and other penal institutions developments in the last five years, giving in each case where permission was refused his reasons for refusal.

Mr. Waldegrave: Two proposals for the development of prison establishments, at Ashford (Middlesex) and Woolwich, have been the subject of public local inquiries in the last five years. Both proposals were subsequently approved.

Roxby Gullet (Mining)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the authority which granted the original planning permission for mining at Roxby Gullet near Scunthorpe, and about the conditions attached to that permission.

Mr. Trippier: There are two planning permissions for mining at Roxby Gullet issued in 1953 and 1958 respectively. I shall write to the hon. Member enclosing copies.

Council Housing

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures showing the total expenditure on local authority housebuilding for each year since 1979 in terms of (i) current prices, (ii) 1988 prices and (iii) share of gross domestic product.

Mrs. Roe: The available estimates of capital expenditure on housebuilding by English local authorities are as follows:

	Current prices £ million	*1987-88 prices £ million*	*Percentage share of gross domestic product*
1978-79	1,096	2,245	0·63
1979-80	1,065	1,867	0·52
1980-81	965	1,427	0·41
1981-82	720	969	0·28
1982-83	685	861	0·24
1983-84	682	819	0·22
1984-85	730	838	0·22
1985-86	579	628	0·16
1986-87	458	480	0·12
[1]1987-88	467	467	0·11

[1] Provisional.

Nuclear Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which areas of the United Kingdom the British Geological Survey has been working since November 1987 in respect of UK Nirex's search for a suitable site for a nuclear waste disposal facility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand from UK Nirex Ltd. that British Geological Survey's work has concentrated on the geological areas identified in Nirex's discussion document "The Way Forward" as potentially suitable for the development of a radioactive waste disposal facility.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish what information he has of the radioactive waste management programmes of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states, indicating which have established organisations for the management of such waste, which are operating (i) low, (ii) intermediate and (iii) high level repositories and which one engaged for the search for sites.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the "International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Fact Book" published by the United States Department of Energy which contains information on those member countries of the OECD which have a nuclear power programme. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Rent Debt (Calderdale)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions were reached by his Department on the escalation in rent debt in Calderdale in the first nine weeks of the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: It is for individual authorities to take timely and appropriate steps to control and reduce rent arrears.

Aggregate

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his policy on stimulation of the production of aggregate from less environmentally sensitive sources and to avoid, so far as possible, environmental and social costs, remains as set out in the Department of the Environment circular 21/82.

Mr. Trippier: Government policy on the supply of aggregates is set out in circular 21/82. However this needs to be read with more recent policy statements on such matters as the development plan system and agricultural land. These are referred to in minerals planning guidance note 1 (general considerations and the development plan system) which was published by HMSO earlier this year.

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, prior to issuing a revised version of the Department of the Environment circular 21/82 entitled "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales," he will issue a Green Paper on the subject to permit full consideration of the views of all those likely to be affected by the proposed changes.

Mr. Trippier: Revised guidelines for aggregates provision in England and Wales are being prepared and a draft for consultation will be issued shortly. A period of at least two months will be allowed for consultation.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he is giving to the establishment of the headquarters of the proposed National Rivers Authority on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The location of the National Rivers Authority's headquarters is one of the matters on which the Government expect to receive advice from the National Rivers Authority advisory committee.

Movement and Dance

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current amount of funding by the Sports Council to the organisations of movement and dance; what are the future funding proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Funding in 1987-88 by the Sports Council to the seven recognised governing bodies of movement and dance was £181,508. In addition, the Sports Council gave regional capital grants to a total of £5,000 in 1987-88 to movement and dance organisations. Grants to governing bodies are considered by the Sports Council following receipt of forward plans from these bodies. A total of £117,342 has so far been allocated to three movement and dance governing bodies for 1988-89. The council is still awaiting forward plans from the other four governing bodies.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of participants in movement and dance.

Mr. Moynihan: The 1986 general household survey of sport and recreation estimates that 1·3 million of the adult population participate in movement and dance.

Disabled Employees

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons were recruited to work in his Department in 1987-88; and what percentage of those were disabled.

Mr. Ridley: Figures are readily available only for non-industrial staff. My Department (including the PSA) recruited 1,456 non-industrial staff in 1987-88 of whom 25 (1·7 per cent.) were registered disabled.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons currently work in his Department; and what percentage of those are disabled.

Mr. Ridley: Figures are readily available only for non-industrial staff. At 1 June 1988, the non-industrial staff of my Department (including the PSA) numbered 20,818 of whom 266 (1·3 per cent.) were registered disabled.

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Q65. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry of Government policy towards support for the helicopter industry, in the light of the proposed sale by Fiat to United Technologies Corporation of its stake in Westland plc.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry maintain close co-ordination on a wide range of defence and industrial issues. But the Government regard negotiations between Fiat and United Technologies concerning their holdings in Westland as a matter for the companies.

Lothian Region

Q75. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Lothian region.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Rating Reform

Q80. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to hold a referendum before implementation of the community charge.

The Prime Minister: No.

Government Decentralisation

Q85. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will take further steps to decentralise the work of Government.

The Prime Minister: Under our next steps initiative, to the greatest extent practicable, responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the executive functions of Government will in future be delegated to executive agencies. The Government are now developing a progressive programme for establishing agencies. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, will make a statement on the progress of this initiative before the recess.

Terrorism

Q90. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister what response she has had from other Governments on curbing finance for international terrorism.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced that we intend in the forthcoming legislative proposals to replace the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 to broaden and strengthen our attack on terrorist funding. He has outlined these proposals to his colleagues in the Trevi forum and they have agreed that Trevi should study ways of confiscating funds intended to support terrorism. Our proposals will provide a starting point for this study. There has also been some work on this topic in the European political co-operation forum to establish what legislative provisions exist at present in the EC countries.

Working Conditions

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister what specific instruction she has given to Government Departments for proposals to improve the health, safety and wage conditions of the British work force following the recent European Community call in Hanover to seek such improvements in all member countries.

The Prime Minister: As I reported to the House in my statement of 30 June, the Hanover Council welcomed the initiative taken under article 118A of the Single European Act to provide better protection for the health and safety of workers. The United Kingdom is playing a positive role in the programme of health and safety directives under article 118A. In line with current policies, the Department of Employment and the Health and Safety Commission continue to develop domestic proposals to improve the health and safety of workers.

As to wages, the European Council drew attention to the prospects offered by the single European market for increasing prosperity generally, including the prosperity of wage-earners.

Engagements

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Georgia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he has considered to prevent the depletion of fish stocks in the area surrounding South Georgia.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 21 June.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what surveys have been carried out regarding the possible depletion of fish stocks in the area surrounding South Georgia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In 1987 surveys of fish stocks around South Georgia were undertaken by two Spanish vessels and by a Polish vessel under charter to the United States Government. The scientific results obtained were instrumental in bringing about the successful negotiation in the convention for the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources (CCAMLR) of the first ever total allowable catch set for this fishery.

In early 1988 a British Antarctic Survey scientist on board the British trawler Lord Shackleton undertook research in these waters. The results will be presented at this year's plenary meeting of CCAMLR in October to support our arguments there for further conservation measures.

Nicaragua

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received on the closure of La Prensa and Radio Catolica by the Government of Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that on 11 July the Sandinista Government announced the indefinite closing of Radio Catolica, citing its reporting of the opposition march of 10 July in Nandaime, during which the police detained 42 people and used tear gas. On the same day, the Nicaraguan Government closed La Prensa for 15 days, and announced the expulsion of the US ambassador and seven other United States diplomats from Nicaragua. We deplore these Nicaraguan actions. They are further evidence of Nicaraguan failure to comply with its obligations to democratisation under the Esquipulas II agreement.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Overseas Assets

18. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets both in value and as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets both in value and as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold).

Balance of Payments

19. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the trend in the balance of payments.

Mr. Lilley: The current account deficit was £1·6 billion in 1987 and is estimated to be £4·7 billion so far in 1988.

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to improve the balance of payments position: and if he will make a statement.

43. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he intends to take to bring about an improvement in Britain's balance of payments performance.

66. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures are being taken to improve the balance of payments.

Mr. Major: Policy will continue to be directed to defeating inflation and encouraging enterprise.

31. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of the current account deficit on the balance of payments that he now predicts for this financial year.

38. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new estimates he has made for the balance of payments figures in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

62. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of the current account deficit on the balance of payments that he now predicts for this financial year.

68. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what level of current account deficit on balance of payments he now predicts for this financial year.

87. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he would now revise his Budget estimates of the likely outturn this year for the balance of payments.

91. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most recent estimate of the current account balance of payments for 1988 in *(a)* visible trade and *(b)* invisibles.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the light of the most recent trade figures, he will revise his current estimate of the balance of payments deficit for 1988-89.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his forecast for the 1988 current account deficit as given in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1988-89".

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate of the balance of payments for 1988-89.

Mr. Major: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already said, recent figures suggest that the current account deficit in 1988 may be larger than the £4 billion forecast at Budget time.

35. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the impact of the measures announced in his Budget on the balance of payments.

58. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for the impact of his Budget income tax changes on the level of manufactured imports in the present year.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave on 12 May 1988 to the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) and for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) at column *453*.

55. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has recently received about the level of the balance of payments deficit for the first few months of 1988.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this, as on a number of subjects.

67. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest available figures in respect of the balance of payments; and what are the comparable figures for one and nine years ago.

Mr. Major: In the first five months of 1988 the current account deficit was £4·7 billion. In the same period a year ago, a surplus of £0·8 billion was recorded, while nine years ago a deficit of £0·6 billion was recorded.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take in relation to the current balance of payments position.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to take any measures to reduce the level of the balance of payments deficit.

Mr. Major: This Government will stick to firm monetary and fiscal policies. These, along with policies to encourage enterprise, will help to ensure continued economic prosperity. In particular, the current surge in domestic investment and lower tax rates will bring strong lasting benefit to United Kingdom trade performance.

Shareholders

20. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of shareholders in the United Kingdom.

34. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of shareholders in the United Kingdom.

45. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of shareholders in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: The most recent survey by the Treasury and the stock exchange estimated that 9 million people own shares, three times the number in 1979.

Manufacturing Investment

21. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest forecast for the growth of manufacturing investment in the United Kingdom in the current year.

44. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest forecast for the growth of manufacturing investment in the United Kingdom in the current year.

Mr. Major: The June investment intentions survey from the DTI suggests that manufacturing investment will grow by 16 per cent. in 1988.

Interest Rates

22. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many interest rate changes have there been since the Budget.

Mr. Lilley: There have been eight changes in base rates since the Budget.

28. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the estimated cost to the Government of the last increase in interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Interest rates were raised in order to maintain downward pressure on inflation. Lower inflation improves Government finances in the medium term.

30. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the level of interest rates in the United Kingdom and other Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley: The table shows the level of bank base rates in the United Kingdom, and the nearest equivalent rates in the other Group of Seven countries.

Country	*Type of rate*	*Bank rate Per cent.*
United Kingdom	Bank base rate	10
United States	Major bank's prime rate	9
Japan	Central bank discount rate	2½
West Germany	Central bank discount rate	3
France	1st category paper rate	6½
Italy	Central bank discount rate	12½
Canada	Commercial bank rate	8¾

32. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many interest rate changes there have been in the last six weeks.

48. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many interest rate changes there have been in the last six weeks.

Mr. Lilley: Bank basic rates have changed five times in the last six weeks.

Privatisation

23. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of

the state-owned commercial sector which will have been transferred to the private sector from 1979 to the end of this year.

56. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of the state-owned commercial sector which will have been transferred to the private sector from 1979 to the end of this year.

73. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of the state-owned commercial sector which will have been transferred to the private sector from 1979 to the end of this year.

86. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of the state-owned commercial sector which will have been transferred to the private sector from 1979 to the end of this year.

Mr. Brooke: Around 40 per cent. of the state-owned sector of industry has been transferred to the private sector since 1979. The proportion which will have been transferred to the private sector by the end of this year depends on the timing of future privatisations, which has not yet been decided. When the further privatisations so far announced have been completed some 60 per cent. of the state-owned sector will have been transferred to the private sector.

92. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the progress of the privatisation programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government have privatised 17 major companies and returned around 40 per cent. of the state-owned sector of industry to the private sector since 1979. The privatisation programme is set to continue; the privatisations of British Steel and the electricity and water industries have already been announced.

Balance of Trade

25. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to make any provision in his fiscal policy to take account of the balance of trade.

Mr. Major: The prudent fiscal stance set at Budget time will be maintained.

39. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's balance of trade.

Mr. Major: In the three months to May, the United Kingdom's balance of trade was in deficit by £3·9 billion.

72. **Mr. McCleish:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has discussed policies to expand mutual trade between European countries with European Community Finance Ministers as a means of increasing United Kingdom visible exports and reducing the current trend to deficit in the United Kingdom trade balance.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend meets other European Community Finance Ministers from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Company Cars

26. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the increase in real terms in the taxation of company cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about this year's increase in the taxation of company cars.

Scottish Economy

27. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the performance of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Brooke: The Scottish economy is growing strongly across a broad range of sectors. The Fraser of Allander Institute has recently commented that
"short-term prospects are more favourable than for some years".

Government Data Network

29. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress with the proposed Government data network.

Mr. Brooke: The choice of Racal Data Networks Ltd. to provide the Government data network service was announced on 19 May at columns *572-73*. Access contracts have now been signed with Racal Data Networks Ltd. to provide services to the Department of Health and Social Services, Inland Revenue, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Home Office. Racal Data Networks Ltd. is preparing for acceptance testing of the initial phase network, which is scheduled for completion early in 1989. Discussions are under way with other Departments considering using Government data network.

Public Spending

33. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimated level of public spending for 1989-90.

80. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of public spending he has now set for 1989-90.

Mr. Major: The Government's plans for public spending were published in the public expenditure White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91", Cm. 288, in January. This shows a planning total for 1989-90 of £167·1 billion.

64. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he expects the public spending outturn to be for 1988-89.

69. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he expects the public spending outturn to be for 1988-89.

93. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he now expects the public spending outturn to be for 1988-89.

95. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he now expects the 1988-89 public spending outturn to be.

Mr. Major: The fist estimate of outturn for the 1988-89 planning total will be published in the 1988 Autumn Statement.

Tenders (Market Testing)

36. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the comulative benefit to the Exchequer of market testing of tenders for Government contracts by central Government since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The cumulative rate of financial savings from the market testing of services by central Government Departments is estimated to have reached some £32 million a year by 1 April 1987.

Business Investment

37. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest forecast for the growth of business investment in the United Kindom in 1988.

51. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest forecast for the growth of business investment in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the Budget forecast which projected a rise of 9 per cent. in the real level of business investment between 1987 and 1988.

Personal Disposable Income

40. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in real personal disposable income in the year to the first quarter of 1988.

Mr. Major: Real personal disposable income was 5½ per cent. higher in the first quarter of 1988 than in the first quarter of 1987.

Take-home Pay

41. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the level of take-home pay obtained by the individuals receiving one half, one third, and two thirds of average earnings; and what were the equivalent figures two years ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The figures are given in the table. They are for a single person not contracted-out of SERPS.

	Take home pay 1986-87			
	(1986-87 prices)	*(1988-89 prices)*	*Take home pay 1988-89*	*Real Increase (per cent.)*
½ average male earnings	58·17	62·88	67·44	7·2
⅔ average male earnings	79·30	85·72	93·28	8·8
⅓ average male earnings	101·84	110·08	120·73	9·7

Average earnings are for full time male workers aged over 21. (£213·80 in 1986-87 and £244·70 in 1988-89 assuming 6½ per cent. earnings growth on 1987-88).

Inflation

42. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of future inflation.

60. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of future inflation.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be publishing his next forecast of inflation at the usual time, in the Autumn Statement.

Tax Cuts (Imports)

46. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the impact of top rate tax cuts on imports.

47. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the impact of top rate tax cuts on imports.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland).

Tax Changes

49. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* personal and *(b)* business taxes have been (i) lowered and (ii) abolished since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to draw a rigid distinction between personal and business taxes; income tax, for example, is paid by individuals, trusts and unincorporated and certain other businesses.

Five major taxes have been abolished since 1979: investment income surcharge, national insurance surcharge, development land tax, capital transfer tax on most lifetime gifts and capital duty. In addition, a number of lesser imposts (such as minor stamp and excise duties) have been abolished.

Of the taxes that remain, the basic rate of income tax has been reduced in stages from 33p to 25p since 1979 while the nine higher rates running up to 83 per cent. have been replaced by a single higher rate of 40 per cent. The main personal allowances have been increased by over 25 per cent. in real terms. Only real capital gains accruing since 1982 are now taxed, at the same rates as income. Capital transfer tax has been replaced by inheritance tax; fourteen rates running up to 75 per cent. in 1979 have been replaced by a single rate of 40 per cent. now, and the threshold is more than twice as high in real terms. In the context of a major reform of company taxation, the corporation tax rate has been reduced in stages from 52 to 35 per cent. The small companies' rate has been cut from 42 to 25 per cent. The main ad valorem stamp duties were halved in 1984 and the duty on share transactions was halved again in 1986. In addition, a number of reliefs have been introduced or improved upon, in particular to foster enterprise and encourage charitable giving.

Productivity

50. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average annual increase in the productivity of the whole United Kingdom economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe).

Annuities (Owner-occupiers)

52. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to encourage retired owner-occupiers on low incomes to unlock the capital tied up in their home by mortgaging the property and using the proceeds to purchase an annuity.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tax relief is already available for interest paid by people aged 65 or more on loans, secured on their homes, which are used to buy a life annuity.

VAT

53. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received in favour of zero rating value added tax on hospital radio broadcasting equipment.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received no further representations since the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 16 June at column *262*.

71. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will include the Meat and Livestock Commission in the list of public bodies able to recover value added tax on their non-business expenditure.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 12 July at columns *99-100*.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what provisional or other timetable has been proposed by the Presidency or Commission of the European Economic Community, or proposed or adopted to or by its Council of Ministers, in respect of the harmonisation of value added tax of those funds, goods and services zero rated or exempt in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* The European Commission considers that member states' VAT rates should be "approximated" by 31 December 1992; but successive European Councils have not regarded tax approximation as a priority area and have set no specific timetable. The United Kingdom Government have made it clear that they do not consider tax approximation to be necessary for the completion of the single market. It could not be introduced without unanimous consent of all member states.

Self-employment

54. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in self-employment since 1979.

65. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in self-employment since 1979.

75. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in self-employment since 1979.

Mr. Major: Since 1979 self-employment has increased by more than 1 million, or over 50 per cent., which is more than six times as much as in the previous 30 years.

Economic Outlook

57. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the economic outlook for the remainder of the current financial year.

Mr. Major: The United Kingdom economy has achieved strong economic growth, low inflation and sound public finance. This combination is set to continue.

OECD Countries (Budget Surplus)

59. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are running a budget surplus.

Mr. Lilley: As well as the United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, Norway and Sweden are expected to have a budget surplus in the current year.

Tax and Prices Index

61. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the rise in the tax and prices index in the 12 months to May.

Mr. Lilley: The tax and prices index rose by 2·1 per cent. in the 12 months to May.

Budget Strategy (Pay Settlements)

63. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications of the current rate of pay settlements for the implementation of his Budget strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Government's policy of not accommodating domestic cost increases implies that excessive pay settlements are a threat to jobs rather than inflation over the medium term.

Economic Growth

70. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for economic growth in the United Kingdom in the next year.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's latest forecast was published at Budget time. It showed growth of 3 per cent. in whole economy output in 1988, equivalent to 3½ per cent. growth on a non-oil basis. However, as my right hon. Friend reported to the House on 16 June at column 554 it now looks as though growth in 1988 may prove slightly higher than this.

Aviation Gasoline

74. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current revenue raised from the duty on aviation gasoline.

Mr. Lilley: The revenue collected in 1987-88 was £3·5 million.

Economic Growth (Interest Rates)

76. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the effect of the

current instability of interest rates on investment in industry over the next year; and what assessment he has made of the effect this will have on the current level of economic growth in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: With interest rates close to their average levels for recent years, there is every sign that investment growth will be strong in 1988, as projected in the FSBR and the latest DTI investment intentions survey. This will contribute to the continuation of the strong and steady growth seen since 1981.

Departmental Telephone Numbers

77. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that when Government Departments change their telephone numbers the correct information is made available to right hon. and hon. Members in due time.

Mr. Brooke: None, directly. It is the responsibility of the particular Department to advise its contacts when telephone numbers are changed.

Government Expenditure

78. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the planned path for general Government expenditure over the period to 1990-91.

Mr. Major: The Government's expenditure plans, as set out in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 288) show general Government expenditure (including privatisation proceeds) of £183 billion in 1988-89, £193 billion in 1989-90 and £202 billion in 1990-91. This represents a declining proportion of GDP.

Manufacturing Profitability

79. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the rise in manufacturing profitability in 1987.

83. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the rise in manufacturing profitability in 1987.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

Third World Debt

81. **Mr. Holland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what grounds he rejected the proposal by the French Government at the Toronto summit to write off one third of the official debt of the 20 least-developed African countries.

Mr. Lilley: On balance, a reduction in interest rates, as proposed in the Chancellor's initiative, offers greater short-term cash flow relief for the debtor than the French Government's proposal which involves earlier repayment of principal. The United Kingdom therefore considers it desirable to lower interest rates for those countries which qualify for debt relief.

Mercury Telecommunications Ltd.

82. **Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusions the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency has reached about telecommunications services to other Government Departments in the light of the Government's evaluation of services offered by Mercury Telecommunications Ltd.

Mr. Brooke: The CCTA's study has shown that, given the current structure of telecommunications tariffs, Mercury will in many instances offer financial savings over British Telecom for exchange lines connected to large private telephone exchanges. For such exchanges in the Whitehall area for which it is responsible, the CCTA will be implementing a phased programme to replace half the BT exchange lines with Mercury lines.

Civil Service Job Location

84. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Civil Service jobs are now located in the south-east.

Mr. Brooke: There were 225,700 civil servants located in the south-east on 1 April 1987. These are the latest centrally available figures.

Economic Output

85. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the growth of economic output in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: Provisional CSO estimates suggest that the output-based measure of GDP increased by 5 per cent. between the first quarter of 1987 and the first quarter of 1988.

Economy (Supply Side)

88. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to improve the capacity of the supply side of the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Major: We have introduced a number of reforms to improve the supply performance of the economy by increasing competition and flexibility and sharpening incentives to enterprise and effort. These complement the medium-term financial strategy which sets the macro economic framework needed to control inflation and give business the confidence to expand.

Since 1979 we have cut personal tax rates sharply, bringing the basic rate down from 33p to 25p and sweeping away all higher rates above 40p; cut the main corporation tax rate to 35 per cent., one of the very lowest in the industrialised world; privatised nearly 40 per cent. of the state-owned commercial sector; trebled the number of shareholders; abolished credit controls and created one of the world's most open, competitive capital market centres; strengthened trade union democracy; ended incomes policies; increased value for money in the public sector; and swept away a battery of bureaucratic controls and regulations. We will continue to bring forward measures of this kind.

Eurotunnel

89. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the tax treatment of complimentary journeys available to flotation shareholders in Eurotunnel.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the answers I gave to similar questions on 3 December 1987 to

my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) at column *697* and on 23 November 1987 to my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East and for Dover (Mr. Shaw) at columns *67-68*.

European Central Bank

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the proposals made by Governments in the European Community for a European central bank.

Mr. Lilley: I would refer the hon. Member to the Prime Minister's statement of Thursday 30 June on the outcome of the European Council in Hanover on 27-28 June at columns 525-26.

Building Society Accounts

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the number of building society accounts currently in existence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: Information on the number of building society accounts is not available. The annual returns sent by building societies to the Building Societies Commission showed at the end of 1987 an aggregate of 42 million investing shareholders and 3.6 million creditors for deposits and loans. As people may hold more than one account, these figures do not represent the actual number of accounts.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost in revenue forgone of *(a)* mortgage interest relief, *(b)* superannuation contributions and *(c)* retirement annuity premiums, for each year since 1980; and if he will estimate for each year the number and percentage of owner occupiers who were in receipt of mortgage interest relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is as follows. For 1983-84 onwards the figures for mortgage interest relief include the cost of relief given to non-taxpayers.

	Mortgage interest relief (£ million)	*Estimated cost of Employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes* (£ million)	*Employers' contributions to occupational pension schemes* [2] (£ million)	*Retirement annuity premia* (£ million)	*Number of mortgagors* (thousands)	*Mortgagors as a percentage of all owner occupied dwellings* (per cent.)
1980-81	1960	n/a	n/a	150	5860	49
1981-82	2050	n/a	n/a	200	5850	47
1982-83	2150	1300	3100	250	6130	48
1983-84	2780	1400	3200	250	7500	57
1984-85	3580	1400	3300	300	7750	57
1985-86	4750	1500	3300	400	8000	58
1986-87[1]	4750	1600	3100	450	8200	58
1987-88[1]	4850	1600	2900	450	8400	58

[1] Provisional
[2] on the basis that employers' contributions are not taxable as a benefit in kind of the employee.
n/a—not available.

Retirement Annuity Premiums

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide, for retirement annuity premiums superannuation contributions tax relief, a breakdown of benefits for income bands on the same basis as that given in the answer to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) of 14 June on mortgage interest relief, *Official Report*, columns *147-48*, giving additionally the percentage of tax units in each income band, and the percentage of tax units within each income band who receive the benefits of the relief; and if he will provide comparable figures for both income band and region of residence in 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Available information is given in the table. Data for 1987-88 and provisional estimates are based on projections from the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes. Due to the small sample size it has been necessary to amalgamate certain income ranges.

Tax units receiving retirement annuity relief by range of total income

Range of total income	*Number of tax units*[1] *with retirement annuity relief* (thousands)	*Average value of relief* (£)	*Total cost of relief* (£ million)	*Percentage of total cost* (per cent.)	*Number of tax units*[1] *paying tax* (thousands)	*Percentage of tax units* (per cent.)	*Percentage of tax units receiving relief* (per cent.)
1985-86							
Up to £10,000	450	120	50	13	12,000	59	4
£10,000 to £15,000	260	180	50	12	4,500	22	6
£15,000 to £20,000	190	210	40	10	2,100	10	9
£20,000 to £30,000	110	530	60	14	1,100	6	9
Over £30,000	100	2,080	210	52	450	2	22
TOTAL	1,100	370	410	100	20,100	100	5
1987-88							
Up to £10,000	360	110	40	9	10,500	51	3
£10,000 to £15,000	300	160	50	10	4,800	23	6
£15,000 to £20,000	200	210	40	9	2,600	13	8

Range of total income	Number of tax units[1] with retirement annuity relief (thousands)	Average value of relief (£)	Total cost of relief (£ million)	Percentage of total cost (per cent.)	Number of tax units[1] paying tax (thousands)	Percentage of tax units (per cent.)	Percentage of tax units receiving relief (per cent.)
£20,000 to £30,000	160	370	60	13	1,800	9	9
Over £30,000	130	2,030	270	59	750	4	17
TOTAL	1,160	400	460	100	20,600	100	6

[1] Single persons and married couples.

Analysis by region[1] 1985-86

Percentages

	Tax units[2] with retirement annuity relief	Tax units[2] paying tax
Northern	5	6
Yorkshire and Humberside	10	8
North West	11	11
East Midlands	7	7
West Midlands	8	9
East Anglia	5	3
South East	31	33
South West	11	8
England	88	85
Wales	4	4
Scotland	7	9
Northern Ireland	1	2
United Kingdom	100	100

[1] Members of the Forces and Merchant Navy have not been allocated to regions or countries, but together with a small number of civil servants serving overseas, have been included in the figures for England.

[2] Single persons and married couples.

Taxation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, *Official Report*, 27 June, he will state what would be the gains if those are average incomes in each of the following categories for each tax year from 1979-80 onwards relative to the indexed 1978-79 tax system *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the next 2 per cent. to 5 per cent., *(c)* the next 6 per cent. to 10 per cent., *(d)* the next 11 per cent. to 20 per cent., *(e)* the next 21 per cent. to 30 per cent., *(f)* the next 31 per cent. to 40 per cent., *(g)* the next 40 per cent. to 50 per cent. and *(h)* the lower 50 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates are not available in the precise form requested. For each financial year 1979-80 to 1988-89 the table shows the average gain/loss per tax unit compared with the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are based on a provisional 1988-89 income base projected from the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and all tax regimes are indexed to 1988-89 levels according to the statutory formula. The comparison therefore allows for budgetary changes in income tax since 1978-79 but not for changes in definition or any other factors which might affect the income base.

Average gain/loss (−)[3] per tax unit[2] (£ per annum)

Point of income distribution in 1988-89[1]	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Top 1 per cent.	11,230	10,730	9,260	9,420	10,240	12,820	13,000	13,120	13,350	22,680
Top 2 to 5 per cent.	1,760	1,520	810	890	1,290	1,660	1,790	1,980	2,360	3,350
Top 6 to 10 per cent.	800	660	240	300	540	720	810	990	1,330	1,770
Top 11 to 20 per cent.	490	390	170	200	330	440	510	640	910	1,220
Top 21 to 30 per cent.	360	270	90	110	220	310	380	480	680	910
Top 31 to 40 per cent.	290	210	60	70	160	240	300	380	540	740
Top 41 to 50 per cent.	250	180	30	50	130	200	260	320	460	630
Bottom 50 per cent.	120	70	−50	−40	30	80	120	150	210	290
All	410	330	140	160	270	370	430	500	630	910

[1] Based on 20,900,000 single people and married couples expected to pay tax in 1988-89 and excluding 1,100,000 who would pay tax under the revalorised 1978-79 regime.

[2] All information is in terms of tax units, i.e. married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

[3] Average gains are calculated by reference to the estimated number who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime.

Income Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what pecentage of income was paid in tax in 1979 and is paid currently by a married couple with two, three and four children respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Income tax liability depends on the level of income. The information in the table relates to a married man on average earnings for males in full-time employment.

Income tax liability less child benefit[1] as a percentage of gross income for a married man on male average earnings[2]

	1978-79 per cent.	1988-89 per cent.
Married couple with		
Two children aged under 11	14·4	11·0
Three children; two aged under 11, one aged 11-15	10·7	8·1
Four children; two aged under 11, one aged 11-15, one aged 16 or over	6·8	5·1

[1] Deducting child benefit of £2·57 per child per week in 1978-79 and £7·25 in 1988-89.

[2] £92·80 per week in 1978-79 and estimated at £244·70 per week in 1988-89.

The calculations assume that all income is earned income, that the wife has no earnings, and that no reliefs or allowances are claimed other than the married man's allowance.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost to Her Majesty's Treasury of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The cost to the Treasury, excluding the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, was as follows:

Financial year	*£ thousands*
1984	144
1985	301
1986	220
1987	351

The figure for 1983 could be given only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in Her Majesty's Treasury as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Brooke: For the Treasury, excluding the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, there were no such contracts extant as at 1 January 1987.

Water (VAT)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to respond to the European Court of Justice's ruling on value added tax with respect to all parts of the water industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: As I informed the House on 21 June at column 957, the Government are obliged to comply with the Court's ruling that the zero-rating of water and sewerage services supplied to industry and a number of other goods and services is not permitted under European Community law. Supplies to domestic consumers will not be affected and no changes to the VAT law to give effect to the judgment will take effect before 1 April 1989. A consultation paper on this and other aspects of the judgment apart from non-domestic construction was issued by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise on 30 June and placed in the Library.

Civil Service (Staff Relations)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to improve staff relations, arbitration and joint consultation in the Civil Service; and what guidelines are being issued to Civil Service managers.

Mr. Brooke: Collective relations within the Civil Service continue under the long-established machinery of the national Whitley council, in the case of non-industrial civil servants, and the joint co-ordinating committee for Government industrial establishments, in the case of industrial civil servants. Under the Whitley machinery dialogue is continuing with the Council of Civil Service Unions on whether central guidance about consultation might be appropriate.

Local Pay Additions

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to take any steps to rationalise the payment of local pay additions across Departments.

Mr. Brooke: No. It is for Departments to decide, within the scheme's guidelines and subject to Treasury approval, the plan which best meets their individual recruitment and retention needs.

CBI

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the director general of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend meets the director general of the CBI from time to time, and a wide range of subjects are discussed. He has no specific plans to meet him in the foreseeable future.

Member's Questions

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for South Shields can expect to receive an answer to his questions tabled for ordinary written answers on 29 June concerning the value added tax treatment of *(a)* the Apple and Pear Development Council and *(b)* the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave on Tuesday 12 July 1988 at columns *99-100*.

Turkey

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount of debt relief given to Turkey in each of the years between 1978 and the latest year for which figures are available, for both calendar and financial years.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Since 1978 the United Kingdom has rescheduled the following amounts of aid loans and officially guaranteed debts as part of the three multilateral Paris Club rescheduling operations for Turkey:

Amount rescheduled

Year	*£ million*
1978	35.3
1979	11.5
1980	108.1

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will detail for the latest available year the gains to *(a)* individuals and *(b)* income groups for each of the following categories who are claiming mortage interest relief, those earning per year *(a)* less than £5,000, *(b)* £5,001 to £7,500, *(c)* £7,501 to £10,000, *(d)* £10,001 to £12,500, *(e)* £12,501 to £15,000, *(f)* £15,001 to £17,500,

(g) £17,501 to £20,000, *(h)* £20,001 to £22,000, *(i)* £22,501 to £25,000, *(j)* £25,001 to £27,500, *(k)* £30,000 to £40,000, *(l)* £40,001 to £50,000 and *(m)* above £50,000 per year; together with the numbers claiming in each income group.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Provisional estimates for the United Kingdom are given in the table. These are based on projections to 1988-89 of information in the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and the 1985 family expenditure survey. The estimates include mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme which are now subsumed under MIRAS.

Tax units receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1988-89

Range of total income	*Number of tax units[1] with mortgage interest relief[2] (thousands)*	*Average value of relief per mortgagor (£)*	*Cost of relief (£ million)*
Up to £5,000	690	300	210
£5,001 to £7,500	470	360	170
£7,501 to £10,000	830	400	330
£10,001 to £12,500	1,210	450	550
£12,501 to £15,000	1,230	480	590
£15,001 to £17,500	1,020	490	510
£17,501 to £20,000	870	490	430
£20,001 to £22,500	650	500	330
£22,501 to £25,000	460	520	240
£25,001 to £27,500	250	630	160
£27,501 to £30,000	220	630	140
£30,001 to £40,000	440	780	340
£40,001 to £50,000	120	900	110
Over £50,001	140	1,020	140
Total	8,600	490	4,250

[1] Single persons and married couples.
[2] Including about ½ million non-taxpaying tax units.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the cost on revenue each year since 1979 for each of the following tax allowances: *(a)* mortgage interest relief, *(b)* retirement annuity relief, *(c)* approved pension schemes, *(d)* employers' contributions to funded pension schemes, *(e)* exemption of investment income from pension funds and *(f)* exemption of lump-sum payments for pension funds.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* The available information is as follows. Figures for 1983-84 onwards for mortgage interest relief include the cost of relief given to non-taxpayers.

£ million

	Tax cost of relief on					
	Mortgage interest	*Retirement annuity premia*	*Employees contributions to occupational pension schemes*	*Employers contributions to occupational pension schemes[1]*	*Exemption of investment income of occupational pension schemes[2]*	*Exemption of lump sum payments[2]*
1979-80	1,450	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	1,960	150	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	2,050	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	2,150	250	1,300	3,100	2,600	700
1983-84	2,780	250	1,400	3,200	3,000	800
1984-85	3,580	300	1,400	3,300	3,500	1,000
1985-86	4,750	400	1,500	3,300	3,900	1,100
1986-87[3]	4,750	450	1,600	3,100	4,100	1,200
1987-88[3]	4,850	450	1,600	2,900	4,100	1,200

[1] On the basis that employers' contributions are not taxable as a benefit in kind of the employee.
[2] Assuming relief at the basic rate of income tax.
[3] Provisional
n/a = not available.

Customs Procedures

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how British Customs procedures, on trains and elsewhere, differ from those of other European Economic Community countries; and what proposals there are for change.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* Detailed information is not readily available about how Customs procedures here differ from those of other EC countries, but I understand that Customs checks are carried out on board some trains crossing the frontiers of certain other member states.

Section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 provides for Customs and immigration checks to be undertaken on board international trains going beyond London, subject to adequate facilities being provided. Discussions are at present taking place with British Rail about the facilities that would be required.

Harrods Trust

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on whether the Bank of England has recently authorised Harrods Trust to extend its banking activities, and as to where the ultimate control of the trust resides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Harrods Trust Limited is authorised under the Banking Act 1987. The Bank of England has a statutory duty to supervise all institutions authorised under the Act. That supervisory relationship is subject to Banking Act confidentiality and therefore it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this particular institution. The ultimate holding company of Harrods Trust and the registered and beneficial owners of the issued share capital of that company, are set out in the latest audited accounts submitted to Companies House.

DEFENCE

Arms Exporting Countries

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the top five arms exporting countries in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our estimates indicate that, based on the value of new contracts signed, the top five defence exporters for 1987 were:

United States of America
Soviet Bloc
United Kingdom
France
People's Republic of China

RAF Bases (Scotland)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many officers, non-commissioned officers and other ranks are currently stationed at RAF Leuchars;

(2) how many Royal Air Force installations and bases there are in Scotland; and how many officers, non-commissioned officers and other ranks are currently stationed at each of them.

Mr. Freeman: It would not be in the public interest to provide details of the number of personnel in individual defence establishments. As at 1 January 1988 there were 7,950 Royal Air Force personnel stationed at defence establishments in Scotland.

Low Flying

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will immediately order all military forces involved in low-flying exercises to stop all flying below 300 m.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Wessex Helicopters

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and respective ages of Wessex helicopters assigned to the Queen's flight; what other helicopters are in service with the flight; and what plans he has for replacing these aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: There are two Wessex helicopters assigned to the Queen's flight, both of which are 19 years old, which is relatively young compared to other Wessex helicopters in service. There are no plans for replacing the Queen's flight Wessex helicopters in the immediate future. There are no other helicopters in service with the Queen's flight.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and respective ages of Wessex helicopters assigned to search and rescue duties within the United Kingdom, listing their home-bases.

Mr. Freeman: The in-service dates of the Wessex aircraft currently assigned to search and rescue (SAR) duties within the United Kingdom are as follows:

RAF Chivenor—1965 x 1, 1966 x 1
RAF Leuchars—1964 x 1, 1968 x 1
RAF Manston—1965 x 1, 1966 x 1
RAF Valley—1968 x 2
RAF Valley (SAR helicopter Training Unit)
1963 x 2
1964 x 1
1968 x 2
RAF Finningley (SAR helicopter Maintenance Unit)
1963 x 1
1964 x 1
1966 x 2
1967 x 1

In addition, one SAR Wessex helicopter (in-service date 1966) is currently with the manufacturer for maintenance.

Mr. Victor Adams (Compensation)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, the claim for compensation from Mr. Victor Adams was received by his Department; when compensation was paid; in respect of what damage sustained by Mr. Adams the compensation was paid; how many similar claims have been received; what conditions were attached to the compensation paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A claim for compensation for personal injury was received by the Ministry of Defence from solicitors acting for Mr. Victor Adams in March. The claim was dealt with on the basis of legal liability, and was settled on 17 May. It is not our practice to discuss details of individual settlements, the terms of which must be regarded as private between the Department, the claimant and his legal advisers. No other claims for personal injury have been received following the incident in question.

Aero Technologies

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what contracts Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes has received from his Department; what procedures are involved in the issuing of licences to firms undertaking defence or arms-related work in the United Kingdom; and what system of monitoring exits within the procurement division of his Department to ensure that firms satisfy all the statutory and legal obligations and employment conditions;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for the continued operation of Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes as a defence contractor of the Crown investigation into allegations of illegal arms shipments to Iran, of the sale of secret documents and of the sale of laser-guided bombs to the middle east.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no record of any headquarter contract having been placed with this company. The issue of arms export licences is not a matter for my Department. Enforcement of the law is a matter for the police or other relevant authorities. However, any case brought to our notice, would be carefully considered.

Beagling

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Army personnel are permitted to engage in beagling in duty hours.

Mr. Freeman: Beagling is regarded as a recreational activity and is not pursued in duty hours to the detriment of any military task.

Hunting

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Army personnel who hunt in duty hours use privately-owned horses and equipment.

Mr. Freeman: The use of privately owned horses and equipment is permitted.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Army personnel who hunt in off-duty hours are permitted to use Government property.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. Army equipment lent to an individual for participation in a sport is on the basis that there is no additional cost to public funds. In certain cases it is necessary for the individual or club to take out insurance to cover against loss or damage.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions since December 1986 Army personnel have been engaged in fox hunting in duty hours;

(2) on how many occasions since December 1986 Army personnel have engaged in deer hunting in duty hours.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave the hon. Lady on 22 March 1988 at column *114*.

Empty Property

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of empty homes owned by his Department outside security areas in the Greater London area; if he will list them by London borough; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* There are currently 718 empty homes owned by my Department outside security areas in the Greater London area. The figures by London borough are as follows:

	Number
Barnet	86
Croydon	11
Ealing	1
Greenwich	110
Harrow	35
Hendon	190
Hillingdon	103
Hounslow	1
Kensington and Chelsea	3
Kingston-upon-Thames	74
Lambeth	25
Southwark	3
Sutton	2
Wandsworth	10
Westminster	64
	718

Three hundred and fifty-two of the empty properties are either undergoing or awaiting works services, or temporarily empty pending the arrival of new occupants; 232 are in the process of disposal.

THE ARTS

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the cost to his Office of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Luce: The Office of Arts and Libraries was established in July 1983. No management consultants have been employed, but during this period expenditure of £25,691 was incurred in 1987-88 on a computer consultancy for the Government art collection.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Luce: No computer or management consultancy was extant in my Department at 1 January 1987.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Body Samples

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what safeguards there will be for suspects from whom the Royal Ulster Constabulary may wish to take body samples in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill.

Mr. Stanley: I summarised the various safeguards at column 641 of the *Official Report* on 16 June when introducing the relevant amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill.

In addition, I am today placing in the Library of both Houses the code of practice for the identification by the Royal Ulster Constabulary of suspects by body samples, swabs and impressions.

This code of practice is based on chapter 5 (Identification by body samples, swabs and impressions) of the "Code of Practice for the Identification of Persons by Police Officers" issued for England and Wales under section 66 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average waiting time for interviews of sponsors living in the United Kingdom in

relation to applications from relatives living in the Indian sub-continent after relatives have been interviewed abroad, at his Department's Birmingham office.

Mr. Renton: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to her question on 29 June, at column *234*.

Official Secrets

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any public representations and comments in reaction to his recent proposals to reform the official secrets legislation.

Mr. John Patten: By 12 July we had received six letters from members of the public on the proposals set out in our White Paper.

Broadcasting Authorities

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the broadcasting authorities; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend is in regular touch with the chairmen of the BBC and IBA on a wide range of broadcasting matters.

Asylum

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the new procedure regarding those arriving in the United Kingdom seeking refugee asylum.

Mr. Renton: A new procedure is being introduced for the referral of asylum cases to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) on 4 July, at column *419*.

Mr. and Mrs. Vadevalloo (Passports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will inquire into the circumstances of the delay in issuing a passport to Mr. J. Vadevalloo of 147 Brightwell avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex, date of birth 22 January 1948, who submitted his passport for renewal along with his wife's papers and the birth certificates of his three children.

Mr. Renton: Mrs. V. Vadevalloo's passport application was received at the London Passport Office with her husband's passport and the other supporting documents on 6 June. As the form indicated that she did not intend to travel until 8 September, the application was not given any priority. It was included in a batch of applications transferred last week to the Liverpool passport office for processing. Mrs. Vadevalloo's passport, and all the supporting documents were posted to her from Liverpool yesterday.

Secure Prisons

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* all sites which his Department have identified as suitable for new category B secure prisons in the north-west of England.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A large number of possible sites have been considered in the north-west for new category B prisons, as part of a general site search exercise covering the whole of England and Wales. A formal application for planning clearance has been made in respect of a site at Rochdale; and a written approach has been made to the local planning authority in respect of Prison Department land at Kirkham.

Licensing Act 1988

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the proposed dates for the implementation of the various sections of the Licensing Act 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is intended that the commencement date for sections 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 16, 17 and 18 of the Licensing Act 1988 will be 1 August; that the remaining sections will be in force on or before 1 September, with the exception of sections 12 and 15, which are likely to be implemented on 1 March 1989.

Immigration Rules

Mr. Hattersley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many written and oral representations he has received urging him to reform immigration rules on family unity, particularly the primary purpose rule, the sole responsibility rule and the elderly parents rule so as to make it easier for families to be reunited in the United Kingdom; from which organisations and groups these representations have come; and what has been his response to such representations.

Mr. Renton: Over time there have been a number of written representations from hon. and right hon. Members and others, and the subjects have been raised variously at meetings, including one with a delegation led by the right hon. Gentleman last month. There are no present plans to change the relevant provisions of the immigration rules, although their operation is kept under review.

Women's Prison (Lancashire)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any future plans for a women's prison, remand centre and additional probation hostel within the boundaries of the Fylde, Wyre, Blackpool, North and Blackpool, South parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such plans at present.

Prison and Detention Accommodation

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* by county the total numbers of persons who can be accommodated in *(a)* prison *(b)* remand *(c)* youth custody and *(d)* detention centres.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is set out in the table. Figures show the certified normal accommodation in each type of establishment in each county on 31 May 1988, the most recent date for which information is available.

County	*Prisons*	*Remand Centres*	*Youth Custody Centres*	*Detention Centres*
England				
Avon	938	159	—	146
Bedfordshire	155	—	—	—
Berkshire	178	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	429	—	451	—
Cambridgeshire	484	—	—	—
Cheshire	154	606	383	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	150
Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	497	—	—	—
Derbyshire	486	—	—	—
Devon	1,424	53	—	—
Dorset	642	17	707	—
Durham	1,252	195	420	—
East Sussex	588	—	—	—
Essex	231	54	77	—
Gloucestershire	193	—	—	—
Greater London	3,952	719	256	—
Greater Manchester	653	317	—	139
Hampshire	562	55	—	100
Hereford and Worcester	432	163	136	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	484	—
Humberside	699	102	304	—
Isle of Wight	1,043	—	—	—
Kent	1,449	183	463	—
Lancashire	1,910	394	81	—
Leicestershire	1,228	240	372	—
Lincolnshire	551	—	—	202
Merseyside	968	—	—	—
Norfolk	906	60	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	764	—
Northumberland	448	—	300	—
North Yorkshire	134	—	127	—
Nottinghamshire	627	—	304	237
Oxfordshire	127	34	218	—
Shropshire	174	—	360	—
Somerset	173	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	1,001	—	180	—
Staffordshire	1,320	—	360	—
Suffolk	1,235	—	391	118
Surrey	736	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	575	—	—	—
West Sussex	568	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	1,932	95	223	—
Wiltshire	578	—	—	—
Wales				
Clwyd	—	—	—	—
Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	110	120
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	253	85	—	—
West Glamorgan	174	55	—	—
TOTALS	32,059	3,586	7,471	1,212

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, following representations received, he intends to amend the draft code of practice and guidance notes on tape recording of police interviews which were laid before Parliament on 14 June.

Mr. Hurd: I have now considered representations received about the code. I do not intend any change to the code itself but, following representations about one of the guidance notes which, while forming part of the printed document, is not a provision of the code, I have decided to modify guidance note 4M to further clarify the procedure to be followed should a tape break during an interview. I intend to add a new sentence after the second sentence in the note as follows:

"If equipment for copying the unbroken tape is not readily available both tapes should be sealed in the suspect's presence and the interview begun again."

Copies of the revised note have been placed in the Library.

I now intend as soon as possible to seek the approval by resolution of both Houses—as required under section 67 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—to the order made by statutory instrument which will bring the code into operation and which was laid before Parliament

yesterday. The code will not have effect in relation to any area until a further order is made in relation to that area under section 60(1) (b) of the 1984 Act.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Policy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of London Food Commission's food quality charter, he will make it his policy to co-ordinate a national food policy in order to ensure better and safer standards for food in the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: It has always been our policy to ensure that consumers can enjoy a plentiful and varied supply of good quality, unadulterated food at affordable prices. We will continue to pursue this policy taking into account the advice from our independent expert advisory committees.

New Zealand Butter

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe of 11 July, he will give details to the House of the Government's views on New Zealand butter exports to the United Kingdom before communicating them to the European Commission; what steps he has taken to discover the response of the New Zealand Government to the views he will be putting forward; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's general approach on future access for New Zealand butter was set by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the House on 19 May.

I maintain regular contact with Ministers and officials of the New Zealand Government and dairy board. Since the beginning of this year, for example, I have discussed this issue with the New Zealand Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Overseas Trade and the chairman of the New Zealand dairy board, as well as with officials of the New Zealand high commission. I also expect to see the New Zealand Minister for Overseas Trade again on 18 July.

Pigmeat

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Meat and Livestock Commission's proposal that expenditure on pigmeat promotion will fall from £3·4 million in 1988-89 to £2·5 million in 1990-91.

Mr. Donald Thomspon: I understand that the Meat and Livestock Commission's draft corporate plan, covering the period 1988-91, proposed expenditure on pigmeat promotion as indicated. The proposals in the corporate plan finally adopted by the Commission, following consultation with the industry, are £3·6 million in 1988-89 and £2·9 million in 1990-91. This compares with £2·5 million actually spent in 1987-88.

As with cattle and sheep, the MLC intends to reduce the allocation from the general levy income (which, of course, is used to fund other work on pigs, cattle and sheep) to promotion of the individual meats. Pigmeat promotion funds will become more reliant on income from the producer-funded levy. The corporate plan assumes increases in the species promotion levy on pigs, but it is for the Pork and Bacon Promotion Council to recommend —and the commission as a whole to decide—the actual rates of levy. The council, which consists of pig producers and other industry interests, has not yet recommended rates for 1989-90 or 1990-91. It will do so in the knowledge of the level of income likely to be generated.

TRANSPORT

Cross-Channel Ferries

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his Department's policy in future to conduct regular unannounced inspections of all cross-Channel ferries.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department's marine surveyors will continue to carry out random unannounced as well as announced inspections of cross-Channel ferries.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of every passenger safety certificate issued by local marine offices under the authority of his Department to P and O cross-Channel ferries in the last 13 months.

Mr. David Mitchell: The following P and O cross-Channel ferries have been issued with passenger and safety certificates in the last 13 months:

European Clearway, European Endeavour (formerly European Enterprise), European Trader, Pride of Bruges (formerly Pride of Free Enterprise), Pride of Calais, Pride of Canterbury (formerly Free Enterprise VIII), Pride of Dover, Pride of Hythe (formerly Free Enterprise V), Pride of Kent (formerly Spirit of Free Enterprise), Pride of Sandwich (formerly Free Enterprise VI), Pride of Walmer (formerly Free Enterprise VII), Viking Trader, Viking Valliant, Viking Venturer, Viking Viscount, Viking Voyager.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to include in the criteria by which a cross-Channel ferry is judged in any application for a passenger safety certificate the experience of crew members operating the vessel and hours worked by those crew before embarkation of each passenger complement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The procedures for the issue of a passenger and safety certificate to a cross-Channel ferry include a check on the statutory qualifications of the officers and the number of qualified persons required for emergency duties. The allocation of duties and hours worked between members of the crew is in the first instance a matter for the operator.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the structural requirements for shipping vessels, including life-saving equipment, with particular reference to cross-Channel ferries, in regard to the issue of a passenger safety certificate.

Mr. David Mitchell: The structural requirements for cross-Channel ferries are given in the Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) Regulations 1980 or the Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction and Survey) Regulations 1984, as appropriate, depending upon the age of the ship. Details of the life-saving equipment to be carried on such ships are given in the Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) Regulations 1980 or 1986 as appropriate.

Road Markings

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce mandatory reflectorised road markings similar to the scheme in West Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Department is currently working with the British Standards Institute towards the introduction of standards for retroreflective road markings.

Departmental Shareholdings

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all shareholdings in public and private companies still held by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is one 25p special share in the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company acquired in the late 1960s in order to protect the Government's financial interests. It enables the Secretary of State to appoint one director to the board of the company.

The following ordinary shares in public and private companies are held by the Department:

Company	*Shareholding*
British Airways plc	9,837,614 25p ordinary shares
BAA plc	21,828,280 25p ordinary shares
British Channel Tunnel Company plc	4,739,131 £1 ordinary shares
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company	4,137,265 10p ordinary shares

The shares in British Airways and BAA have been retained in order to pay the loyalty bonus in accordance with the terms set out in the prospectuses.

In addition, we retain one £1 special share in each of BAA, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, and Sealink (the rights attaching to these shares are set out in the articles of association of the companies concerned). The Department also has holdings of four shares in each of BA Share Offer and BAA Share Offer, the unlimited companies established to receive application moneys during the flotations of British Airways and BAA.

Quangos and Trading Funds

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations and trading funds reporting to his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1987."

Blind Pedestrians (Road-crossing Aids)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport where the tactile devices used to assist blind pedestrians to cross the road have been deployed; what have been the conclusions drawn from their experimental usage; and how soon he believes the equipment will be brought up to marketable standard.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tactile units have been installed at sites in Birmingham, London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham and Sheffield. The results of a questionnaire for members of blind organisations indicated that the great majority considered the units were easy to find and using the units made them more confident. Timing of the marketability of such equipment is a matter for manufacturers and customers.

Bridges

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost to local authorities and to his Department of the repair of all United Kingdom bridges to the standard recommended by his Department's document entitled "The assessment of Highway Bridges and Structures."

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The bridge census and sample survey report of January 1987 estimated the cost of strengthening bridges on local authority roads in Great Britain to be some £700 million. The corresponding costs of strengthening trunk road bridges in England are estimated to be some £50 million. An element of these costs will fall to the statutory transport undertakings. The costs of strengthening trunk road bridges in Scotland and Wales and all bridges in Northern Ireland, are matters for the respective Secretaries of State. For information on the cost of ongoing maintenance to keep pace with deterioration, I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 11 July 1988 at columns *82-83*.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives his Department has taken since the publication of the document entitled "The Assessment of Highway Bridges and Structures" to improve the quality of United Kingdom bridge stock.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of bridges on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads and follow-up discussions on the results of the census and sample survey of other bridges are now in progress as announced on 24 November 1987, at column *110*.

Roadworks

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the latest available estimate of works costs for schemes listed in the White Paper "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" on which contracts have not yet been let.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. If my hon. Friend has a particular scheme in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Goods Vehicles (Overloading)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider seeking to amend the Road Traffic Acts to enable road hauliers to seek a defence, if prosecuted, of due diligence in cases of overloaded heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Road haulage operators are responsible for ensuring that they and their drivers observe the law on overloading.

Motorways (Capacity)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, he is in a

position to provide the estimates on motorway capacity requested by the hon. Member for Northampton, North using the following illustrative assumptions: midsummer, five miles from the nearest junction, dry conditions, midday; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Not precisely in the conditions suggested. Observations have been made for the highest sustainable flow over a one-hour period in good conditions and with no disruptions such as accidents. For motorways the average speed of the traffic in these conditions was about 50 mph. When heavy goods vehicles constituted about 12 per cent. of the total traffic, the observed flows on three lanes was about 6,000 vehicles per hour.

M1 (Delays)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what was the cause of delays in the south-bound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 15 and 8 between 21.00 hours and 23.59 hours on 10 July; by what date he anticipates road improvements to allow a significant relief in the congestion experienced at such a time and place and under such conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cause appears to have been traffic from the British Grand Prix at Silverstone joining the M1 at junction 15, adding to the already very heavy traffic flows which are usual on Sunday evenings.

The M1 will be relieved with the completion by 1992 of the M40 extension to Birmingham.

Selby Bypass

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what results have been yielded from the soil survey and considerations of landscape and agricultural problems in connection with the proposed Selby bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The soil survey showed that there are extensive peat deposits at the eastern end of the proposed bypass. Measures to deal with this problem are being investigated.

Our scheme plans are being developed taking account of all aspects relevant to the design of a new road, including landscape and agriculture. Additional information has caused us now to consider localised variations to the preferred route.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to publish draft line and side road orders for the proposed Selby bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The programme for this scheme has had to be reviewed in the light of survey findings and other fresh information. A new publication date for draft orders will be set when the implications have been assessed.

Road Safety

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his strategy and priorities for future action on road safety in the light of consultations about the report, "Road Safety: The Next Steps," published in July 1987.

Mr. Channon: There was wide support for the target which I set of reducing casualties by one third by the turn of the century, and for the proposals for redirecting resources to measures which can be shown directly to cut casualties.

Achieving the target depends on close co-operation between central and local government since 70 per cent. of casualties occur on local roads. Recently I agreed with the local authority leaders representing highway authorities new arrangements for taking forward road safety work jointly. We have agreed that the priority should be to reduce casualties among the most vulnerable road users —pedestrians, children, cyclists and motor cyclists—and that we should work together between now and the end of the year to find ways to expand the programme of low-cost road engineering schemes which will most benefit those groups. We will also work on setting local casualty reduction targets.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of a discussion paper which I tabled at the meeting with the local authority leaders which summarises views expressed during the consultation exercise and action taken and planned in respect of each of the review's recommendations.

Flight Delays

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he received from the Civil Aviation Authority on the likelihood of flight delays during the summer months; what number of delayed flights and number of passenger hours' delay were predicted; and how those forecasts relate to actual delays so far.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The authority advised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in March of the intention of the National Air Traffic Services to apply flow management restrictions during the summer months of 1988, with the overall effect of reducing peak hour rates by 10 per cent. compared to those applying in 1987. The delays to flights caused by flow management restrictions imposed in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe could not be quantified accurately in advance. NATS anticipated an increase compared to the average delay of 10 to 15 minutes experienced in 1987. Each summer season's activities are analysed by the CAA, in collaboration with other European air traffic services and representatives of both scheduled and charter airline operators, in order to identify bottlenecks and to seek the most beneficial traffic flows for the following season.

EMPLOYMENT

Factory Inspectorate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average frequency of visits made by the factory inspectorate to workplaces in Wales in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of reported accidents is investigated by the factory inspectorate in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987-88, a total of 5·4 per cent. of accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate in Wales were investigated.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost of a training place on *(a)* the new employment training programme to begin in September and *(b)* the YTS at an annual ratio.

Mr. Cope: The average gross cost to the Exchequer of a training place per year is expected to be about £4,200 on employment training. On the latest available information a full training year on YTS costs an average of £2,600.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list unemployment levels as a percentage of work force for each of the European Economic Community countries and the United States of America, Sweden and Japan for each quarter since the first quarter of 1979.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The tables show standardised unemployment rates published by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development where these are available for each quarter since 1979. The same information is not available for Ireland, Greece, Denmark and Luxembourg but annual averages for 1983-87, and rates for the first quarter of 1988 are given based on similar "harmonised" unemployment rates published by the statistical office of the European Communities.

OECD Standardised unemployment rates (per cent. of labour force) seasonally adjusted

Quarter	United Kingdom	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	United States	Sweden
1979										
1	5·1	8·0	5·7	3·4	7·5	5·4	n/a	7·8	5·8	2·2
2	5·1	8·1	5·8	3·1	7·5	5·4	n/a	8·2	5·6	2·2
3	4·9	8·2	5·9	3·0	7·9	5·4	n/a	8·7	5·8	2·0
4	4·9	8·2	6·0	3·0	7·4	5·3	n/a	9·3	5·8	1·8
1980										
1	5·3	8·2	6·1	2·8	7·6	5·4	n/a	10·1	6·2	1·8
2	5·9	8·4	6·2	2·9	7·3	5·6	n/a	11·1	7·2	2·0
3	6·8	9·0	6·2	3·1	7·6	6·2	n/a	11·4	7·6	1·9
4	7·9	9·4	6·5	3·4	7·5	6·9	n/a	12·2	7·3	2·2
1981										
1	8·8	10·0	6·8	3·8	7·1	7·5	n/a	12·9	7·3	2·2
2	9·6	10·6	7·2	4·2	7·8	8·2	n/a	13·7	7·3	2·2
3	10·2	11·1	7·6	4·6	7·9	8·8	n/a	14·3	7·3	2·5
4	10·6	11·4	7·9	5·3	8·5	9·5	n/a	14·9	8·1	3·0
1982										
1	10·8	12·1	7·9	5·5	8·5	10·2	n/a	15·1	8·7	3·0
2	11·0	12·5	8·0	5·9	8·3	11·1	n/a	15·5	9·3	3·0
3	11·5	12·7	8·2	6·3	8·5	11·7	n/a	16·1	9·8	3·4
4	11·7	13·1	8·3	7·0	8·5	12·4	n/a	16·5	10·5	3·1
1983										
1	12·3	11·7	8·2	7·7	8·9	11·5	n/a	16·8	10·2	3·3
2	12·5	11·9	8·2	8·1	9·5	12·1	7·3	16·9	9·9	3·5
3	12·6	12·3	8·3	8·1	9·2	12·1	8·3	17·4	9·2	3·6
4	12·4	12·4	8·3	8·0	9·6	12·3	8·0	17·8	8·4	3·4
1984										
1	11·9	12·2	9·2	7·0	10·1	12·2	8·1	19·0	7·8	3·2
2	11·7	12·2	9·6	7·1	10·0	12·2	8·3	19·8	7·4	3·2
3	11·6	12·1	9·8	7·1	9·7	11·7	8·5	20·3	7·3	3·1
4	11·6	11·9	10·1	7·1	9·8	11·2	8·7	21·1	7·2	3·0
1985										
1	11·4	11·6	10·2	7·2	10·0	10·9	8·4	21·1	7·2	3·0
2	11·2	11·4	10·2	7·3	9·9	10·7	8·7	21·5	7·2	2·9
3	11·1	11·2	10·2	7·1	10·2	10·5	8·2	21·5	7·1	2·8
4	11·1	11·2	10·2	7·0	10·5	10·3	8·9	21·5	7·0	2·7
1986										
1	11·1	11·2	10·1	6·8	10·6	10·2	8·9	21·3	6·9	2·8
2	11·2	11·2	10·3	6·5	10·9	10·0	8·7	21·1	7·1	2·7
3	11·3	11·1	10·5	6·4	10·9	9·8	8·3	20·9	6·9	2·6
4	11·2	11·2	10·5	6·3	n/a	9·7	7·9	20·7	6·8	2·6
1987										
1	11·0	11·2	10·6	6·4	n/a	9·6	7·6	20·7	6·5	2·0
2	10·6	11·1	10·7	6·5	n/a	9·6	7·1	20·2	6·2	1·9
3	10·0	10·9	10·6	6·5	n/a	9·4	6·8	20·0	5·9	1·9
4	9·5	10·6	10·4	6·5	n/a	9·5	6·4	19·6	5·8	1·7
1988										
1	9·0	10·4	10·4	6·5	n/a	9·5	6·5	19·4	5·6	1·7

Source: OECD Quarterly Labour Force Statistics.

"Harmonised" rates compiled by SOEC (per cent. of civilian labour force)

Annual averages

	Ireland	*Greece*	*Denmark*	*Luxembourg*
1983	15·2	9·0	9·5	3·6
1984	17·0	9·3	9·2	3·0
1985	18·4	8·7	7·6	2·9
1986	18·5	8·2	5·8	2·7
1987	19·2	8·0	5·9	3·1
1988[1]	18·9	n/a	6·2	3·0

[1] Quarter—March.
Source: Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC).

Aero Technologies

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from employees of Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes on the non-payment of salaries and wages, redundancy payments and dismissal.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will direct the Health and Safety Executive to investigate the conditions under which 2·5 tonnes of high explosives are stored at the Glenrothes factory of Aero Technologies, in the light of the current employee sit-in.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is aware of the situation at the Glenrothes factory and is satisfied with the current safety and security arrangements at the site.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will prosecute the directors and owners of Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes for breaches of the Employment Acts relating to non-payment of salaries and wages.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no power to do so. Employees who believe that they are owed wages or salaries should seek redress in the civil courts.

Working Women

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of full-time working women in the northern region receive less than £100 a week.

Mr. Lee: The available information is published in table 13 of part A of the report on the new earnings survey 1987.

WALES

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to take to ensure the proportion of gross domestic product spent in Wales on the National Health Service is increased to the levels prevailing in the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Grist: This question appears to be based on a mistaken premise. In 1985—the latest year for which comprehensive information is available—the mean level of GDP spent on public sector health care in member states of the European Community (excluding Luxembourg) was 5·5 per cent. while the proportion of GDP spent in Wales on the NHS in 1985-86 was 7·3 per cent. Since 1985-86 the Government have increased spending on the NHS in Wales by nearly 16 per cent. in real terms.

House Buyers, Gwynedd

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department is taking to help first-time house seekers in Gwynedd to secure a house to buy or rent at a price within their reach.

Mr. Grist: We require the Housing Corporation to take full account of the needs of rural areas. It has invested on average 25 per cent. of its allocation in housing for rent and low-cost home ownership schemes in such areas. In Gwynedd in particular in 1987-88 the corporation approved schemes to provide some 150 units of accommodation out of 650 in rural Wales. In the current year, with additional private finance, the allocation will provide over 280 units in Gwynedd. In addition, we have encouraged local authorities to use their considerable powers to provide homes for local people. Dwyfor district council has received additional allocations totalling £0·5 million for this purpose over the last three years.

New Houses

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each district authority in Wales, the number of new houses built in each of the last 10 years separately distinguishing (a) private and (b) non-private housing.

Mr. Grist: The required information on private and non-private housing completions from 1978 to 1986 is published in "Local Housing Statistics" copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Data for 1987 are given in the following table:—

1987 Housebuilding completions

Welsh districts[1]	*Public sector*	*Private sector*
Alyn and Deeside	49	208
Colwyn	10	241
Delyn	—	189
Glyndwr	9	116
Rhuddlan	42	109
Wrexham Maelor	102	250
Carmarthen	66	169
Ceredigion	52	149
Dinefwr	30	69
Llanelli	70	51
Preseli	57	331
South Pembroke	—	166
Blaenau Gwent	67	59
Islwyn	64	25
Monmouth	15	376
Newport	42	335
Torfaen	20	219
Aberconwy	—	255
Arfon	48	110
Dwyfor	35	69
Meirionydd	1	19
Ynys Môn	9	166
Cynon Valley	40	60
Merthyr Tydfil	18	127
Ogwr	51	438
Rhondda	8	15

Welsh districts[1]	Public sector	Private sector
Rhymney Valley	14	213
Taff Ely	66	330
Brecknock	37	84
Montgomeryshire	8	207
Radnor	12	130
Cardiff	29	1,458
Vale of Glamorgan	34	457
Lliw Valley	33	160
Neath	38	94
Port Talbot (Afan)	28	15
Swansea	75	361
Cwmbran	—	54
Newtown	—	91
WALES TOTAL	1,279	7,975

[1] Including Government Departments.

Population Statistics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each of the next 10 years at each level of geographical disaggregation available to his Department the projected population for Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Population projections are made for counties of Wales. These are conterminous with district health authorities except for Dyfed, where separate assessments are made for East Dyfed and Pembrokeshire.

The projections currently available are made on the basis of the populations in 1985 and are given in the following table. The most recent information at the all-Wales level for 1986 suggests however that these estimates are on the low side. Projections based on 1987 information will, it is hoped, be made available towards the end of the year.

1985-Based Population Projections: Counties and District Health Authorities 1988-97

000's

Year	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Pembrokeshire	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan
1988	401·7	227·5	111·2	338·7	439·9	235·4	531·8	112·2	396·6	360·4
1989	403·2	227·9	111·8	339·8	440·1	236·1	531·5	112·5	397·5	359·4
1990	404·8	228·4	112·5	340·9	440·3	236·9	531·4	112·9	398·5	358·4
1991	406·6	228·9	113·3	342·1	440·6	237·8	531·4	113·2	399·5	357·4
1992	408·3	229·4	114·0	343·4	441·0	238·7	531·5	113·6	400·7	356·5
1993	410·2	230·0	114·7	344·7	441·4	239·7	531·7	113·9	401·8	355·5
1994	412·0	230·5	115·5	346·0	441·7	240·6	532·9	114·3	402·9	354·6
1995	413·9	231·0	116·2	347·2	442·0	241·6	532·1	114·6	404·0	353·6
1996	415·7	231·5	116·9	348·5	442·2	242·6	532·2	115·0	405·1	352·5
1997	417·5	232·0	117·6	349·6	442·3	243·5	532·1	115·3	406·0	351·4

Contaminated Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what steps he has taken to ensure that the tipping of contaminated wastes in the vicinity of Dark and Chapel lanes will not affect adversely the watercourses, the pastures, the crops and the livestock of adjacent fields; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take steps to compensate residents in Chapel and Dark lanes consequent upon the impact of tipping upon their general environment; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will meet residents of Chapel lane and Dark lane, near Rossett, Clwyd, to discuss the tipping of contaminated soils from Holland, unmarked drums and other substances; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will establish tests to ensure that the tipping of substances near Chapel lane and Dark lane is not injurious to the lungs, eyes and nervous systems of nearby residents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to him on 11 July at column *18*.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales from what company or companies he has received applications to enlarge the extent of tipping at Chapel and Dark lanes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I have received no such applications. Any application would be made to the appropriate local authority.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has assessed the sufficiency of local or regional monitoring of the provision of services for mentally handicapped persons in Wales.

Mr. Grist: All county joint planning teams, which are responsible for the planning of services for people with mental handicap supported by funding made available under the all-Wales handicap strategy, assess the progress made in the development of those services. The Department meets the county joint planning teams annually to discuss the progress and planning of mental handicap services. Additionally, research teams based in the university of Wales college of medicine and the university college of North Wales, Bangor are undertaking an extensive programme of formal research to evaluate the development of mental handicap services; and the question of a system of independent review of these services is to be considered by the newly reconstituted all-Wales advisory panel on the development of services for people with a mental handicap.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in what way regional health authority strategic plans embody a commitment to the continuation of mental handicap nurse training in Wales.

Mr. Grist: District health authorities in Wales will shortly be formulating their second round strategic plans, and guidelines for their production will be issued in the spring 1989. Authorities will be expected to continue to

develop services for people with mental handicaps, and support for and continuation of mental handicap nurse training will be an integral component in that process.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provisions regions are making, as services move out into the community, to continue their commitment to mental handicap nurse training in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The strategy for nursing in Wales published by the Department in 1987 had as one of its objectives the development of a comprehensive system of progressional education to enable the profession to meet the changing needs of the population in Wales.

The change of emphasis in the care of people with mental handicaps as established in the all-Wales mental handicap strategy has demonstrated the need for different education and training for learners and further education for staff already trained. Health authorities are expected to take full account of this in the development of community based services for those with a mental handicap, and the issue is being monitored with authorities through the annual review process.

Information about health authorities' current proposals for future mental handicap training is currently being collated at the all-Wales level through a manpower resource planning exercise involving all health authorities and will be available later in the year.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurses entered into mental handicap nurse training for each of the past five years in each region in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Information relating to entrants into mental handicap nurse training is held by the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and is available by district health authority for four years as shown in the following table:

Nurses entering mental handicap training

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Gwent				
Registered	12	9	13	13
Enrolled	6	5	7	0
Gwynedd				
Registered	14	6	6	0
Enrolled	8	0	6	0
Mid Glamorgan				
Registered	15	14	16	21
Enrolled	8	7	8	0
Powys				
Registered	0	0	0	0
Enrolled	11	6	12	6
South Glamorgan				
Registered	5	6	8	13
Enrolled	12	0	7	0

Notes:

1. Clwyd, East Dyfed, Pembrokeshire and West Glamorgan are not approved by the Welsh national board to run mental handicap registered or enrolled nurse training.
2. Years quoted in the table above are 1 April to 31 March.

Physiotherapy and Speech Therapy

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many pupils, respectively, in schools in each county of Wales, with statements under section 7(1) of the Education Act 1981, are in receipt of physiotherapy provisions as a result of the need indicated in that statement; and what proportion of those in need in each county that number constitutes;

(2) how many pupils, respectively, in schools in each county in Wales, with statements under section 7(1) of the Education Act 1981, are in receipt of speech therapy provision as a result of the need indicated in that statement; and what proportion of those in need in each county that number constitutes.

Mr. Grist: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to reduce the shortage of speech therapists; if he will initiate measures to make the career of speech therapists more attractive to potential entrants; if he will make available extra moneys to ensure that the salary levels and status of speech therapists are improved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The manpower resource planning exercise currently being undertaken by all health authorities is intended to provide details of future requirements at the all Wales level in a number of staff groups, including speech therapy. When that exercise has been completed later this year, consideration will be given to what action should be taken to meet those requirements. A new pay and grading structure for speech therapists was introduced with effect from 1 January 1988. The management side of the scientific and professional council took account of the recruitment difficulties affecting the profession nationally and believes that the new structure will bring considerable benefits to the profession. In the current year the management side has offered a 5·5 per cent. increase in pay effective from 1 April 1988. The staff side is at present consulting its membership on this offer.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will launch a campaign to be handled by the careers service promoting careers in physiotherapy and speech therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Work is currently in hand on the preparation of revised recruitment literature promoting careers in the National Health Service generally. Within Wales, the manpower steering group established by the Department is giving consideration to measures to promote and encourage recruitment into the National Health Service in Wales. The need to target specific staff groups will be considered in the light of the outcome of the manpower resource planning exercise currently being undertaken by health authorities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call an all-Wales conference on speech therapy to discuss the deficiencies in speech therapy provision in schools in Wales and to prepare proposals to enhance provisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office has asked health authorities through the manpower steering group to estimate how many speech therapists will be required by the National Health Service over the next 10 years and this should enable action to be taken where appropriate to meet those requirements.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the speech therapy units in Clwyd

local education authority county primary schools and specialist schools for the handicapped in Clwyd to discuss with parents the current shortage of qualified staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any present plans to do so.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to make it a statutory right for children to have sufficient speech therapy provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We are not convinced that the introduction of a statutory right would lead to a significant improvement in the provision of speech therapy to children.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ascertain from local education authorities and health authorities the availability of physiotherapists' service for handicapped pupils in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The provision of physiotherapy for handicapped pupils is best determined by district health authorities in the light of their knowledge of local circumstances. The Welsh Office has asked health authorities to estimate how many physiotherapists will be required by the National Health Service over the next five to 10 years and this should enable action to be taken where appropriate to meet the requirements.

Earnings

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of working men in Wales who earned less than £100 per week in the year 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Latest available data for Wales from the new earnings survey, April 1987 show that 6·4 per cent. of full-time male employees on adult rates (whose pay for the survey pay-period was not affected by absence) earned less than £100 per week.

Young Persons (Employment)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of young people left school in Wales and went directly into work at 16 years of age without training in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available.

Sports Halls and Swimming Pools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of local authority (i) sports halls and (ii) local authority swimming pools in each of the counties of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The number of local authority sports centres and swimming pools in each of the counties of Wales is as follows:

County	*Sport centres*	*Swimming pools*
Clwyd	15	17
Dyfed	10	17
Gwent	23	19
Gwynedd	7	9
Mid Glamorgan	17	18
Powys	8	8
South Glamorgan	11	8
West Glamorgan	6	7

Source: Sports Council for Wales.

Sports Council

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cash grant in real terms to the Sports Council Wales in each of the years since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The grant-in-aid allocation to the Sports Council for Wales since 1979, adjusted by the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator at 1988-89 prices, is as follows:

	£
1979-80	3,349,000
1980-81	3,519,000
1981-82	3,614,000
1982-83	3,769,000
1983-84	3,482,000
1984-85	3,430,000
1985-86	3,812,000
1986-87	4,135,000
1987-88	4,355,000
1988-89	4,199,000

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much capital spending has occurred under (i) Sports Council for Wales and (ii) local authorities Wales on sports facilities in each of the years since 1979: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Sports Council for Wales and local authorities' gross capital expenditure on sports facilities was as follows:

£ million

Year	*Sports Council for Wales expenditure*[1]	*Local authorities expenditure*[2]
1979-80	0·831	4·141
1980-81	0·966	9·849
1981-82	1·118	7·334
1982-83	1·367	8·349
1983-84	0·962	12·101
1984-85	0·731	15·207
1985-86	0·759	11·639
1986-87	1·267	13·135
1987-88	1·138	n/a

[1] Includes grants and loans to local clubs etc. as well as the Sports Council for Wales' capital expenditure on its own facilities.
[2] Includes expenditure on sports/recreation centres, golf courses, playing fields/sports grounds and swimming pools.
n/a—Not available.

Farm Inspectors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farm inspectors were employed by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in 1980 and 1986; what is the figure for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Officers of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service visit farms for a variety of purposes, including the provision of technical

advice to farmers at their request as well as for certain statutory purposes. There is no distinct category of ADAS farm inspector as such.

Rating Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his latest estimate of the number of people liable to pay the poll tax in (i) each of the counties of Wales, (ii) each of the districts and boroughs of Wales and (iii) each of the parliamentary constituencies of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Most adults in Wales will be liable to pay the community charge. At this stage, estimates of those exempt from the charge by county, district or parliamentary constituency are not available.

The estimated number of adults in each county and district in Wales is given in the following table.

Estimates of the number of adults in each parliamentary constituency in Wales are not available other than from the 1981 census.

OPCS mid-year 1986 estimates of adult population by county and district in Wales

	Adult population OOO'
Clwyd	304·4
Dyfed	261·9
Gwent	335·4
Gwynedd	180·2
Mid Glamorgan	402·3
Powys	87·0
South Glamorgan	300·3
West Glamorgan	278·9
Alyn and Deeside	53·9
Colwyn	40·7
Delyn	49·0
Glyndwr	31·3
Rhuddlan	43·4
Wrexham Maelor	86·1
Carmarthen	42·0
Ceredigion	49·6
Dinefwr	28·9
Llanelli	57·7
Preseli Pembrokeshire	53·4
South Pembrokeshire	30·3
Blaenau Gwent	59·4
Islwyn	50·0
Monmouth	59·4
Newport	98·1
Torfaen	68·5
Aberconwy	41·5
Arfon	40·6
Dwyfor	20·9
Meirionnydd	25·0
Ynys Môn	52·2
Cynon Valley	49·3
Merthyr Tydfil	44·4
Ogwr	101·8
Rhondda	59·4
Rhymney Valley	76·7
Taff Ely	70·7
Brecknock	31·6
Montgomeryshire	38·6
Radnor	16·8
Cardiff	212·6
Vale of Glamorgan	87·7
Port Talbot	38·9
Lliw Valley	46·8
Neath	49·8
Swansea	143·4
Total Wales	2,150·4

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his latest estimate of the average level of poll tax in each of the districts of Wales to be paid by each adult; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Illustrative figures are given in the following table. These estimates are based on present needs assessments which are under review.

1988-89 community charge figures for Wales

Rating authority	*Community charges for 1988-89*	
	Before safety net (£ per adult)	*After safety net (£ per adult)*
Alyn and Deeside	143	176
Colwyn	150	198
Delyn	152	177
Glyndwr	151	155
Rhuddlan	139	170
Wrexham Maelor	155	162
Carmarthen	153	123
Ceredigion	142	136
Dinefwr	138	110
Llanelli	162	137
Preseli Pembrokeshire	138	126
South Pembrokeshire	142	152
Blaenau Gwent	158	116
Islwyn	156	127
Monmouth	147	167
Newport	151	185
Torfaen	153	154
Aberconwy	138	173
Arfon	136	129
Dwyfor	137	160
Meirionnydd	142	158
Ynys Mon	132	154
Cynon Valley	158	108
Merthyr Tydfil	170	124
Ogwr	167	151
Rhondda	159	85
Rhymney Valley	174	139
Taff Ely	165	145
Brecknock	135	131
Montgomeryshire	119	128
Radnor	125	134
Cardiff	112	179
Vale of Glamorgan	123	166
Port Talbot	207	154
Lliw Valley	187	142
Neath	172	141
Swansea	201	192
Wales	151	151

Homeless Persons

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures showing the numbers of housing applications and the numbers officially accepted as homeless in Wales for each year since 1978.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table:

Number of cases accepted and presented 1978-87

Total	*Cases presented*	*Cases accepted*
[1]1978	5,042	3,204
1979	7,084	4,676
1980	8,277	5,446
1981	8,609	5,462
1982	9,061	5,611
1983	9,191	5,008
1984	8,845	4,999
1985	9,206	5,371

Total	Cases presented	Cases accepted
1986	9,861	5,965
1987	8,423	5,294

[1] Data for the first quarter of 1978 are not available. The monitoring of homelessness under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 did not commence in Wales until April 1978.

Welsh Language

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he has received from the working group he established to advise him on issues relating to the Welsh language: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have received valuable advice from the group and had a further useful discussion with it this week.

WDA (Regional Office)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for further consultations with local authorities before the implementation of proposed changes in the Welsh Development Agency regional office boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: *[holding answer 13 July 1988]*: I am assured that the agency will be willing to discuss any further representations made to it.

SCOTLAND

Green Belt

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by region and district the area of land designated as green belt up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Designated green belts in Scotland in 1986 (the latest available information) were as follows:

Region	Green belt	Hectares
Lothian	Lothian	14,600
Grampian	Aberdeen	82,355
Strathclyde/Central	Greater Glasgow	100,000
Strathclyde	Ayr/Prestwick	2,835
	TOTAL SCOTLAND	203,285
Total designated green belt in Scotland in 1979		218,470

Note: Between 1979 and 1986 the Dundee green belt (14,800 hectares) was de-designated and became the Dundee Countryside Policy Area. A breakdown of the 1979 figure is not available.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by region and district, the sites designated as of special scientific interest, and the area of each, up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. I shall however write to the hon. Member giving a list by region of all sites of special scientific interest at 31 December 1987. The list will show the area of each site and whether the site had been notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by November 1981. I shall also send a list, by region, of sites of special scientific interest which had been notified by 30 November 1981, but which have subsequently been denotified. Copies of these lists will be placed in the Library of the House.

Crown Classification Scheme

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the results of any consumer research regarding public understanding of the crown classification schemes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish tourist board has not to date undertaken any specific research into public awareness of the crown classification and grading scheme. I understand that the board plans to undertake research later this year by which time the public will have had reasonable experience of the scheme's operation.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has assessed the sufficiency of local or regional monitoring of provision of services for mentally handicapped persons in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department has nearly completed the second round of monitoring health boards' implementation of the priorities for the Scottish Health Service set out in the report "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties" (SHAPE). That report recommended inter alia that high priority should be given to the provision of services for the mentally handicapped. Expenditure on those services rose by 6 per cent. in real terms from 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Mental Handicap Nurses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what way health boards' strategic plans embody a commitment to the continuation of mental handicap nurse training in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The strategic plans of Scottish health boards do not contain specific commitments to mental handicap nurse training. However, as part of the "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties" monitoring programme, plans include a nursing manpower analysis (including the mental handicap programme) for a projected period of 10 years. From this, health boards are able to determine their future staffing recruitment and training requirements. In addition the Scottish Home and Health Department has had discussions with health boards about target figures for recruitment to mental handicap nurse training programmes and these target figures will be kept under review. When health boards submit proposals for new capital developments such as new wards or units for the improvement of mental handicap service, the Scottish Home and Health Department has to be fully satisfied that appropriately trained nursing staff will be available to commission and operate the new facilities before approval will be given.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many community mental handicap nurses are employed by each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not at present collected centrally. Arrangements are being made to do so as part of a more general development of manpower and personnel management information systems in health boards.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions regions are making, as services move out into the community, to continue their commitment to mental handicap nurse training in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The staff of regional authorities involved in dealing with the mentally handicapped are mostly social workers. Mental handicap nurse training is provided at health boards' colleges of nursing and midwifery: curricula and standards of training are laid down and monitored by the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland. The Scottish Home and Health Department and the social work services group of the Scottish Education Department are providing £200,000 to fund a three-year project to establish guidelines for shared training and work experience for nurses and social work staff working with mentally handicapped people. The Scottish Home and Health Department has also had discussions with health boards about target figures for recruitment to mental handicap nurse training programmes and these target figures will be kept under review.

Mental Handicap Training

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses have entered into mental handicap training for each of the past five years in each region in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held centrally in the form requested. The information readily available relates to Scotland as a whole and is given in the table. I shall write further to the hon. Member when figures for each health board are available.

Entrants to mental handicap nursing training

	Number
1983-84	148
1984-85	192
1985-86	178
1986-87	155
1987-88	194

Teachers

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of vacancies for teachers in (i) mathematics, (ii) history, (iii) English, (iv) sciences and (v) physical education in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Glasgow, for each year since 1974.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on vacancies for teachers is not available. Information on excesses and deficits of secondary school teachers is collected, and is published in an annual statistical bulletin. The most recent bulletin in the series is No 3/C1/1988, a copy of which was sent to the hon. Member. A copy is also held in the House of Commons Library.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total pay bill for nurses in Scotland in 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisionally £621·3 million, on the basis of health board accounts submitted but not yet audited. This figure includes the pay costs of nursing staff not directly involved with patient care at ward level.

Homelessness

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the estimated costs to public funds of *(a)* keeping homeless families in hotels and *(b)* building new council houses for those families.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures showing the numbers of housing applications and the numbers officially accepted as homeless in Scotland for each year since 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Homelessness: Applicant Households, Scotland

Period of application year ending 31 March	*Number of applications*	*Number assessed by local authorities as homeless*
1979	16,035	7,493
1980	15,460	7,440
1981	14,868	7,025
1982	15,955	8,270
1983	16,539	8,664
1984	15,516	8,086
1985	20,461	9,912
1986	23,647	11,015
1987[1]	24,726	10,321

[1] provisional.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures showing the total expenditure on local authority housebuilding for each year since 1979 in terms of (i) current prices, (ii) 1988 prices and (iii) share of gross domestic product.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is available only in terms of financial years and in that form is set out in the table. Figures for earlier years are not readily available on a consistent basis and the last year for which final figures are available is 1986-87.

Local Authority Expenditure on Housebuilding

£ million

(1) Year	*(2) Cash Prices*[1]	*(3) 1988-89 Constant Prices*	*(4) Col. (2) expressed as per cent. of GDP*[2]
1981-82	66	93	0·36
1982-83	67	87	0·33
1983-84	68	85	0·31
1984-85	64	77	0·28
1985-86	62	70	0·25
1986-87	63	69	0·23

[1] Figures shown are based on housing capital returns submitted by local authorities.

[2] Based on gross domestic product at factor costs, a measure which excludes taxes on expenditure and the effect of subsidies, and taken from "Regional Accounts" prepared annually by Central Statistical Office.

Community Service Orders

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many community service orders have been made by Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district court in each of the last two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

Nuclear Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the course of his meeting on 14 June with Mr. Baker of UK Nirex Ltd., he was advised by Mr. Baker when Nirex expects to be in a position to recommend to the Government one or more sites worthy of further investigation to assess their suitability as nuclear waste disposal facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that Nirex hopes to be in a position to report the outcome of its consultation exercise and to make recommendations by early next year.

Nirex

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the course of his meeting with Mr. John Baker of UK Nirex Ltd. on 14 June, he was advised whether Nirex was conducting preliminary investigations in Scotland on *(a)* the land holdings of its partners *(b)* other publicly owned land and *(c)* privately owned land; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No physical investigations are taking place at any site in Scotland, but Nirex is understood to be continuing with desk studies of the suitability of various areas of land throughout the United Kingdom, in order to make recommendations to the Government in due course.

Ambulances

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the expenditure on the Scottish ambulance service for Scotland as a whole and for each health board area for each of the past five years at constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scottish ambulance service operational areas do not coincide with health board boundaries and it is not possible to calculate expenditure for each health board area. The expenditure for the whole of Scotland over the past five years at constant 1986-87 prices calculated by applying the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator, is as follows:

Year	*Expenditure* £
1983-84	25,867,460
1984-85	25,747,847
1985-86	25,677,434
1986-87	28,011,143
[1]1987-88	30,372,439

[1] Provisional.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many one-man ambulances there are still operating in each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Single-manned ambulances are not a specific type of vehicle. Ambulances are crewed by one or two members of staff in the light of operational circumstances, particularly the mobility and physical condition of the expected patients. There are long-standing arrangements to reinforce a single crew member if necessary.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ambulances there are per 1,000 of the population in *(a)* Scotland as a whole and *(b)* for each health board area; and what is the equivalent ratio for England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In December 1987 (the latest figure available) the number of ambulances per 1,000 of population in Scotland was 0.17. The number in each health board area is not readily available, since Scottish ambulance service operational areas do not coincide with health board boundaries. The ambulance service in England and Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants were brought to Westminster from Scotland for the debate on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order on 11 July; and what was the cost to public funds.

Mr. Lang: Four, three of whom also had other unrelated business which required their presence in London. Total travel and associated costs are estimated at £850.

Wetlands

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the classification of further sites in Scotland as special protection areas, under article 4 of European Community directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds, and the listing of further sites in Scotland as wetlands of international importance, under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance, especially as waterfowl habitat.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that the Government have accepted the recommendation of the Nature Conservancy Council that the following sites of special scientific interest should be classified as special protection areas (SPA) under the directive and, except as indicated, listed as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

Site of special scientific interest	*International designation*
Gruinart Flats, Islay	(SPA), Ramsar
Eilean Na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss), Islay	(SPA), Ramsar
Bridgend Flats, Islay	(SPA), Ramsar
Laggan Peninsula, Islay	(SPA)
Gladhouse Reservoir, Midlothian	(SPA), Ramsar
Din Moss—Hoselaw Loch, Roxburgh	(SPA), Ramsar

Aero Technologies

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the implications for employment prospects and the local economy of the difficulties facing Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes; and if he will meet the directors to discuss the firm's problems.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the numbers involved at the company's plants in Cumbernauld and Glenrothes are fewer than 100. These losses have to be seen in the context of increases of 944 and 107 in net employment in each of these new towns respectively during 1987-88. My officials are always ready to meet representatives of companies in Scotland who consider that the schemes of assistance operated by my Departments are relevant to their circumstances.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much regional industrial grant Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes has received for its factories, plant or equipment; what steps have been taken to secure the plant and machinery against the possibility of removal; and what investigations are being carried out into its original application for grant assistance.

Mr. Lang: The amount of regional development grant paid to Allivane International Ltd., now known as Aero Technologies in respect of its activities at Cumbernauld was published in *British Business* on 4 September 1987. RDG is not available in Glenrothes new town, an intermediate area. The disposal of assets at Cumbernauld is a matter for the company. My Department is monitoring the situation to ensure full compliance with the conditions attached to the payment of grant.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Christmas Bonuses

96. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many £10 Christmas bonuses were paid to pensioners at Christmas 1987.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that about 11·5 million payments were made to pensioners and other qualifying beneficiaries in December 1987. Figures will be available with the publication of the national insurance fund and appropriation accounts later this year.

Community Health Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of *(a)* the total budget and *(b)* the revenue budget per hospital and community health services was allocated to community health services in each regional health authority in England during 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: Percentage figures for each region, derived from expenditure information recorded in the 1986-87 annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England, are shown in the table.

Expenditure on community health services (CHS)—Proportions of total hospital and community health services (HCHS) expenditure

Region	*Proportion[1] of revenue and capital expenditure on CHS to total HCHS revenue and capital expenditure* *Per cent.*	*Proportion[2] of revenue expenditure on CHS to total HCHS revenue expenditure* *Per cent.*
Northern	9·5	9·8
Yorkshire	9·1	9·6
Trent	10·5	11·1
East Anglian	9·8	10·0
North West Thames	10·1	10·5
North East Thames	8·6	8·8
South East Thames	10·5	10·5
South West Thames	9·7	10·0
Wessex	9·9	10·7
Oxford	11·0	11·6
South Western	10·5	10·7
West Midlands	10·5	10·9
Mersey	9·8	10·1
North Western	11·1	11·6

[1] The expenditure figures used for CHS (that is, from the annual accounts) cover main services expenditure but exclude elements of broadly related expenditure (for example, on projects jointly financed with local authorities).

[2] Expenditure on HCHS represents total expenditure by the health authorities (including that on ambulance, blood transfusion, mass radiography and other services).

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the average expenditure on community health services per head of the population aged under four years, five to 14 years, 15 to 64 years, 64 to 75 years and over 75 years for each regional health authority in England in 1986-87;

(2) what was the expenditure per head of the population aged under four years, five to 14 years, 15 to 64 years, and 75 years and over on community health services *(a)* in 1979-80, and *(b)* in 1986-87 at constant prices.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not available.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of *(a)* the total National Health Service budget and *(b)* the revenue budget for the hospital and community health services was allocated to the community health services for each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: The percentage allocation of gross current expenditure on community health services of *(a)* the total National Health Service budget and *(b)* the revenue budget for the hospital and community health services for the years 1979-80 to 1986-87 is shown in the table.

(Percentage) England

	(a)	*(b)*
1979-80	6·6	8·4
1980-81	6·3	8·7
1981-82	6·4	8·7
1982-83	6·4	8·9
1983-84	6·4	9·0
1984-85	6·5	9·4
1985-86	6·8	9·8
1986-87	7·1	10·2

Note: Figures relate to current gross expenditure.

Community Medical Staff

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of whole-time equivalent community medical staff employed in the National Health Service in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: The whole-time equivalent numbers of medical staff in the community health services in England were:

	whole-time equivalent
30 September 1979	2,057
30 September 1986	2,186

Chiropodists

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each district health authority in England, the number of whole-time equivalent chiropodists per 1,000 of the population aged 65 years and over in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: It would not be meaningful to provide the ratios of staff to population in specific age groups as chiropodists provide care to patients of all ages.

Nurses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in what way regional health authority strategic plans embody a commitment to the continuation of mental handicap nurse training in England.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authority strategic plans set out authorities' long-term objectives. Progress toward these objectives, including the continued development of community and district-based services for mentally handicapped people, is monitored through the annual accountability review process and analysis of short-term programmes. These include discussion of regional plans for mental handicap nurse training, information on which is collected in the short-term programmes.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions regions are making, as services move out into the community, to continue their commitment to mental handicap nurse training in England.

Mr. Newton: It is for regional and district health authorities to determine the patterns of provision for mental handicap nurse training in the light of their local needs and resources. Details of these training arrangements are not held centrally.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions his Department has had with local authority social services departments regarding the employment of nurses with mental handicap training; and what guidelines have been issued to ensure that this kind of training plays an integral role in planning services.

Mr. Newton: It is for the local and health authorities co-ordinating their plans for the mental handicap services for which they have statutory responsibility to agree as necessary appropriate arrangements for the selection, employment and training of care staff. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 16 March at column *615*on advice on the developing role of mental handicap nurses in the chief nursing officer's letter of 18 December 1988 (CNO(85)5).

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which schools of nurse training have closed in the past two years.

Mr. Newton: No schools of nursing in England have closed in the past two years.

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has assessed the sufficiency of local or regional monitoring of the provision of services for mentally handicapped persons in England.

Mrs. Currie: The Department assesses the sufficiency of local and regional monitoring in a number of ways and I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 30 March 1988 at columns *547-48*.

Orthotic Services

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the results of the National Health Service Management Consultancy Services study of orthotic services in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: This report is in the process of being finalised by the study team. It is hoped to go out to consultation on the contents of the report by the autumn.

NHS Review

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the organisations which have been invited to make submissions to the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 17 March at column *677*.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of what background research has been commissioned for the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Moore: The review is able to draw on the extensive range of background material that already exists, including some which has been stimulated by the announcement of the review itself.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the organisations which have made submissions to the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) and for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) on 12 July at columns *152-53*.

OPCS Office (Asbestos)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is safe for the staff and public to use the office

of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys at St. Catherine's House; and whether he proposes to take any action regarding the asbestos there.

Mrs. Currie: Following recent building work in St. Catherine's house traces of asbestos fibres have been identified in a small number of rooms where certain parts of the internal fabric of the building had been damaged.

A programme of testing all such rooms has been undertaken as a matter of urgency and, when tests have proved positive, rooms have been closed to staff, cleaned by a specialist company and not reopened until further tests have proved negative. No traces of asbestos fibres have been found in those rooms to which the public have free access.

The Property Services Agency is being consulted on the prevention of any recurrence of this problem in future.

Rating Reform

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if there will be deductions from income support for claimants who do not pay their community charge.

Mr. Portillo: Paragraph 6 of schedule 4 to the Local Government Finance Bill (as amended on Report) provides for regulations which will enable deductions to be made from income support if a magistrates court has issued a liability order for community charge payments in England and Wales. Schedule 12 makes parallel provision for Scotland.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the name and address of persons who claim income support but not a community charge rebate will be given to the local community charge registration officer.

Mr. Portillo: No. The names and addresses of those who are awarded income support but who do not claim a community charge rebate will be given to the community charge registration officer.

Departmental Forms

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much it has cost his Department in photocopying and duplicating costs since form A14BL has been out of print.

Mr. Portillo: Form A14BL went out of stock on 2 March 1988. Reprint and subsequent distribution was completed by 13 July 1988. While out of stock, the total additional cost of printing and photocopying for regional and local offices was approximately £4,300.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of printing form MF36A print run April 1988; and how much it cost to correct.

Mr. Portillo: The April 1988 costs of printing form MF36A were £2,340·43. It contained a very obvious single-word printing error which is being put right clerically in local offices at minimal cost.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new forms were created as a result of the Social Security Act 1986; how many were abolished; and how many had to be amended.

Mr. Portillo: The reforms introduced in April 1988, as a result of the Social Security Act 1986, required the introduction of 100 new forms for use by local offices including four transitional forms. Some 296 other forms used by local offices were amended and 131 existing forms were abolished. Information on forms introduced, amended, or abolished earlier than April 1986, as a result of the Social Security Act 1986, could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Department Offices

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what offices of his Department have become vacant as a result of the move to Richmond house.

Mr. Moore: The move of some 480 staff to Richmond house has left space in Alexander Fleming house, Friars house and Hannibal house.

In order to provide decant space for the planned refurbishment of Alexander Fleming house, a rationalisation programme has begun in these buildings. The space gained from the move to Whitehall will therefore be used initially for decant space and eventually released from the estate following implementation of our accommodation strategy on the completion of the refurbishment of Alexander Fleming house in 1992-93.

Resettlement Unit (Southampton)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his plans for his Department's Southampton resettlement unit, Mill Brook road, over the next five years.

Mr. Portillo: In 1985 we announced that we intended to work towards the closure of all resettlement units, replacing them with other facilities, to be run by voluntary oranisations and local authorities but funded by the Government. Proposals for the provision of facilities in the Southampton area were agreed with the local review team earlier this year. The unit will be run down as those facilities become available and will close as soon as an agreed number of replacement bed spaces have been provided. I anticipate that closure will take place within the next five years.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of the refurbishment of his Department's Southampton resettlement unit at Mill Brook road.

Mr. Portillo: No general refurbishment of the Southampton resettlement unit has taken place. Essential plumbing repairs are currently in progress at an estimated cost of £33,000.

Staff Retraining

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the breakdown costs of retraining staff at national and local level, including all training materials, to enable them to adminster the new social security system following the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Portillo: The breakdown is as follows:

Local office staff	= 2,214 man years	= £19·9 million
Regional office staff	= 6 man years	= £100,000
Central office staff	= 53 man years	= £0·5 million
Central training staff	= 51 man years	= £0·5 million

In addition, printing costs for the training material totalled approximately £0·5 million (£447,871).

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of alleged discrimination against disabled people have been made to him during each of the years 1982 to 1988 inclusive; and if he will outline what action was taken in each case.

Mr. Scott: Since 1983, 34 cases of alleged discrimination against disabled people have been referred to the Department following the invitation by the then Minister for the disabled, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H.Rossi). The number received each year is as follows:

	Cases
1983	22
1984	3
1985	2
1986	none
1987	4
[1]1988	3

[1] First 6 months.

For those cases where investigations have been completed:

In 10 cases no evidence of discrimination was found.

In six cases, insufficient information was available to enable enquiries to be completed.

In four cases there were genuine problems of access.

Three cases involved judgments by a particular employer that the individual's disability adversely affected their ability to perform the job efficiently or safely.

In three cases the problem was resolved in favour of the complainant during the course of our enquiries.

Two cases involved commercial judgments, the basis of which could not effectively be checked.

One case concerned maritime regulations laid before Parliament.

One case was a complaint by a disabled person against an employee who was subsequently disciplined by the employer.

One case involved a conflict of opinion over the application of 'right to buy' housing legislation.

In one case the Department requested further information from the complainant but received no response.

In one case the complainant was seeking the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation and we responded by setting out our position on this issue.

There is currently one case still under consideration.

Organ Donors

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the names of those holding organ donor cards are entered on a centralised computer.

Mrs. Currie: The national donor card scheme is not related to computerised registers of potential organ donors. The intention of the donor card was described in my reply to my hon. Friend on 4 May at column *504*. At present we have no plans to establish a national register of potential donors. We wish to see an evaluation of the registers being established by the Manpower Services Commission, for example, in Birmingham and Sheffield, and of a similar scheme operating in Wales before giving further consideration to this question.

Ambulances

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many one-man ambulances there are still operating in England and Wales as a whole and for each health authority area.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Means-tested Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants claiming each of the means-tested benefits for which he is responsible.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the reply to the then hon. Member for Kensington, 14 April 1986, *Official Report*, columns *271-72*, estimating the total number of *(a)* families and *(b)* persons in the United Kingdom receiving income-related benefits; and if he will also estimate the number of families and persons who were entitled but not claiming.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* This information requested is set out as follows:

Income-related benefit recipients and their dependants
Great Britain—latest available figures

(Thousands)

Date and benefit	*Number of recipients*	*Number of dependants*
May 1987		
Supplementary benefit	4,896	3,309
March 1988		
Family income supplement	[1]210	[1]570
Autumn 1986		
Standard HB	3,730	n/a
Recipients getting one or more income-related benefit	[2]8,400	n/a

n/a—Figures not available.

[1] Cases considered at time of conversion to family credit. The number of dependants is estimated from earlier figures.

[2] This figure reflects an adjustment for the overlap between the benefits (ie people receiving two or more of the above benefits).

Primary Care Psychiatry

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his Department's plans for the future funding of research into primary care psychiatry; what arrangements have been made with the Medical Research Council for work to continue in this area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* We continue to regard research into primary care psychiatry as important. In view of the forthcoming retirement of the director of the DHSS-funded general practice research unit at the Institute of Psychiatry we have, as is our normal practice, reviewed the way we support work in this area. The Medical Research Council has also reviewed its future arrangements for research in this area, given the forthcoming retirement of the directors of its two existing units of social psychiatry. As a result, the MRC is establishing a new unit of social psychiatry, and we intend to fund a significant programme of research based at the new unit. I hope that these collaborative arrangements with the MRC will support research of high scientific quality with benefits for patients and those who care for them.

ENERGY

Piper Alpha

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, columns 1191-98, whether the public inquiry he announced on the Piper Alpha platform disaster will review safety procedures for work in the North sea generally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: Since my statement to the House on 7 July, I have had the opportunity to consult the Attorney-General and the Lord Advocate on the form of the public inquiry.

The public inquiry will take place under the Offshore Installations (Public Inquiries) Regulations 1974. These regulations were made under the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 and were expressly designed to provide for public inquiries into casualties and accidents involving offshore installations. They provide full powers for appointing assessors, summoning witnesses, collecting evidence and making recommendations.

I have appointed Lord Cullen, a senator of the College of Justice in Scotland as the chairman of the public inquiry. The Government intend that the public inquiry will be as full and far reaching as necessary. I have arranged for copies of the instrument directing that a public inquiry be held to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and in the Vote Office. It provides that the inquiry be held to establish the circumstances of the accident and its cause. It also appoints Lord Cullen to hold the inquiry and to report to me on the circumstances of the accident and its cause together with any observations and recommendations which he thinks fit to make with a view to the preservation of life and the avoidance of similar accidents in the future.

The inquiry will be held in Aberdeen. The Lord Advocate has indicated that the Scottish Law Officers will represent the public interest in the inquiry.

I am also very anxious that if there are any early lessons that can be learnt from the disaster we should extract them and issue immediate guidance to operators of North sea installations. The Health and Safety Commission and I have therefore agreed that a speedy and thorough technical investigation will be held under section 14(2)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and under regulations made under the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 to establish the cause of the accident.

The person appointed by the Health and Safety Commission and myself under these provisions is Mr. J. R. Petrie, the director of safety in the petroleum engineering division of my Department who is working in close consultation with the staff of the Health and Safety Executive and with the procurator fiscal. He will make a report to both the commission and myself as quickly as possible and we will then consider whether and, if so, what guidance should be issued. The report of this investigation will be available as evidence to the public inquiry which will be free to question or supplement it as it wishes.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now make public the inquiry report into the explosion on the Piper Alpha platform in 1984.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall make the report of the investigation of the 1984 explosion available to the forthcoming public inquiry into the Piper Alpha accident.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when an inspector from his Department last inspected modules on the Piper Alpha platform for the fire test; and what action was said to be necessary in order that the appropriate safety standard would be reached.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The inspection of modules on the platform for structural fire safety is a matter for the certifying authority. The second annual survey within the five-year cycle of the current certificate of fitness from the certifying authority took place between January and April of this year. The fire-fighting equipment in place on the platform is examined every two years by the Department of Transport to ensure its effectiveness. The last Department of Transport survey was completed in February of this year. A satisfactory survey report was issued shortly thereafter.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will supply copies of his Department's report into the fire and explosion on the Piper Alpha oil rig in 1984 *(a)* to the chair of the public inquiry into the explosion and *(b)* to the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already announced, I shall make available to the public inquiry all the relevant information held by my Department, including the results of the investigation into the 1984 explosion on Piper Alpha. It will then be for the public inquiry to decide whether and how to publish this information.

North Sea Installations

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many persons were killed in the course of their employment on oil platforms and similar installations in the North sea in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Accident statistics of the kind requested by the hon. and learned Member are published in the annual report to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Energy on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The latest statistics show that there were 76 fatal accidents in the years 1978 to 1987.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many serious accidents have occurred on gas or oil installations each year since 1965; how many of these each year involved fatalities; how many persons were killed each year; and how many persons in total have been killed in such accidents since 1965.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Accident statistics of the kind requested by the hon. Member are published in the annual report to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Energy on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the agencies which carry out inspections of

oil and gas installations in the North sea; and how many inspectors each of these agencies had engaged on this work each year since 1965.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The independent agencies for offshore installations appointed by the Government are the following six certifying authorities:

Lloyd's Register of Shipping, American Bureau of Shipping, Bureau Veritas, Det Norske Veritas, Germanischer Lloyd and the Offshore Certification Bureau.

The staff numbers employed by the certifying authorities are a matter for them. My own Department and the Department of Transport also carry out safety inspections.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list each occasion and date since 1965 when safety inspectors of oil and gas installations in the North sea have recommended or required significant changes, other than minor matters, to be carried out as a result of inspections; which owners were involved; what action was taken to ensure whether such recommendations or required actions were actually carried out; and in which cases such actions had not been carried out by the time of the next inspection.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available in the form requested. However, generally speaking the Department carries out over 200 inspections and between 25 and 30 accident investigations each year. In the majority of cases inspections result in recommendations for action, usually of a minor nature, to be taken. Progress on carrying out recommendations is continuously monitored by the Department.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the occasions and dates since 1965 when the owners of gas or oil rig installations in the North sea have been prosecuted; what was the basis of the prosecution in each case; and what was the penalty imposed on each occasion when an offence was proved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details are available only from 1977. Since then 65 prosecutions of companies or persons have been brought in connection with offshore safety requirements monitored by my Department. The basis of prosecution in each case was infringement of the requirements under the legislation applying to operations on the United Kingdom continental shelf. The penalties are imposed in accordance with the penalty provisions set out in the appropriate legislation.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, for each of the gas and oil rig installations in the North sea, the date of each safety inspection carried out in the last five years, which agency carried out the inspection, the length each inspection lasted, how many persons carried out each inspection and the conclusion of the inspection in each case.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The figures are not available in the form requested. In broad terms the Department's safety inspectorate carries out over 200 inspections annually. Each inspection usually lasts between one and two days and is carried out by a single inspector. The frequency of inspection varies depending on the circumstances of the individual installation, but in general an inspector would visit each installation at least once a year. Any lessons from the inspections are notified by means of a letter to the offshore installation manager and to his company management, and by the issue of safety notices, which are circulated to all offshore operators and throughout the industry.

The Department of Transport surveys all offshore installations every two years to ensure that the fire-fighting equipment and life-saving appliances meet the necessary requirements. No Department of Transport surveyors are allocated exclusively to the survey of offshore installations and so there are no figures for the actual number of inspectors engaged in the work, but it is estimated that around 12 to 15 man years per annum are devoted to this work.

The certifying authorities make an independent assessment of the design and construction of every offshore installation. Major surveys of offshore installations are carried out before the first certificate of fitness is issued and every five years thereafter. In addition, every year there is an annual survey carried out so that the certifying authority may satisfy itself that the installation remains fit for its purpose. The certifying authorities employ surveyors of many disciplines and they estimate that in aggregate 250 man years each year are devoted to offshore installations.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list each serious accident that has occurred regarding oil and gas exploration and drilling in the North sea since 1980; what was the cause and nature of the accident; in each case, how many persons were killed and injured in each accident; in which cases an inquiry was carried out into each episode; and whether the inquiry was made public.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Accident statistics of the kind requested by the hon. Member are published in the annual report to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Energy on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. An investigation is carried out by the Department of Energy inspectorate into all the serious accidents, and any lessons to be learnt are made available publicly by way of regular safety notices issued by the safety directorate of my petroleum engineering division.

Electricity

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by what percentage electricity charges have risen since May 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Over the period June 1979 to May 1988, electricity charges to domestic consumers rose in real terms by 2·5 per cent. and those to industrial consumers fell by 3 per cent.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 July 1988

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education Standards

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to ensure comparable education standards between maintained and Government schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: Controlled and maintained schools are treated on a similar basis and this will continue to apply to the range of current and future initiatives aimed at improving standards.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future generation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: In 1985 the Government identified the need for new generating capacity to be available in Northern Ireland from the mid-1990s. Tenders were invited from NIE and the private sector to find the most cost-effective way of meeting this requirement, taking account of the availability of indigenous lignite deposits.

The main options were a public or private sector lignite-fired station or the installation of generating sets 3 and 4 at the Kilroot power station (known as Kilroot phase II) as dual coal/oil-fired units.

In the event, the particular circumstances of the availability of spare plant already purchased but not yet installed, together with the lower levels of coal and oil prices that are now forecast, made the option of proceeding with Kilroot II the most economical outcome.

The Government have therefore decided that the requirement for new generating capacity in Northern Ireland will be met by Kilroot phase II.

There is strong evidence, however, that had the particular circumstance of the lower capital cost not existed, a lignite station would otherwise have had significant advantages and therefore the next power station in Northern Ireland is likely to be lignite-fired.

This view is reinforced by the positive approach evident in the proposals submitted by the private sector for a lignite-fired power station, and in particular in that from the Antrim Power Company Limited, which emerged as much the strongest private sector group.

The Government are determined that the benefits from private sector involvement in the electricity supply industry should be available to Northern Ireland consumers as they will be to those in the rest of the United Kingdom. They therefore propose to set in hand immediately consideration of ways of privatising the Northern Ireland electricity system.

In the appraisal of these options the Government have been advised by Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited (with Ewbank Preece Power and Water Limited) on economic and technical issues, N. M. Rothschild and Son Limited on financial matters, Denton Hall Burgin and Warrens, solicitors, on legal and contractural matters, and Dr. Otto Gold GMBH on lignite mining.

Security Forces (Offences)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those cases where members of security forces have been charged with offences causing *(a)* the death of or *(b)* injury to civilians for each year since 1969, indicating the branch of the service involved, such as Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Army, the Royal Marines, and so on, the charge originally brought, the charge for which each person was tried, the verdict and, where appropriate, where the sentence was or is being served.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Religious Education

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning maintaining the provision of religious education in state schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: A large number of letters have been received about the place of religious education in the curriculum of maintained schools. The Government believe that the concerns expressed have been met by the provisions now contained in the Education Reform Bill.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to provide additional resources to assist local education authorities to fulfil their duty to provide further education with regard to the needs of persons with special educational needs.

Mr. Dunn: No. The Education Reform Bill, as amended, makes explicit, but does not extend, the responsibility of local education authorities to have regard to special educational needs in securing the provision of adequate facilities for further education. It will continue to be for local education authorities to decide their own spending priorities within existing planned provision.

Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be in a position to announce his decision regarding the future of the Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology, Gloucester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The applications from Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology and a number of other colleges to join the new Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council sector raise very important issues both for the colleges concerned and for the future patterns of higher and further education provision nationally. My right hon.

Friend is accordingly giving the applications careful consideration. He hopes to be able to make an announcement shortly.

School Buildings

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of investment in new school buildings and the repair of existing school buildings in Cornwall.

Mr. Dunn: In 1988-89 the schools element of the Cornwall authority's prescribed allocation for capital expenditure on county and voluntary controlled schools was £6·274 million. This allocation, which covered 78 per cent. of the authority's submitted plans, reflects the Government's awareness and appreciation of the authority's problems. In addition, Cornwall was allocated £145,000 in respect of work at voluntary aided schools.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The figures in the table relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure; receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included. They do not take into account the changes in funding responsibility, for example, in the case of polytechnics, which will take place after the Education Reform Bill is enacted.

	1982-83 outturn £ million	*1983-84 outturn* £ million	*1984-85 outturn* £ million	*1985-86 outturn* £ million	*1986-87 outturn* £ million	*1987-88 estimated outturn* £ million	*1988-89 plans* £ million	*1989-90 plans* £ million	*1990-91 plans* £ million
Local education authorities: Schools	−259	−286	−282	−315	−357	−389	−372	−379	−385
Local education authorities: Further and higher education	−386	−499	−508	−634	−732	−786	−800	−829	−855
Local education authorities: Miscellaneous services	−10	−19	−21	−25	−29	−31	−36	−37	−38
Research Councils	−95	−98	−104	−103	−106	−115	−107	−109	−112

The receipts include:

Schools
Meals and milk sales; rents; fees and charges; and grants.

Further and Higher Education
Fee income; examination fees; research and consultancy income; rents and charges; and grants.

Miscellaneous
Income of youth and other educational services; other fees and charges.

Research Councils
Charges for commissioned research.

PRIME MINISTER

Global Atmosphere

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she proposes to support the five-point plan to protect the global atmosphere, set out in the address by the Norwegian Prime Minister before the world conference on the changing atmosphere: implications for global security.

The Prime Minister: I welcome Mrs. Brundtland's contribution, delivered to the Toronto conference. Several of her points were also stressed by my noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water in a written message to the conference, in particular the need for international co-operation in seeking solutions to the problems posed by climate change, in developing renewable energy resources and co-ordinating scientific research. The special problems of the poorest countries, stressed by Mrs. Brundtland, have already been recognised by the agreement we reached on debt relief at the Toronto economic summit. For the moment, however, it would be premature to place high priority on the proposal to establish a global convention on protection of the climate. The best immediate use of our resources lies in the difficult task of reducing uncertainty about the nature and consequences of atmospheric change.

Nuclear Submarines (Canada)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent visit to Toronto, she discussed with the Canadian Prime Minister the sale of nuclear submarines to Canada.

The Prime Minister: Yes. As has been widely reported, the subject was discussed during my recent visit to Canada.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her meeting with Canadian Government Ministers in Ottawa on 22 June concerning the sale of British Trafalgar Class nuclear submarines to Canada.

The Prime Minister: No.

Plutonium Exports (Japan)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent visit to Toronto, for the meeting of leading industrial nations, she discussed with the Japanese Prime Minister the matter of commercial exports of plutonium from the United Kingdom to Japan with respect to economic benefits and safety.

The Prime Minister: No.

French Nuclear Energy Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent visit to Toronto for the economic summit, she discussed the French nuclear energy programme with the President of France.

The Prime Minister: No.

Radioactive Fallout (Turkey)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Turkey in April, she had the opportunity to raise with the Turkish Government the matter of the economic effects on Turkish farmers of the Chernobyl radioactive fallout.

The Prime Minister: This subject was not raised during my visit to Turkey.

Cuba (Performing Musicians)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Department or Departments are involved in agreeing *(a)* work permits and *(b)* visa applications for performing musicians from Cuba.

The Prime Minister: Work permits are a matter for the Department of Employment. Visa applications are dealt with by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Capital Controls

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what capital controls other European Economic Community countries operate.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands all have full freedom of capital movements, while Belgium and Luxembourg have no controls apart from those needed to maintain a dual exchange rate system, under which they have an "official" foreign exchange market for current account transactions, and a "free" one for capital transactions. Only authorised banks may carry out exchange transactions permitted in the "official" market, although they may sell on the official market currencies acquired on the free market. French residents are still not generally permitted to hold bank accounts abroad or open foreign currency accounts in France and there are restrictions on the amounts that banks can lend to non-residents. Denmark retains some restrictions, for example, on the maturity of foreign loans taken up by non-financial enterprises, on financial credits and loans between residents and non-residents, on residents holding foreign bank deposits and on the size of non-residents' krone deposits in Danish banks. The Italians have committed themselves to liberalisation of all remaining restrictions in October 1988, except on residents' holdings of lire or foreign currency deposits abroad, the opening of lire or foreign currency lines of credit in favour of foreign countries and foreign exchange forward or option transactions with foreign counterparties. Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain maintain more extensive systems of exchange control covering, in particular, those areas such as short-term capital movements, the issuing of unlisted securities and non-commercial loans, where, until now, there has been no binding obligation to liberalise. Adoption of the European Community's capital liberalisation directive on 24 June extends liberalisation to all capital movements within the Community, in most cases by 1 July 1990 but with extensions for Spain, Ireland, Greece and Portugal.

Small and Medium-size Enterprises

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the 1986 European Community draft directive for small and medium-size enterprises to be implemented.

Mr. Lilley: The President of the European Council has given no indication of the future timetable for consideration of this draft directive.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether new office building contracts entered into and completed before 1 April 1989 will be exempt from value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: In my statement of 21 June I made it clear that there would be no changes to the current value added tax arrangements before 1 April 1989. It follows that a contract for a completely new office building entered into and completed before that date will remain zero rated.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what announcements he has made concerning the receipt of comments by Her Majesty's Government relating to the mode and timing of incorporation of the recent ruling of the Court of the European Communities on value added tax; and if he will give the body or person and the address to which comments should be sent.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* As I informed the House on 21 June, at columns 957-58, no changes to the VAT law to give effect to the judgment will take effect before 1 April 1989. A consultation document on issues affecting non-domestic construction was made available in the Vote Office and the Library on that day. A consultation paper on other aspects of the judgment was announced and placed in the Library on 30 June, as announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), at column 331.

Copies of both documents are available from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, New King's Beam House, 22 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PJ. Any person or body wishing to comment on these proposals should write to VAT Administration Directorate, Division F, Room 14 at the above address no later than 31 August, although consultation with those who comment by 31 August will continue after that date.

European Economies

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the 10 fastest growing economies in Europe in descending order and with their corresponding percentages of growth for each year since 1979.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* Information on the growth rates of Western European countries for the years in question can be found in the June 1988 OECD *Economic Outlook*, table R1.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will take steps to encourage Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to reduce its demand for on-board customs and immigration facilities on Channel tunnel through trains due to serve places including Birmingham International and Birmingham New Street to a level more in line with the half-coach requirement of European operators of trans-national services.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Customs and Excise has asked for only 20 sq m of accommodation on the through services to points beyond London.

Coral

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many consignments of coral have been impounded by customs officials since the coming into operation of appendix II of the conference on international trade in endangered species 1985.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 8 July 1988]:* Latest available records show that Customs has made eight seizures of coral sine 29 August 1985, when EC regulation No. 2384/5 came into force.

DEFENCE

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmore: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when was the last occasion on which a DROPS medium mobility vehicle overturned; what injuries were caused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: One of the DROPS medium mobility vehicles currently undergoing pre-production validation trials was involved in a minor incident on 17 June in which it fell on its side when negotiating a bend on the RARDE rough road test track. The military crew of the vehicle suffered cuts and abrasions which required out-patient hospital treatment.

WALES

Cwm Dyli Power Station

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about a proposal to put an underground pipeline from Cwm Dyli power station in the event of its reopening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I have received a number of representations, from the Snowdonia National Park Society and others, objecting to the CEGB's replacement plans for the supply pipelines to its Cwm Dyli hydro-electric station.

The CEGB and the local planning authority take the view that replacement is "permitted development" under the terms of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on research into the feasibility of laying an underground pipeline to serve Cwm Dyli power station.

Mr. Grist: I am not aware of any such research.

Land Development, Ewloe

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet councillors and representatives of residents in Ewloe concerning their objections to the Redrow development Ewloe, Deeside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No. Redrow Commercial Developments Ltd. has appealed to my right hon. Friend following the failure of Alyn and Deeside district council to determine within the prescribed period its application for planning permission for development of land at Ewloe, Clwyd. Arrangements are being made for a public inquiry to be held into the appeal and, in view of this, it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to meet local representatives to discuss the proposed development.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many community mental handicap nurses are employed by each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* Information, taken primarily from the NHS payroll, does not at present permit reliable estimates to be made of numbers of community mental handicap nurses. However, work is being carried out by the district health authorities in conjunction with Welsh Office officials to enable such information to be extracted in the longer term.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available extra cash to local authorities to enable them to provide courses locally for the training of speech therapists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* Funding for speech therapist courses in local authority maintained institutes is provided through the AFE pool. At present a four-year honours degree course for speech therapists is provided at South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, which recruits students from all parts of Wales. The initiative for proposing new higher education courses rests with the colleges and their maintaining authorities. Proposals for new courses are considered by the Wales Advisory Body and, if approved, would need to be funded from the AFE pool.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the levels of funding of the British Overseas Trade Board for 1988-89 and the last five financial years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The British Overseas Trade Board guides and directs my Department's export promotion effort. The amounts of expenditure in each of the past five years and planned for the current year are as follows:

£ millions

	Gross expenditure	Net expenditure
1983-84	29·8	22·2
1984-85[1]	37·4	28·5
1985-86[2]	39·1	27·7
1986-87	40·0	25·3
1987-88[3]	40·2	25·2
1988-89[4]	44·4	27·2

[1] Includes expenditure on publicity and promotion previously shown as expenditure of the Central Office of Information. The expenditure amounted to £2·1 million.
[2] Includes revenue from the operation of the export intelligence service previously treated as computer services receipts. Receipts amounted to £0·5 million.
[3] The outturn for 1987-88 is provisional. Includes expenditure of £0·4 million on publications for the statistics and market intelligence library previously treated as part of general expenditure on libraries.
[4] Includes the grant-in-aid to the International Customs Tariff Bureau of £0·38 million. Includes £0·4 million for the second half of the year on the "New Products from Britain" service previously borne by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Recycling Advisory Unit

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future role of the recycling advisory unit at Warren Spring laboratory in relation to the reclamation and recycling industries.

Mr. Butcher: The future role of the recycling advisory unit will be largely unchanged.

European Community (Joint Research Centres)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to make additional funds available to assist new initiatives at the European Economic Community joint research centres at Geel in Belgium, Petten in the Netherlands, Karlsruhe in the Federal Republic of Germany and Ispra in Italy.

Mr. Butcher: A 1988-91 programme for the Joint Research Centre was agreed at the Research Council on 29 June. This provides 700 million ecu (£466 million) of Community funding for specific research programmes at the Joint Research Centre, and sets targets for a further 250 million ecu (£166 million) of work under contract to Commission directorates and external customers, both private and public. I regard this as a satisfactory settlement. The obligation on the Joint Research Centre to increase its earnings under contractual arrangements is part of a package of measures aimed to make the Joint Research Centre more efficient and its work more relevant to the Community's needs.

United Kingdom Government Departments will be willing to consider contracting some of their research needs to the Joint Research Centre if they are persuaded that the appropriate expertise is available there at a competitive price.

Northern Region

Mr. Cousin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the Government's achievements for the northern region on a basis comparable with the answer of the Secretary of State for Wales to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 21 June, *Official Report*, columns 498-504.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* I have outlined as follows the activities and achievements relevant to the work of the Department of Trade and Industry along with those appropriate to my wider inner cities brief.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment in the north has fallen by 31,500 over the past 12 months and now stands at its lowest level since April 1981. The total of unemployed school leavers is down by 24 per cent. over the past year. Vacancies continue to rise, while redundancies were 44 per cent. less in 1987 than in the previous year. The CBI and chambers of commerce report good progress in the regional economy in a wide range of industries, with output, sales and investment all buoyant and auguring well for further progress in the future. The number of employees in employment has risen by 13,000 in 1987 and by almost 50,000 since 1983. Similarly, self-employment in the region has increased by 400,000 since 1979, representing more than 40 per cent. of the nationwide increase in self-employment.

In the past year the north has attracted eight new inward investment projects from four countries. These projects involve fixed investment of £14 million and the creation of 1,173 jobs over three years. A further 11 overseas companies announced expansion plans in the region with investments totalling £327 million and creating 1,700 jobs as well as safeguarding a further 1,500 jobs over the next three years. Interest in the region from overseas continues to show a dramatic increase, with inquiries in the year to June 1988 totalling 284, an increase of 83 per cent. on the previous year.

The Northern Development Company was allocated a total of £1·165 million for 1988-89 for its inward investment promotional programme and for wider activities in support of the region's small business sector and wider regional regeneration. This is an increase of £47,000 on the previous year, with the NDC receiving over 40 per cent. of the total DTI support for English regional development organisations.

In 1987-88, English Estates North completed over 659,000 sq ft of industrial work space at a cost of £19 million and let almost 1,500,000 sq ft of space.

Companies are registering for VAT at a rate of around 6,000 a year, comfortably exceeding deregistrations, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment informs me that the small firms centre in Newcastle dealt with nearly 9,800 inquiries in the six months to 30 June 1988, an increase of 11 per cent. on the previous six months.

Since June 1987 a total of over 5,500 applications for regional development grant have been received. There have been 329 applications for regional selective assistance during the same period, 34 per cent. higher than the previous year. If the potential of the projects associated with these applications is fully realised, it will increase investment in the north by over £2,000 million and create over 65,000 jobs in the next few years.

Since the launch of the new enterprise initiative in January of this year the DTI has received 430 applications for consultancy assistance from the northern region, and since the launch of the regional enterprise grants in April over 500 inquiries have been received. Marketing of the new initiatives in the region to maximise take-up continues at high levels, and since January the DTI has participated in over 130 events, making direct contact with almost 4,000 representatives of local firms.

In the year to 30 June 1988 the DTI held 933 meetings with companies regarding export problems and participated in 39 seminars/workshops, which were attended by 578 companies. The Department arranged visits to the region for 69 commercial officers from posts worldwide, who were seen by 427 northern companies. The DTI also sponsored eight overseas trade missions organised by the Northern Development Company. As a result of this promotional activity, which continues at high levels, the Department found 177 potential or actual new exporters and attracted 43 companies to subscribe to the export intelligence service.

An application for an integrated development operations programme for the years 1989 to 1994 was submitted to the European Commission in May of this year on behalf of the counties of Cleveland and Durham. It is presently being considered by the Commission, and the Government are seeking speedy approval of the application. An application for an IDOP is being prepared for Tyne and Wear and south-east Northumberland. It is hoped that a formal submission to the Commission can be made shortly.

IDOP status will enable programme areas to obtain maximum and priority assistance under the various Community structural instruments (including the European regional development fund and European social fund). This will greatly assist progress towards economic regeneration in these areas in coordination with United Kingdom measures of regional industrial assistance, spending on infrastructure, and Training Commission schemes.

A great deal of redevelopment activity is taking place in inner areas in the region. The Tyne and Wear city action team and the Cleveland co-ordinating team are effectively co-ordinating Government spending of over £80 million a year in the inner areas, while at the same time supporting nearly 50 initiatives from their special funds: £3 million spent so far out of the funds has triggered a total spend of £12 million. My task forces in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool have supported over 70 projects to the tune of £2,500,000, which has helped to trigger a further £9 million of supporting funds. But significantly we are seeing, in the northern inner areas, a revival of private sector-led regeneration. This was exemplified by the excellent response to the action for cities presentation held in Newcastle earlier this year. Another example is the Newcastle initiative, announced last month and involving a number of exciting and forward-looking projects for the regional capital. This initiative, led by the private sector., has received, and will continue to receive, the full support of the Government.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Guatemala and Belize

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress had been made towards a peace settlement by the recently established joint commission of Guatemala and Belize.

Mr. Eggar: A second round of talks of the Belize/Guatemala joint commission was held on 12-13 July. At the invitation of both sides the United Kingdom attended as an additional participant.

United States (Visas)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom citizens have been refused boarding passes by foreign airlines flying from the United Kingdom to the United States of America because they were unaware of the relaxation of the United States visa requirements.

Mr. Eggar: We are not monitoring the operation of the United States visa-waiver scheme directly, but I understand it is operating smoothly. There have been no reports that eligible travellers have been refused boarding passes.

Libya

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress Her Majesty's Government are making in establishing normal relations with Libya.

Mr. Eggar: There can be no question of returning to normal relations with the Libyan Government as long as they maintain their support for international terrorism, including the IRA.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British subjects are currently working in Libya.

Mr. Eggar: We do not have separate figures for those British nationals currently working in Libya, but the approximate size of the British expatriate community is 3,250.

Disarmament

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any formal reply to criticisms of United Kingdom policy on involvement in nuclear disarmament negotiations by the Soviet Foreign Minister and Deputy Foreign Minister at the United Nations third special session on disarmament on 8 June.

Mr. Eggar: No formal response has been made to the speech by Mr. Shevardnadze. As the Government of the Soviet Union know, we strongly support the INF agreement and the goal of an agreement to reduce the strategic nuclear weapons of the superpowers by 50 per cent.

Nuclear Submarines

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with officials of the United States Government concerning the release to Canada of confidential information on nuclear submarines obtained under the Anglo-American mutual defence agreement.

Mr. Eggar: The protection of confidential and other sensitive information on nuclear submarine propulsion, made available under the 1958 United States/United Kingdom agreement for co-operation in the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes, is governed by articles VI and VII of that agreement, as amended.

Agreement was reached with the United States in 1987 for the release of the appropriate information to Canada and the United States Department of State publicly announced this on 28 October.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representatives of Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago, Chile will be attending the Chile Crea congress.

Mr. Eggar: The Chile Crea arts festival incorporates a wide range of cultural events. Various members of Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago will be attending the festival.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation Her Majesty's Government will send to Chile to observe the plebiscite due before October 1989.

Mr. Eggar: We do not intend to send an observer delegation to the Chilean plebiscite.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Commission

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the current members of the Training Commission, together with the dates and duration of their appointments.

Mr. Cope: The current members of the Training Commission, together with the dates and duration of their appointments, are:

Sir James Munn (Chairman)
22 October 1987 to 31 August 1988
Mr. Michael Bett
27 September 1986 to 31 December 1988
Professor Kenneth Durrands
1 January 1986 to 31 December 1988
Councillor James Gilchrist
27 September 1986 to 31 December 1988
Mr. Roy Grantham
1 January 1986 to 31 December 1988
Mr. Roy Jackson
23 July 1987 to 31 December 1988
Mr. John Peake
1 January 1986 to 31 December 1988
Councillor John Pearman
1 January 1986 to 31 December 1988
Mr. Richard Price
1 January 1986 to 31 December 1988

BDH Chemicals Ltd.

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that the results of the inquiry conducted on behalf of his Department into the cause and effects of fire at BDH Chemicals Ltd. in Poole on 21 June are made public; and if he will also set up a public inquiry.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive proposes to make available to the public a summary of the results of its investigation into the cause of the fire.

I do not propose to set up a public inquiry, since this would be unlikely to identify any causes or contributory factors which will not be identified by the HSE investigation.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to appoint a chairman for the Training Commission.

Mr. Fowler: The appointment of the present chairman, Sir James Munn, ends on 31 August this year. I am today announcing that I am appointing Mr. Brian Wolfson, chairman of Wembley Stadium Ltd. and currently also chairman of the British Institute of Management, as chairman from 1 September. Mr. Wolfson's period of appointment is for three years.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Sir James Munn for his many achievements during his period of office.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Community Care

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the current National Health Service review is considering the issues raised by the Griffiths report on community care.

Mr. Moore: The NHS review is concentrating on hospital services. We are also considering Sir Roy Griffiths' recommendations on community care, taking account of the proposals on residential care from the committee chaired by Lady Wagner, and the reactions to both reports. We will bring forward our own proposals in this area in due course.

Children (Supplementary Benefit)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table from the "Low Income Families Statistics 1985" showing the number of children in Great Britain living below, on or up to 40 per cent. above, supplementary benefit level in 1985; and what proportion of all children they represent in each case.

Mr. Portillo: The information is set out in the table:

Children in families Great Britain 1985

	Number (thousand)	*Percentage of all children*
Receiving supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement (HBS)	1,890	15
Not receiving supplementary benefit or (HBS) but with:		
—relative net resources below 100 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale rates	360	3
—relative net resources below 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale rates	1,650	13

Hospital Closures

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list hospitals in the Greater London area that have been closed since 1979; how many are still empty; what plans exist for the development of these hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A list of all hospitals/units in Greater London which we are aware have been approved for closure from 1979 to the end of 1986 is as follows. Information on the current status of the buildings in question is not held centrally. The closure of old hospitals or units is often associated with the opening of new modern hospitals or units. The hon. Member may wish to write to the relevant health authority in respect of any case in which he is particularly interested.

Name of hospital	District health authority	Year
St. Helenas recovery home	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	1979
Paddington green childrens	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	1979
St. Elizabeths	Barnet	1979
Orme lodge	Barnet	1979
Stanmore cottage	Barnet	1979
Garret Anderson	Camden and Islington	1979
Holmhurst	West Lambeth	1979
St. Georges Hyde park corner	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1979
St. Columbas	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	1980
Thomas Barlow	Camden and Islington	1980
Cromwell lodge	Camden and Islington	1980
London jewish	City and East London	1980
Bearstead memorial	Enfield and Haringey	1980
Queen Elizabeth house	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1980
St. Benedicts	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1980
Temple hill	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	1981
St. Faiths	Barking and Haringey	1981
Aldersbrook	City and East London	1981
Queen Marys, Newham	City and East London	1981
St. Marys, Newham	City and East London	1981
Wimbledon	Merton and Sutton	1981
City of London Maternity	Camden and Islington	1982
Whittington Home	Camden and Islington	1982
Enfield War Memorial	Enfield	1982
Leamington Park	Brent	1983
West Hendon	Barnet	1983
All Saints	Victoria	1983
Royal National Orthopaedic, Great Portland Street	Bloomsbury	1983
Prince of Wales	Haringey	1983
St. Giles	Camberwell	1983
St. Johns	Lewisham and Southwark	1983
Waddon	Croydon	1983
South London Hospital for Women	Wandsworth	1983
Chepstow Lodge	Paddington and North Kensington	1984
Hereford Lodge	Paddington and North Kensington	1984
St. Johns	Hounslow and Spelthorne	1984
St. Johns	Hillingdon	1984
The Mothers	City and Hackney	1984
The German	City and Hackney	1984
St. Matthews	City and Hackney	1984
Mildmay Mission	Tower Hamlets	1984
Harts	Waltham Forest	1984
Lugano Nursing Home	Waltham Forest	1984
Cheam	Merton and Sutton	1984
Royal Throat, Nose and Ear	Bloomsbury	1985
Dreadnought Seamans	Greenwich	1985
Westmoor House	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1985
Hendon District	Barnet	1986
St. Marys Harrow Road	Paddington and North Kensington	1986
Banstead	Riverside	1986
Dagenham Hospital	Redbridge	1986
Bethnal Green	Tower Hamlets	1986
New Cross Hospital	Lewisham and North Southwark	1986
Lennard	Bromley	1986
Beckenham	Bromley	1986
St. Nicholas	Greenwich	1986
Queens	Croydon	1986
St. Marys	Croydon	1986
Athlone House	Bloomsbury	1986

Health Authorities

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the salary paid to each of the regional chairpersons of health authorities covering the Greater London area.

Mrs. Currie: Chairmen of regional health authorities are entitled to receive remuneration which currently stands at £11,709 a year. They may as an alternative choose to claim financial loss allowance. Chairmen are also entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances.

Consultancies

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 Jauary 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Moore: Details of management and computer consultancy contracts extant as at 1 January 1987 are as follows:

Firm	Subject of Assignment
Abbey Business Consultants Ltd.	General Information Technology Support
Abbey Business Consultants Ltd.	Family Practitioner Service Registration Study
Abbott, W.	Information Technology 86 Project
Applied Systems Engineering	Central Design Authority
Arthur Andersen (CBT).	Branch RD21: User Implementation
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Central Design Authority
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Departmental Central Index
Arthur Andersen and Co.	End to End Architecture
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Family Credit
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Local Office Project
Arthur Andersen and Co.	National Unemployment Benefit System 2
Arthur Andersen and Co.	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
Arthur Andersen and Co.	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Prescription Pricing Authority/Pharmacy Links Trials
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Operational Strategy Directorate Overall Management
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Branch RD21: User Implementation
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Retirement Pension
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Retirement Pension Forecast
Arthur Andersen and Co.	Strategy Control Office
Arthur Young	General Information Technology Support
Arthur Young	Procurement Directorate Support
Atkins Planning	Computer Support (to Regional Liaison (Central Analysis of Regional Performance))
BIS	Central Design Authority

Firm	Subject of Assignment
BIS	Database/Administration
BIS	Database/Administration and Training
Barnett, J. C.	Action in Prescribing
Binder Hamlyn	Dentists Practising as Associates (Phase 2)
Butley D.	Manpower Planning for the Medicines Inspectorate
CAP	Central Design Authority
CAP	Local Office Microcomputers Project
CAP	Private Office Computer
CAP	Private Office Computer
CAP	Strategy Assurance Programme Software support
CAP	Strategy Terminals
CSC	Data Dictionary Review
CSC	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
CSC	Departmental Integrated Project Support Environment Policy
CSC	Strategy Security
C-Squared	Telecommunications Survey
C-Squared	Aggregate Performance Indicators (Social Security Offices/Regions)
C-Squared	Regional Liaison-RL2D Pilot Study
C-Squared-Enator	Telecommunications Survey
Cedar Design Systems	Health Building Division Database Development
Coopers and Lybrand	Unit Costs at North Fylde Central Office
Coopers and Lybrand	Health Promotion
Digitus	Branch RD11 Training
Digitus	Branch RD11 Training
Duncan, R.	Key Indicators in Personal Social Services
Eosys Ltd.	Telecommunications Networks
Ernst and Whinney	Study of Private and Voluntary Residential Accommodation
Ernst and Whinney	Computer Audit
Ernst and Whinney	Social Services Inspectorate Information Requirements
Ernst and Whinney	Finance Branches FA/FB Operational Project
Fastastro	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
Gilbert, P. R.	Welfare Benefit Information System
Goldberg, Miss V.	Dissemination of Child Care Research
HUSAT	Software Design and Implementation
HUSAT	Implementation Review of Human Factors
HUSAT	Database
HUSAT	Development of Application Architecture
HUSAT	Prototype Programming
HUSAT	Pensions on Line Access Systems
HUSAT	Support for New Technology
HUSAT	Department of Employment Unemployment Benefit Offices
HUSAT	Training
HUSAT	Local Office Project Implementation Evaluation
HUSAT	Prototyping and Implementations into Local Offices
HUSAT	Survey Job Design and Specification
Honeywell	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
ICL	Central Design Authority
ICL	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
ICL	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
ICL	Pre-production order. Estriel
INI Systems	Operational Strategy: Manpower Modelling
Local Government Training Board	Training for Senior Managers in Social Services
Logica	Telecommunications Networks
Logica	Telecommunications Networks
MOM	Project Information and Control System
Medical Research Council	Welfare Benefit Information System
Meditel Ltd.	Computer Readable Medical Card Evaluation Study
Metron Technology Ltd.	Study of Exeter Family Practitioner Service Computer Unit
Mitchie, Professor	Welfare Benefit Information System
Model Systems	DIADEM
Model Systems	Local Office Microcomputers Project
Murray, U.	Social Services Inspectorate Exercise on Clients from Ethnic Minorities
NCC	Appraisal of Network Proposals
National Institute for Social Work	Decentralisation Planning Pack
National Physical Laboratory	Irradiation of Medical Supplies
NCB OR Executive	Family Practitioner Service
NCB OR Executive	Operational Strategy
NCB OR Executive	Nurse Manpower Planning
NCB OR Executive	Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres Transport/Accessibility
PA Consulting Services Ltd.	Whole Unit Concept
PA Computers and Telecommunications Ltd.	Special Hospital Patient Information Network
PA Computers and Telecommunications Ltd.	Statistics and Research Information Centre
Pactel	Software Portfolio Development
Pactel	Information Centre for Social Security Prototype

Firm	Subject of Assignment
Price Waterhouse	Contributions
RICA	Welfare Benefit Information System
Rawlinson, R.H.	Pensions Consultant
Resources International	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
Sanport/Applied Systems	Departmental Integrated Project Support Environment
Social and Community Planning Research	Communications in DHSS Headquarters
Spicer and Pegler	Balance of Care (The Elderly) Decision Support System—Maintenance and Back-up
Spicer and Pegler	Planning (Acute Beds)
Spicer and Pegler	Evaluation of the Use of an Application Generator—Hammersmith Hospital
Syntek	Housing Benefit Review
Systems Concepts	Operational Strategy Directorate Office Systems
Systems Concepts	Branch RD11 Training
Systems Concepts	Branch RD11 Training
Tallis, B. T.	Strategy Data Network
Task Force	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
Task Force	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
Task Force	North Fylde Telecommunications Survey
Task Force	Programming Assistance
Taylor Hutchinson and Partners	Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres: Estate Management and Advisory Work
Touche Ross Management Consultants	NHS Payment Systems
Ultracomp	National Unemployment Benefit System/Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service
University of Aberdeen (Professor P. Sloane)	Nurses Grading Project
University of Bath	Strategy Data Network
University of York (Miss C. Horrocks) (Mr. K. Tolley)	Day Services for Mentally Handicapped People
VIS	NHS Performance Indicators

Single-parent Families

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of single-parent families drawing supplementary benefit for the latest available date; and what is the proportion of these claimants who have been drawing supplementary benefit for *(a)* more than five years but less than 10 years, and *(b)* more than 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: The most recent information available comes from the 1987 annual statistical inquiry. The number of lone-parent families in receipt of supplementary benefit was 629,000 in May 1987; 25 per cent. of these families had been in receipt of benefit for more than five years. Statistics are not kept on the number of lone-parent families who draw benefit for 10 years or more.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women receiving (i) invalidity benefit and (ii) severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: At April 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of people in receipt of invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance was:

	Invalidity benefit	*Severe Disablement Allowance*
Men	754,000	102,000
Women	214,000	158,000

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress on the conversion of supplementary benefit cases to income support at his Department's offices in Hackney, Stoke Newington, Shoreditch, Hoxton and Finsbury Park; what percentages of cases have to date been converted; and, in respect of those offices that have not yet completed the conversion, when each office expects to have finished the conversion exercise.

Mr. Portillo: The conversion exercise has been completed.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of supplementary benefit and income support claims received in the last four-week period for which records are available and the percentage of claims awaiting a decision at the end of that four-week period; and if he will supply this information in respect of (i) his Department's Hackney office, (ii) his Department's Stoke Newington office, (iii) his Department's Finsbury Park office, (iv) London north region as a whole and (v) London south region as a whole.

Mr. Portillo: Since the introduction of income support, management information on claims has been recorded calendar monthly instead of four-weekly. The figures in the table relate to the month ended 31 May 1988:

	Supplementary Benefit		*Income Support*	
	Claims received during period	[1] *Percentage awaiting decision at end*	*Claims received during period*	[1] *Percentage awaiting decision at end*
National	30,416	18·0	283,837	21·0
Hackney	33	5·1	706	23·2
Stoke Newington	nil	44·6	417	44·8
Finsbury Park	49	31·5	957	47·9
London North Region	2,510	25·1	40,695	30·3
London South Region	2,783	21·0	38,194	25·0

[1] This is the percentage of all claims held awaiting a decision—not a percentage of those cases received during the month.

This information was obtained from internal regional management statistical returns.

Income Levels

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the population exist at or below a level at which means-tested benefits become available; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Portillo: There is no single income level at which income-related benefits become available, since this varies both by benefit and by claimant. However, the 1983 and 1985 versions of "Low Income Families" (copies of which are in the Library) indicate the numbers receiving supplementary benefit and those below 100 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale rates for the years requested. For a detailed discussion of this approach see "Low Income Statistics—Report Of A Technical Review" March 1988, and for alternative approaches see "Households Below Average Income: 1981-85," copies of which are also in the Library.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what medical advice has been received concerning myalgic encephalomyelitis post viral syndrome; and if it is intended to recognise it as grounds for mobility allowances.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's medical advisers are keeping in touch with developments on myalgic encephalomyelitis. The medical eligibility criteria for mobility allowance are framed in terms of inability or virtual inability to walk due to physical disablement, irrespective of any specifically diagnosed cause of such inability, and we have no present plans to change those criteria.

Health Authorities (Greater London)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the proposed amalgamation of health authorities in Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have received no representations concerning the amalgamation of health authorities in Greater London.

Means-tested Benefits (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the number of families claiming means-tested state benefits for each of the counties of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Baby Foods

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure, following the almonella outbreak caused by powdered baby foods produced in France, that the replacement stock from the same factory is not also contaminated.

Mrs. Currie: The company undertook extensive environmental cleansing and more intensive end product testing from the beginning of May 1988, and investigations by the French official inspection services showed no contamination with salmonella. It has therefore been agreed that withdrawn products may be replaced with those manufactured after May 1988. To date there have been no cases of salmonellosis in the United Kingdom which can be confirmed as being associated with Milupa products.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the brand of powdered baby milk which was withdrawn from the market in the United Kingdom on 4 July has been withdrawn from sale in any other European country.

Mrs. Currie: The powdered baby milk which was withdrawn from the United Kingdom market on 4 July was prepared exclusively for the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and, as far as we are aware, action has been taken in those two countries only. We have not been advised that any other European country has withdrawn supplies.

Hospital Deaths

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the publication of death lists for individual hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Data are not available centrally for deaths in individual hospitals. We have no objection to the publication of such data locally, but it is important that they should be interpreted in the light of local circumstances, taking account of the type of hospital and the age, sex and medical condition of the patients concerned.

As regards data at district health authority level, it is intended to include in the next national performance indicator package mortality rates for deaths anywhere in the district from selected conditions. Such data have been included in the past in the indicator package produced by Inter-Authority Comparisons and Consultancy at the Birmingham health services management centre. Consideration is also being given to the introduction in the national indicator package of data at health authority level on deaths in hospital by specialty.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of the report entitled "Hospital Deaths—The Missing Link" by Paul Kind, concerning the detailed death rates in regional health authorities, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We are studying the report carefully and will take it into account in our consideration of how to improve the assessment of the outcome of health care. As the report makes clear, there are considerable difficulties in interpreting this type of data and conclusions can be drawn only after detailed local inquiry. Certain proposals along the lines suggested by the report are already under consideration following consultation on the contents of the next national performance indicator package.

New Hospital, Hove

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that he will reach no

decision on any application by the Brighton health authority for approval in principle for a new hospital in Hove until the full implications for development of hospitals in the Worthing and district health authority have been analysed and the potential waste of public funds examined; if he will make a statement on the joint option appraisal referred to in the parliamentary answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *592;* and why an approval in principle application has been made before this has been completed.

Mrs. Currie: The position remains as indicated in my earlier reply. Departmental officials will be meeting senior managers of the two regional health authorities involved at the end of this month to discuss the outcome of their consideration of future hospital developments in Worthing and Brighton. The approval in principle submission relating to capital developments in Brighton has not yet been submitted formally to the Department by South East Thames RHA.

Departmental Offices (Staff)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the staffing allocations for 1988-89, as determined by the agreed complementing system, for his Department's offices in Hackney, Stoke Newington, Shoreditch, Hoxton and Finsbury Park; and what were the comparable staffing levels in 1987-88.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is as follows:

	1987-1988	*1988-1989*
Hackney	210·5	192
Stoke Newington	141·5	129
Shoreditch	95·5	89
Hoxton	163·0	145
Finsbury Park	224·0	208

The reduction in complements results largely from the replacement of supplementary benefit by income support and the fall in numbers of unemployed claimants.

Regional Authorities (Chairmen)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will announce the appointment of regional health authority chairmen from 1 August.

Mr. Moore: The terms of office of eight of the 14 regional health authority chairmen expire on 31 July 1988. I have made three new appointments as follows:

South West Thames—Mrs. J. F. Cumberlege CBE
Wessex—Mr. R. W. Buchanan
North Western—Mr. R. B. Martin QC

These appointments run until 31 July 1990.

The chairmen of the following five regional health authorities have accepted my invitation to serve in this most important position for another two years each:

Northern—Sir Bernard Tomlinson
Yorkshire—Mr. B. Askew
North West Thames—Mr. W. Doughty
North East Thames—Mr. D. Berriman
Oxford—Sir Gordon Roberts

I should like to place on record my appreciation of the distinguished service given to the National Health Service by the three outgoing regional chairmen: Sir Antony Driver (South West Thames), Sir Bryan Thwaites (Wessex) and Sir John Page OBE (North Western).

Benefits (Order Books)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to make any changes in the arrangements for handling foils from order books after encashment at post offices.

Mr. Portillo: An internal study recommended that certain accounting work presently carried out by the Post Office at Chesterfield and Edinburgh could be carried out more efficiently and economically at the paid order store operated by the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) on behalf of this Department.

Following a review of the proposals, and in consultation with the Post Office, I have agreed to a trial in a small area to start in January 1989.

The proposed change in procedures has no effect on the counter network.

Publications

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all publications regarding benefits for which he is responsible since 1979, indicating which of these were published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 February 1988]:* Apart from the numerous leaflets on social security benefits, which are all produced through HMSO, details of publications and their publishers, and, where appropriate, the authors, are printed in the "DHSS Sectional List" produced annually by HMSO and in the "Catalogue of British Official Publications not published by HMSO" (Chadwick Healy). Copies of both publications for the years 1979-87 are available in the Library. In addition, arrangements have been made to place a copy in the Library of the current "DHSS-DATA database of DHSS publications not published by HMSO". This publication is updated every two months.

SCOTLAND

Wormit (Rail Halt)

Mr. Menzies Campell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had in connection with the establishment of a rail halt at Wormit; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since June 1987 one representation has been received about the provision of a rail halt at Wormit.

Responsibility for providing rail services is a matter for British Rail. Each year it receives grant from the Government in recognition of its obligation to provide passenger services. The level of grant is determined on a network-wide basis and it is for British Rail to decide how the resources available to it can best be deployed.

Trunk Roads (Fife and Tayside)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect on the trunk road network in Fife and Tayside he anticipates there will be as a result of current repairs to the Tay road bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No significant effect is expected.

Legal Aid Board

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current members of the Scottish Legal Aid Board, their qualifications for membership, the duration of their appointments, and their rate of remuneration.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Period of Appointment

Chairman	*From*	*To*	*Background*
Mr. Donald B. Grant TD CA	20 October 1986	31 March 1990	Business
Members			
Mrs. Christine Davis	17 November 1986	31 March 1989	Consumer Affairs
Mrs. Peter C. Rendle	17 November 1986	31 March 1989	Public Service
Mr. Alistair R. Brownlie OBE LLB	17 November 1986	31 March 1990	Solicitor
Mr. Brian G. Donald LLB	17 November 1986	31 March 1990	Solicitor
Mr. Archibald Gilchrist	17 November 1986	31 March 1990	Business
Mr. Ranald N. M. MacLean QC	17 November 1986	31 March 1990	Advocate
Mr. W. Norman Hunter Smart CA	17 November 1986	31 March 1990	Business
Mr. Graham H. Speirs LLB	17 November 1986	31 March 1990	Public Service
Mr. George Barrie CA	1 December 1986	31 March 1990	Business
Professor Thomas F. Carbery OBE	1 December 1986	31 March 1990	Information Technology
Mrs. Anne B. Ward	1 December 1986	31 March 1990	Consumer Affairs
Mr. John A. C. Weir	1 December 1986	31 March 1990	Sheriff Courts
Mr. Brian Gill QC	1 July 1987	31 March 1990	Advocate

The chairman receives a salary of £18,300 for part-time service. Members' remuneration for part-time service is based on a full-time equivalent salary of £24,000 per annum which is under review. At present two members receive £4,800 per annum (for one day per week), five receive £7,200 per annum (for one and half days per week) and six receive £9,600 per annum (for two days per week).

Travelling People's Site (Dundee)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the funding of the Official Reporter's inquiry into the establishment of a travelling people's site within the Dundee district authority area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the report of the public local inquiry into the city of Dundee district council's proposals for a travellers' site at Panmurefield, Broughty Ferry. The report of the public local inquiry has been sent to the district council and other interested parties today together with notification of my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to accept the Reporter's recommendation that planning consent should be refused. I have written to the hon. Member today with details of the decision.

Aero Technologies

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress in the investigation into allegations of wrongdoing by Aero Technologies of Cumbernauld and Glenrothes; and whether charges are to be brought against Alexander McDonald, Terence Byrne, Terence Byrne jnr. and Alan Crossley, directors of the company.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A search warrant was granted by the sheriff at Airdrie on 29 June and has been executed by officers of Strathclyde police, who are continuing with inquiries. I have nothing further to add.

Wildlife

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, in respect of each year since the coming into force of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the number of reported incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances against wildlife, the number of each wildlife species involved, the number of such cases referred to the police or procurator fiscal for investigation, the number of investigations which resulted in legal proceedings and the outcome of those proceedings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of incidents, affected species and cases referred to the police or procurator fiscal involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances against wildlife in Scotland, as confirmed by the wildlife incident investigation service, in each of the years from 1981 to date are given in the table. The table includes statistics of incidents of poisoned bait being laid where the victims were domestic animals or there were no reported victims, since poisoned bait is usually targeted against wildlife pests. No statistics of legal proceedings by category of offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are available centrally.

Year	*Number of incidents*			*Number of each species*				*Number of cases referred to police or PF*
	Wildlife	*Domestic Animals*	*No. Victim*					
1981	19	16	3	Eagles	4	Pigeons	3	2
				White Tailed Eagle	1	Song Bird	1	
				Buzzards	5	Fox	1	
				Kestrels	2	Domestic Animals	20	
				Hen Harrier	1			

Year	Number of incidents: Wildlife	Domestic Animals	No. Victim	Number of each species				Number of cases referred to police or PF
				Corvids	4			
				Gulls	3			
1982	23	5	4	Eagles	6	Domestic Animals	6	1
				Buzzards	19			
				Peregrine Falcons	2			
				Corvids	36			
				Gulls	4			
				Pigeons	6			
				Song Birds	6			
				Badger	1			
1983	24	12	8	Buzzards	19			18
				Sparrow Hawk	1			
				Corvids	94			
				Gulls	12			
				Song Birds	2			
				Foxes	3			
				Badgers	4			
				Domestic Animals	15			
1984	10	12	2	Eagles	2	Domestic Animals	17	
				Buzzards	4			
				Perigrine Falcon	1			
				Tawny Owl	1			
				Corvids	10			
				Gulls	4			
				Pigeons	4			
				Song Birds	8			
1985	20	8	4	Eagles	3			4
				Buzzards	9			
				Sparrow Hawk	1			
				Corvids	12			
				Gulls	18			
				Pigeon	1			
				Foxes	2			
				Domestic Animals	13			
1986	19	6	2	Eagle	1	Fox	1	4
				Buzzards	10	Domestic Animals	13	
				Sparrow Hawks	2			
				Kestrel	1			
				Herons	6			
				Corvids	4			
				Gull	1			
				Pigeons	2			
1987	23	8	7	Eagles	2			5
				Buzzards	9			
				Corvids	40			
				Gulls	3			
				Pigeons	2			
				Song Birds	3			
				Domestic Animals	9			
1988	16	4	6	Eagles	4	Domestic Animals	5	11
				Buzzards	6			
				Tawny Owls	2			
				Corvids	27			
				Gulls	5			
				Pigeons	2			
				Song Birds	10			
				Fox	1			

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has provided to local authorities and land owners, under section 17 of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, concerning the use of pesticides and their effects on wild birds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Drafts of codes of practice prepared under the provisions of section 17 of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 have been circulated to interested bodies, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Landowners Federation and the National Farmers Union of Scotland, with a view to codes being laid before Parliament in due course. The draft code on the agricultural and commercial

horticultural use of pesticides provides advice on the safe use of pesticides, including measures to be taken to protect wildlife.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to what advice or publicity local authorities have provided to the public under section 25(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, on the legal provisions concerning the poisoning of wild birds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My Department has drawn local authorities' attention to their responsibilities under section 25(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. I have, however, no information as to the advice or publicity which local authorities may have provided to the public under the provisions of that section.

Housing Support Grant

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will update the information contained in the answer of 26 October 1987, *Official Report*, column 118, on the housing support grant or equivalent figure for Scotland, repriced for inflation for each year since 1978; and if he will give the percentage change over the previous year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

Year	*Amount of grant paid at 1988-89 average prices*[1] £	*Percentage change over previous year*
1978-79	—[2]	—
1979-80	391,595,559	—
1980-81	353,185,167	−9·8
1981-82	228,005,690	−35·4
1982-83	137,560,798	−39·7
1983-84	90,578,082	−34·2
1984-85	80,821,598	−10·8
1985-86	72,824,695	−9·9
1986-87	48,810,476	−33·0
1987-88	43,804,169	−10·3
1988-89	[3]54,631,469	+24·7

[1] Using GDP deflators.
[2] Information for 1978-79 is not readily available.
[3] Estimated.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will update the information in the answer of 19 February, *Official Report*, column 776, on the gross allocation, repriced for inflation, to the Housing Corporation in Scotland for each year since 1974; and if he will give the percentage change over the previous year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table:

Year	*Gross allocation* £ million	*Percentage variation over previous year*	*Gross allocation in real terms* £ million	*Percentage variation over previous year*
1974-75	[1]4.5		16.408	
1975-76	[1]10.6	135.6	30.761	87.5
1976-77	[1]16.3	53.8	41.791	35.6
1977-78	[1]27.1	66.3	61.004	46.0
1978-79	[1]31.4	15.9	63.852	4.7
1979-80	[1]48.6	54.8	84.558	32.4
1980-81	[1]65.7	35.2	96.414	14.0
1981-82	85.0	29.4	113.583	17.8
1982-83	108.5	27.6	135.197	19.0
1983-84	109.6	1.0	130.473	−4.5
1984-85	101.3	−7.6	115.442	−11.5
1985-86	104.2	2.9	112.062	−2.9
1986-87	113.8	9.2	118.636	5.9
1987-88	123.2	8.3	[2]123.200	3.8
1988-89	162.9	32.3	155.890	26.5

[1] Actual expenditure. In these years expenditure was controlled on basis of housing units to be provided rather than budget allocation.
[2] Base year.

Public Transport Companies (Scottish Bus Group)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Grampian Public Transport Company, Lothian Public Transport Company, Strathclyde Public Transport Company and Tayside Public Transport Company will be eligible to bid for any parts of the Scottish Bus Group when it is privatised; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Two of the main objectives of the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group are to increase competition and create new Scottish-based private sector companies. These objectives would not be served by the purchase of Scottish Bus Group subsidiaries by local authority-owned public transport companies.

Civil Justice Review

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if the civil justice review White Paper proposed to be published in spring or early summer in the current year dealing with common law damages procedure will have application to Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* The civil justice review currently being undertaken by the Lord Chancellor applies only to England and Wales. The responsibility for recommending changes in the rules governing the procedures and practices followed in civil proceedings in the Court of Session and the sheriff court falls to the rules councils for those courts. The rules review group set up by the Court of Session is currently examining in detail the rules of that court with a view to ensuring that procedures are as efficient and expeditious as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

London Residuary Body

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on London Residuary Body appointments.

Mr. Chope: The following have been reappointed to the London Residuary Body for the period 12 August 1988 to 31 December 1990 or until the residuary body has discharged its responsibilities arising from abolition of the Greater London council, whichever is sooner:

Members: A. Blakemore, CBE
Councillor Sir Peter Bowness, CBE
J. Esling
W. J. Mackenzie, OBE
M. C. Roberts
J. Wolkind, CBE

These reappointments reflect my right hon. Friend's satisfaction with the great progress made so far by the London Residuary Body and his confidence in its ability to maintain the momentum towards completion of the work arising from abolition of the GLC. The financial benefits resulting from the removal of an expensive and unnecessary tier of London government are now being realised. Only two years on from abolition successor boroughs have already received from the London Residuary Body £129 million in revenue balances that can be directly applied to reduce the rates. By the end of this financial year they can expect to have received some £238 million in capital receipts that can be used to reduce borrowing and enhance capital programmes. These are impressive achievements, on which I congratulate the chairman, Sir Godfrey Taylor, and the members of his board.

Disabled People (Facilities)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the incorporation in all newly developed or built Government offices of modern facilities for the employment of disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is the Government's policy to provide facilities wherever possible for disabled people using Government buildings. Design standards have been developed and are incorporated at the design stage of new Crown buildings. It is also the Government's policy to comply with existing legislation affecting the provision of facilities for disabled people.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in discussions to strengthen existing laws for the removal of rubbish by private contractors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: A number of measures to strengthen the law on waste disposal were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 29 June, at column 1698.

Rating Reform

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he received in favour of the extract of names and addresses from the community charge register being sold by local authorities, and how many representations against it being sold.

Mr. Howard: We received half a dozen representations in favour of the extract being sold and more than 40 against.

Pollution

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects a significant improvement to be achieved in the levels of pollution in the Rivers Don and Rother.

Mr. Moynihan: The Rivers Don and Rother are among the most polluted rivers in the country and are classified as either poor (class 3) or bad (class 4) quality for most of their length. The objective for both rivers set by the Yorkshire water authority is for fair quality (class 2). This should be achieved in the current year for the Don upstream of Sheffield and the Rother south of Chesterfield. A major programme for upgrading and extending Sheffield's sewage treatment works and sewerage system, combined with improved trade effluent discharges, should result in the Don downstream of the Blackburn Meadows sewage treatment works attaining fair (class 2) quality by 1995. Through Sheffield itself, upgrading to a consistent class 2 quality standard will take longer—up to the end of the century—although the river can already support some fish life. Improvements to the remainder of the Rother —mainly through the extension of sewage treatment works capacity—should enable upgrading to class 2 quality during the period 1995-2000.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response the United Kingdom will make to the proposal by the Prime Minister of Norway at the Toronto world conference on the changing atmosphere for an extensive technology transfer programme for modern and low polluting technologies, with particular emphasis on the needs of developing countries.

Mr. Moynihan; My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has responded to the points raised by Mrs. Brundtland, in a written answer given today.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations were made by his Department at the world conference on the changing atmosphere: implications for global security, held in June at Toronto.

Mr. Moynihan: My noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water sent a message to the conference, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Waste Imports

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any biochemical checks made on wastes imported into the United Kingdom from the United States of America to assess the dioxin content of the wastes, particularly those containing paper materials.

Mr. Moynihan: It is the responsibility of waste disposal authorities to decide whether testing is necessary to determine the contents of any waste, including imported waste prior to disposal.

Council House Sales

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the maximum cash discount under the Housing Act 1980 would now be, uprated in line with house price inflation in the Greater London area.

Mr. Waldegrave: The maximum discount on council house sales would be £43,000 if the figure of £35,000 set in January 1987 were to be raised by the percentage increase in London house prices between the first quarters of 1987 and 1988.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the

number of London borough of Camden tenants who applied to buy their homes prior to 23 November 1987 who are still awaiting conveyancing.

Mrs. Roe: The latest statistical return on the council's right-to-buy performance reported 606 cases where completion was pending at the end of May. The returns do not give the dates of the tenants' applications. I am meeting the leader of the council shortly to discuss its handling of sales.

Empty Houses

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide figures showing both the numbers and percentages of empty houses in *(i)* the public sector and *(ii)* the private sector in each local housing authority.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The latest information is for April 1987, from the English authorities' housing investment programme returns, and was included in the table which was sent to the hon. Member on 14 July. All authorities provided figures for their own stock, and these have been shown separately; they exclude closed dwellings, of which there where 2,200 in England. Authorities' information about other vacant housing is generally less accurate and some authorities were unable to provide estimates.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the increase in theft and violence since May 1979; and whether he will include in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in the number of (i) thefts and (ii) violent crimes in the decades ending in 1968, 1978 and 1988 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: The available figures are summarised in the table. Comparable figures for theft and handling stolen goods are not available before 1969 because of changes introduced by the Theft Act 1968; there is also some lack of comparability from 1980 due to changes in the counting rules. Figures on notifiable offences recorded by the police are published annually in chapter 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", of which the most recent issue is for 1986 (Cm. 233). Figures for 1987 were published in Home Office statistical bulletin 6/88 and will be included in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987" later this year; and figures for the first quarter of 1988 were published in Home Office statistical bulletin 19/88; copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Certain notifiable offences recorded by the police
England and Wales — *Numbers (000s) and percentages*

Offence group	*Number recorded (000s)*	*Change Number (000s)*	*Change per cent.*
Violent crime[1]			
1957	31		
1967	56	+25	+82
1977	117	+61	+109
1987	199	+82	+70
April 1978-March 1979	123		
April 1987-March 1988	206	+83	+67
Theft and handling stolen goods			
1969	912		
1978	1,441	529	+58
1987	2,052	611	+42
April 1978-March 1979	1,411		
April 1987-March 1988	2,064	653	+46

[1] Violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery.

Pet Animals (Convention)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with what bodies or persons he is in consultation in regard to the signing by the United Kingdom of the European convention for the protection of pet animals, including article 10 of that convention; and when he expects those consultations to be completed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Consultation on the report on animal mutilations by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which is relevant to article 10 of the convention, is almost complete. The following organisations have been involved:

The British Veterinary Association
The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
The University Federation for Animal Welfare
The Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society
The National Canine Defence League
Pro-Dogs
The British Horse Society
The Horse Race Betting Levy Board
The Jockey Club
The National Trainers Federation
The Master of Foxhounds Association
The Association of British Riding Schools
The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy
The Cats Protection League
The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals
The Blue Cross
The New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society
The Verderers of the New Forest
The New Forest Commoners Defence Association
The Exmoor Pony Society
The National Joint Equine Welfare Committee
The Horses and Ponies Protection Committee
The British Association for Shooting and Conservation
The Kennel Club
The Council for Docked Breeds

It is hoped to complete consultation about the convention as a whole by this autumn. As with the RCVS report, we shall consult all organisations known to us as likely to have an interest, but in addition will welcome views from any other source.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the cost to the Metropolitan police of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the cost to the Metropolitan police of employing management and computer consultants, including agency staff, for the following financial years, was:

Financial Year	Cost £
1984-85	681,000
1985-86	1,643,000
1986-87	2,820,000
1987-88	1,643,000

Information is not available in this form prior to 1984-85.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in the Metropolitan police as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the following contracts, with management and computer consultants, were extant as at 1 January 1987:

Company	Subject of Assignment
Gerard Systems	Artemis planning system
ICL	Police personnel and recruitment projects
ICL	Database maintenance team
Peat, Marwick, McLintock	Relocation of Stores

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department towards allowing telephones to be installed in prisons for inmates to be allowed to contact their families in cases where visits from relatives, due to distance to travel, illness or age, are difficult to make.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Cardphones are provided for use by convicted inmates at open establishments and arrangements are in hand to extend this facility to convicted inmates in certain category C establishments and certain female and young offender establishments.

Unconvicted prisoners are allowed to use official telephones in certain circumstances, including where there are urgent domestic reasons. Governors also exercise their discretion in considering requests from convicted inmates to use official telephones.

Prisoners (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the present number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who are foreign nationals and who are serving prison sentences in prisons in the United Kingdom on 30 June:

(2) how many foreign nationals are at present serving life sentences in prisons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is estimated from records held centrally, which are approximate, that on 31 March 1988 about 600 male and 50 female sentenced prisoners in prison department establishments were of foreign nationality, excluding citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and Eire. Of these, about 80 were serving life sentences. The recording of nationality for citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and Eire is not sufficiently reliable for estimates of their numbers to be given.

Prison Facilities

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison facilities are counted as a national resource on the lines of C wing and the segregation unit at Parkhurst; and how many such facilities have received Butler trust awards.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is a unit comparable to C wing, Parkhurst, at Lincoln prison and a third is planned to open at Hull in November 1988. These units cater for prisoners presenting control problems which cannot be dealt with in normal long-term prison conditions. There are special security units for prisoners who require the highest security conditions, at Leicester and Parkhurst. A third will open later this year at Full Sutton prison. The work of the staff at Parkhurst C wing has been recognised by a Butler trust award.

Unpaid Fines

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total amount of unpaid fines; and whether delays in their enforcement are being occasioned by the lack of staff in magistrates' courts.

Mr. John Patten: The total amount of fines and fees outstanding at magistrates' courts in England and Wales at 31 December 1987 was £84,660,000. Part of this sum consists of fines in respect of which the time allowed for payment had not expired. We are not aware of any general shortage of fine enforcement staff. Applications for grant on the costs of additional staff may be made if a need is perceived: such applications are considered on their merits, having regard to total available provision.

European Parliament (Electoral Systems)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the choice of electoral system for the 1989 elections to the European Parliament.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Representations have been received from two hon. Members in recent months about the electoral system to be used at the European parliamentary elections in 1989. The European Parliament has yet to agree on a uniform procedure for elections, and the electoral system used in the United Kingdom at the 1989 elections will be the same as in 1984: in Great Britain the simple majority system, and in Northern Ireland the system of a single transferable vote.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what matters he discussed during his recent visit to Wandsworth prison; if he will list the people he met during his visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has not visited HM prison Wandsworth recently, but I did so on 4 July. In the course of the visit I had meetings with the governor, senior management, representatives of the board of visitors, the Whitley committee and, at their request, a separate meeting with the local branch of the Prison Officers' Association. In addition, in the course of a tour of the establishment I had conversations with

individual officers, and also took the opportunity to speak to inmates. The questions of staffing complements, overcrowding, integral sanitation and the position of prisoners separated under rule 43 were among the issues discussed. During my visit I gave particular attention to industries, rule 43, sanitation arrangements and an experimental method of installing integral sanitation.

TV-am

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied that TV-am is currently producing programmes fully in accordance with the terms of its franchise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is for the IBA to judge whether or not a programme contractor is fulfilling its contractual obligations in accordance with the Broadcasting Act 1981.

Sporting Events (Public Order)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there have been in 1988 to date for public order offences associated with sporting events.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible from information collected centrally to identify those public order offences which take place at sporting events.

Alcohol-related Public Disorder

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about encouraging breweries, publicans and licensing justices to co-operate with local police in identifying troublemakers in public houses and premises where under-age drinking takes place, with a view to combating alcohol-related public disorders.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no specific representations, but we endorse the need for the brewers, licensees, courts and the police to work together to curb the problems of disorderly conduct and under-age drinking. We shall stress the importance of co-operation in forthcoming meetings and in guidance to be issued shortly by the Department.

Rural Hooliganism

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to increase the resources available to police forces in rural counties to combat drunken hooliganism and assaults on police officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Non-metropolitan forces have received 3,166 extra police posts under this Government and their strength has increased by 4,660 police officers. In addition, substantial numbers of police officers have been redeployed from administrative duties. With my colleagues I shall continue to keep the size of planned increases in police establishments under review.

Remand

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department's latest assessment is of the average time spent on remand in custody by people awaiting trial.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the average time spent on remand in prison department establishments is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales", at table 2(a) of the latest issue, for 1986, Cm. 210, copies of which are in the Library. The initial indications from provisional data reported in Home Office statistical bulletin 8/88, "The Prison Population in 1987", are that there was very little change in 1987.

Open Prison (Lymm)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has any plans to site an open prison at Lymm, in Cheshire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Video Cassettes (Sex and Violence)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are taken to confiscate foreign imported videos depicting perverted sexual practices and violence.

Mr. Renton: The police have powers under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, on a warrant from a magistrate, to seize articles which they believe to be obscene and kept for gain and bring them before a magistrates' court. If the court decides that the articles are obscene and kept for gain or if a person is convicted of keeping them for gain, the court must order their forfeiture. It is for the police to decide when to seek a warrant for the seizure of articles. The courts also have powers when a person is convicted for any offence under the Video Recordings Act 1984 to order the forfeiture of any video recordings related to the offence.

In addition, officers of Customs and Excise have power under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 to seize articles which they believe to be obscene and to have been imported unlawfully. Such articles are deemed to be forfeited unless the importer can satisfy a court that they are not obscene or unlawfully imported.

Los Van Van Group (Visas)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the reasons for the delay in ensuring visa clearance for entry to the Los Van Van group of musicians from Cuba, who have work permits for two engagements in the United Kingdom on 14 and 15 July.

Mr. Renton: There was no undue delay in this case. Applications were submitted at the British embassy in Havana on 1 July and, on confirmation that work permits had been issued for the two planned engagements, visas were authorised on 13 July.

Armley Prison, Leeds

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides there have been in Armley prison, Leeds, during the last three months; on what dates they took place; what were the ages of those involved; for what crimes they were sentenced; and to what extent their imprisonment in Armley was due to a shortage of accommodation in other prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been two apparent suicides, yet to be confirmed as such at inquests, at Leeds

prison during the last three months, on 28 May and the night of 29-30 June. Those involved were aged 17 and 18; both were remanded in custody, facing charges of aggravated burglary, and of theft and taking a vehicle without the owner's consent, respectively. Neither was held at Leeds because of shortage of accommodation elsewhere.

Police—Environmental Health Officers (Liaison)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance to chief officers of police on liaison between police forces and environmental health officers on areas of mutual concern; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of the need for any such guidance, but if my hon. Friend is aware of a particular problem I should be grateful if he would inform me of it.

Bail

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to eradicate any disparities in the granting of bail as between black and white defendants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* Decisions on whether bail should be granted in any particular case are entirely a matter for the courts.

Research is currently being undertaken in the Home Office into the experience of ethnic minorities in the criminal justice system. This will include the question of bail. The results of this research are expected to be published early next year.

Police (Establishment)

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by rank for the present year and for each of the last nine years the total establishments permitted for the Metropolitan police force and for each of the provincial police forces, together with the figure for the actual staffing levels by rank for each year for each force.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the number of police officers for each force in England and Wales; and if he will separately distinguish for each force the number from each rank.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answers 24 June and 30 June 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table:

31 December 1979

	Chief Constable		Deputy Chief Constable		Assistant Chief Constable		Chief Superintendent		Superintendent		Chief Inspector		Inspector		Sergeant		Constable		Totals	
Force	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*	*E*	*S*
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	15	15	32	31	76	71	133	131	452	440	2,240	2,168	2,953	2,861
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	13	14	16	17	50	51	137	141	723	692	947	923
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	6	13	14	26	24	49	51	181	175	861	814	1,140	1,087
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	9	22	21	31	31	102	107	278	273	1,360	1,353	1,805	1,803
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	19	19	27	26	82	83	229	223	1,050	1,049	1,418	1,411
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	2	7	7	16	16	24	24	69	68	171	171	823	782	1,113	1,012
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	28	28	35	94	100	256	243	1,296	1,339	1,712	1,757
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	14	31	34	53	52	124	124	440	425	2,007	1,985	2,673	2,639
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	15	22	22	53	59	172	175	895	881	1,164	1,159
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	18	29	28	73	71	212	204	1,004	980	1,349	1,313
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	10	10	24	24	36	36	155	156	699	682	934	918
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	26	25	60	58	108	111	419	408	1,904	1,885	2,533	2,503
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	14	14	19	19	57	58	170	169	847	830	1,116	1,099
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	5	27	29	92	93	136	148	408	413	1,065	1,071	5,030	4,892	6,766	6,653
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	10	10	22	21	44	44	142	144	748	730	975	958
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	29	29	66	62	116	121	425	418	2,379	2,296	3,034	2,945
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	21	21	33	31	81	82	258	238	1,127	1,081	1,533	1,466
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	25	27	38	37	100	100	314	311	1,448	1,384	1,939	1,879
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	4	11	11	34	34	51	54	159	168	415	417	2,167	2,118	2,842	2,808
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	10	44	45	69	68	149	151	511	511	2,344	2,292	3,138	3,089
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	24	23	35	35	87	90	284	284	1,265	1,258	1,706	1,701
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	14	15	29	29	63	62	180	179	835	871	1,182	1,167
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	4	5	17	20	59	60	65	69	226	231	694	701	3,384	3,381	4,451	4,469
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	6	15	14	24	26	64	63	190	186	962	939	1,265	1,237
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	–	7	7	13	12	24	24	54	54	149	146	728	681	978	926
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	2	13	13	48	51	61	60	187	190	505	511	2,506	2,510	3,325	3,339
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	18	18	30	30	58	59	207	204	986	950	1,309	1,271
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	1	7	7	17	16	29	29	74	73	207	202	1,030	1,008	1,368	1,338
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	35	34	41	42	131	130	331	316	1,709	1,590	2,260	2,125
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	42	62	63	178	178	529	518	2,240	2,206	3,069	3,025
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	37	44	43	150	150	428	426	2,077	1,972	2,752	2,644
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	27	27	49	49	101	102	335	325	1,538	1,496	2,066	2,015
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	11	12	28	28	53	52	166	163	856	841	1,123	1,105
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	21	22	29	30	77	75	247	240	1,216	1,081	1,602	1,460
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	14	39	38	42	44	150	157	458	460	2,106	2,059	2,811	2,777
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	2	12	12	41	41	60	62	135	138	459	446	2,293	2,061	3,005	2,764
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	11	12	19	18	52	53	139	139	646	652	876	883
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	29	29	37	35	121	115	282	259	1,351	1,385	1,834	1,837
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	5	5	20	21	79	81	116	112	359	360	1,041	1,005	4,887	4,574	6,509	6,160
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	6	6	26	26	70	70	88	88	285	285	808	796	3,819	3,526	5,104	4,799
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	11	11	23	23	46	47	148	148	795	769	1,032	1007
City of London	[1]	[1]	[2]	[2]	[3]	[3]	7	7	12	13	18	18	66	61	154	146	762	586	1,022	834
Metropolitan	[1]6	[1]6	[2]15	[2]16	[3]52	[3]52	201	178	259	214	394	465	1,204	1,197	4,264	3,812	20,194	16,542	26,589	22,482
Totals	48	48	57	58	148	146	627	614	1,443	1,410	2,197	2,274	6,008	6,057	18,607	17,925	89,187	83,176	118,322	111,708

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes Deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police, and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

31 December 1980

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	38	38	70	70	146	148	468	465	2,280	2,223	3,020	2,962
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	13	15	16	17	50	51	137	140	736	732	960	963
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	5	13	15	26	24	49	52	181	177	861	810	1,140	1,086
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	22	31	31	105	105	283	282	1,392	1,381	1,845	1,833
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	20	20	27	28	82	89	229	229	1,050	1,077	1,419	1,454
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	17	24	24	69	69	171	172	823	812	1,113	1,104
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	28	28	34	94	101	256	254	1,296	1,403	1,712	1,832
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	15	31	32	53	56	125	134	443	444	2,064	2,035	2,734	2,721
Dorset	1	1	1	—	1	1	4	5	15	14	22	22	53	61	172	179	895	884	1,164	1,167
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	19	29	29	73	69	212	208	1,004	1,008	1,349	1,345
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	10	10	25	25	35	36	155	155	699	693	934	929
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	28	28	59	60	114	113	425	416	1,961	1,976	2,603	2,609
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	14	14	19	20	57	57	170	170	847	849	1,116	1,119
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	27	29	92	93	136	150	408	421	1,065	1,083	5,030	5,139	6,766	6,923
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	10	10	22	22	44	44	142	147	748	741	975	973
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	29	30	66	65	116	127	425	433	2,379	2,384	3,034	3,058
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	21	22	33	31	81	82	258	246	1,127	1,124	1,533	1,518
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	25	27	39	38	99	103	314	315	1,448	1,454	1,939	1,951
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	4	11	11	34	33	51	54	163	167	420	418	2,187	2,182	2,871	2,871
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	16	44	44	69	70	153	159	515	513	2,356	2,312	3,158	3,120
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	24	25	35	36	88	91	284	282	1,285	1,275	1,727	1,720
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	14	15	29	29	63	63	180	181	885	884	1,182	1,183
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	5	5	17	20	59	61	65	72	226	234	694	709	3,384	3,488	4,452	4,591
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	15	15	24	25	64	65	190	191	962	943	1,265	1,249
Northamptonshire	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	7	13	12	24	25	54	54	149	149	728	722	978	971
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	48	50	61	60	187	190	505	504	2,536	2,518	3,355	3,340
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	18	18	30	29	61	62	207	205	986	966	1,312	1,290
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	18	29	30	74	80	207	201	1,030	1,012	1,368	1,352
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	35	35	41	42	131	132	331	319	1,709	1,668	2,260	2,209
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	2	13	13	42	42	62	62	178	179	529	521	2,240	2,247	3,069	3,068
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	38	44	44	150	150	428	428	2,197	2,166	2,872	2,842
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	3	2	11	10	27	26	49	46	101	102	335	329	1,538	1,554	2,066	2,071
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	11	11	28	28	53	55	166	165	856	855	1,123	1,122
Surrey	1	1	1	—	2	2	8	7	21	22	29	29	78	78	247	245	1,215	1,205	1,602	1,589
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	13	39	39	42	44	150	155	460	460	2,116	2,107	2,823	2,823
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	3	12	12	41	41	60	63	135	139	459	460	2,293	2,323	3,005	3,043
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	13	12	19	19	55	56	143	140	681	680	920	916
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	30	30	38	38	126	119	298	268	1,415	1,470	1,921	1,939
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	6	6	20	20	79	80	116	111	359	355	1,041	1,019	4,886	4,946	6,509	6,539
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	6	6	26	26	70	71	88	88	285	287	808	808	3,819	3,752	5,104	5,040
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	11	11	23	23	47	48	148	148	795	793	1,033	1,032
City of London	[1]	[1]	[2]	[2]	[1]	[1]	7	7	12	12	18	18	66	61	154	141	762	601	1,022	843
Metropolitan	[3]6	[3]6	[2]15	[2]16	[2]52	[2]54	195	193	256	219	369	431	1,206	1,236	4,243	3,789	20,235	17,618	26,577	23,562
Totals	48	47	57	56	150	151	619	623	1,452	1,434	2,168	2,262	6,053	6,179	18,647	18,108	89,736	87,012	118,930	115,872

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes Deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

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Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	38	39	70	68	146	149	468	467	2,280	2,273	3,020	3,014
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	17	18	50	50	137	144	749	749	974	983
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	4	13	14	26	23	51	56	181	179	859	841	1,140	1,120
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	23	31	31	105	106	283	282	1,392	1,396	1,845	1,850
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	1	7	7	20	21	28	27	88	85	233	234	1,094	1,098	1,474	1,475
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	17	24	24	70	72	172	174	836	816	1,128	1,113
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	28	31	37	99	100	259	250	1,340	1,352	1,767	1,779
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	14	32	33	52	57	127	134	443	437	2,062	2,014	2,734	2,694
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	17	19	22	62	65	177	175	892	874	1,176	1,162
Durham	1	—	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	19	29	29	73	74	214	213	1,008	982	1,355	1,328
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	10	10	25	25	35	35	155	154	699	691	934	925
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	28	29	59	58	117	118	425	413	1,988	1,978	2,633	2,612
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	14	18	19	57	57	172	169	860	858	1,131	1,126
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	27	29	92	93	136	150	408	425	1,065	1,074	5,205	5,149	6,941	6,928
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	—	6	6	10	10	22	22	44	44	142	144	748	735	975	963
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	15	29	28	66	62	116	120	435	435	2,419	2,383	3,084	3,048
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	22	22	33	32	87	89	258	255	1,155	1,157	1,568	1,568
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	9	25	25	39	37	102	105	324	319	1,468	1,456	1,972	1,955
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	4	11	11	34	34	51	51	163	167	420	416	2,187	2,183	2,871	2,868
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	16	44	44	69	69	153	158	515	512	2,356	2,348	3,158	3,153
Leicestershire	1	1	1	2	2	2	7	7	24	26	35	35	88	92	284	284	1,285	1,279	1,727	1,728
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	14	14	29	29	63	64	180	181	885	883	1,182	1,182
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	5	5	17	19	59	59	68	78	235	241	732	743	3,489	3,500	4,607	4,647
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	15	15	24	23	64	63	190	189	962	963	1,265	1,263
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	13	12	24	25	55	55	151	152	753	749	1,006	1,003
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	48	49	61	62	187	189	505	505	2,536	2,508	3,355	3,331
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	18	18	30	31	62	63	207	204	986	962	1,313	1,288
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	18	29	30	76	76	207	205	1,028	1,013	1,368	1,353
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	35	35	41	42	131	127	330	326	1,709	1,716	2,259	2,259
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	13	42	42	63	63	182	179	529	529	2,270	2,251	3,105	3,082
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	36	44	43	150	151	428	428	2,197	2,198	2,872	2,874
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	11	31	31	49	45	120	113	336	317	1,548	1,574	2,099	2,095
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	24	25	54	54	166	166	856	845	1,125	1,114
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	21	22	29	29	78	77	247	248	1,215	1,205	1,602	1,593
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	12	39	40	42	43	150	152	460	453	2,116	2,119	2,823	2,824
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	4	12	12	41	41	60	61	140	144	466	468	2,383	2,359	3,107	3,091
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	6	15	15	18	18	55	64	143	143	681	676	920	925
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	30	29	38	38	126	125	298	293	1,415	1,434	1,921	1,933

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	6	6	21	22	81	82	116	113	363	361	1,058	1,027	5,037	5,076	6,684	6,689
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	[2]1	6	5	26	27	70	70	88	88	285	287	808	808	3,860	3,860	5,154	5,147
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	11	11	23	23	49	49	148	147	795	803	1,035	1,042
City of London	[1]1	[1]1	[2]1	[2]1	[3]1	[3]1	7	7	12	12	18	18	66	62	154	139	762	624	1,022	865
Metropolitan	[1]6	[1]6	[2]15	[2]16	[3]52	[3]51	195	199	256	216	381	453	1,214	1,230	4,334	3,803	20,124	19,055	26,577	25,029
Totals	48	47	57	59	149	147	622	632	1,470	1,444	2,179	2,276	6,146	6,226	18,839	18,203	90,498	89,001	120,008	118,035

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Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	38	38	70	70	146	147	468	464	2,280	2,259	3,020	2,996
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	19	19	51	51	137	142	750	754	980	989
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	23	55	56	181	181	859	860	1,140	1,142
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	23	31	31	105	104	283	282	1,392	1,377	1,845	1,829
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	20	21	28	27	94	89	235	236	1,086	1,080	1,474	1,464
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	18	24	24	70	72	172	170	835	807	1,128	1,101
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	28	37	38	100	105	259	258	1,333	1,313	1,767	1,754
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	36	47	50	132	133	437	432	2,065	2,060	2,734	2,729
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	8	17	17	19	19	62	66	177	175	892	896	1,176	1,184
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	19	29	29	73	73	214	213	1,008	990	1,355	1,336
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	10	10	25	26	35	35	155	155	699	694	934	930
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	10	28	28	59	59	117	117	425	414	1,998	2,000	2,643	2,633
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	18	18	57	57	173	173	868	861	1,140	1,133
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	27	29	92	94	137	149	409	422	1,065	1,076	5,205	5,220	6,943	6,998
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	11	11	22	20	46	46	142	143	748	740	978	969
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	15	29	28	66	59	116	120	435	436	2,419	2,417	3,084	3,080
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	22	23	33	32	87	88	258	254	1,155	1,151	1,568	1,561
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	9	25	25	39	33	102	106	324	323	1,468	1,459	1,972	1,964
Kent	1	1	1	—	3	4	12	12	34	35	51	54	166	172	420	415	2,187	2,186	2,875	2,879
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	16	44	43	69	70	153	160	515	517	2,356	2,353	3,158	3,165
Leicestershire	1	1	1	2	2	2	7	7	25	26	35	36	93	98	284	284	1,285	1,269	1,733	1,725
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	14	14	29	29	63	64	180	180	885	885	1,182	1,183
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	5	5	17	20	59	60	68	76	235	248	732	747	3,489	3,474	4,607	4,632
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	16	24	25	63	62	191	191	969	962	1,273	1,266
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	13	13	21	21	59	58	151	151	753	748	1,006	1,000
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	47	49	61	62	189	190	505	502	2,536	2,507	3,357	3,329
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	18	19	30	29	63	64	209	210	983	971	1,313	1,303
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	18	29	31	77	80	211	208	1,023	1,020	1,368	1,368
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	35	34	41	42	131	129	330	330	1,709	1,702	2,259	2,250
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	42	42	63	62	182	180	529	530	2,270	2,263	3,105	3,096
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	38	44	44	150	151	428	428	2,197	2,198	2,872	2,875
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	11	31	31	49	49	120	117	336	317	1,548	1,570	2,099	2,099
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	16	24	24	54	54	166	166	856	855	1,124	1,124
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	21	21	29	29	78	79	247	247	1,215	1,214	1,602	1,602
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	12	39	39	42	44	150	157	459	428	2,116	2,141	2,822	2,826
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	40	59	58	146	147	467	458	2,392	2,388	3,124	3,109
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	6	15	15	18	18	60	62	143	144	681	672	925	920
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	11	30	31	38	36	128	128	298	297	1,415	1,416	1,923	1,923
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	6	6	22	22	80	81	116	115	363	364	1,058	1,031	5,037	5,072	6,684	6,693
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	6	6	26	26	73	73	88	88	286	287	812	812	3,861	3,861	5,154	5,155
Wiltshire	1	1	1	—	1	1	6	6	15	15	19	20	54	57	150	150	795	781	1,042	1,031
City of London	[1]1	[1]1	[2]1	[2]1	[3]1	[3]1	7	7	12	12	18	18	66	61	154	129	762	606	1,022	836
Metropolitan	[1]6	[1]6	[2]15	[2]16	[3]52	[3]53	195	200	254	229	390	439	1,292	1,354	4,413	3,906	19,998	20,022	26,615	26,225
Totals	48	48	57	57	149	151	623	638	1,483	1,473	2,181	2,250	6,278	6,410	18,928	18,305	90,378	90,074	120,125	119,406

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E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

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Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	—	3	3	13	13	39	39	70	70	148	148	468	466	2,277	2,245	3,020	2,985
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	19	19	51	51	140	141	767	765	1,000	999
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	—	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	24	55	55	181	180	859	857	1,140	1,137
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	23	31	32	105	105	283	281	1,392	1,379	1,845	1,832
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	8	20	20	28	29	94	92	235	237	1,086	1,074	1,474	1,464
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	17	24	25	70	71	172	173	835	815	1,128	1,111
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	28	37	38	100	102	259	260	1,333	1,326	1,767	1,766
Devon and Cornwall	1	—	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	36	48	47	131	135	438	434	2,064	2,055	2,734	2,724
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	19	17	20	20	62	67	180	180	895	878	1,183	1,171
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	17	29	28	75	75	214	210	1,008	966	1,357	1,308
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	10	10	25	25	35	33	155	155	699	691	934	924
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	28	28	59	59	117	119	425	415	2,008	1,991	2,653	2,628
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	18	18	58	57	174	174	890	871	1,164	1,144
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	28	28	92	94	137	140	408	412	1,065	1,063	5,205	5,186	6,943	6,931
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	15	15	15	15	49	50	142	143	749	732	978	962
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	11	29	29	66	58	116	120	435	435	2,419	2,415	3,084	3,073
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	23	24	32	33	87	91	258	254	1,155	1,151	1,568	1,566
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	1	9	9	24	24	38	38	105	109	324	324	1,468	1,458	1,972	1,965
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	3	12	12	34	35	51	54	166	171	420	411	2,187	2,151	2,875	2,839

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	16	43	44	70	70	153	155	515	516	2,356	2,318	3,158	3,125
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	25	26	35	36	93	97	284	282	1,285	1,284	1,733	1,736
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	2	1	7	8	14	14	29	29	64	64	180	178	885	882	1,183	1,178
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	5	5	17	20	59	61	68	77	235	248	732	744	3,489	3,451	4,607	4,604
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	16	21	22	66	64	191	192	969	974	1,273	1,278
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	13	13	21	21	59	58	151	150	765	750	1,018	1,001
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	2	14	14	47	48	61	62	189	192	505	504	2,536	2,513	3,357	3,337
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	8	19	18	30	30	65	65	209	208	983	943	1,316	1,275
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	17	30	31	78	79	211	212	1,021	1,004	1,368	1,354
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	8	35	31	41	39	131	127	330	326	1,709	1,692	2,259	2,227
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	43	44	63	63	185	182	529	528	2,270	2,246	3,109	3,082
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	37	44	44	156	158	446	446	2,173	2,157	2,872	2,858
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	11	31	31	49	48	120	117	336	321	1,548	1,558	2,099	2,090
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	16	24	24	54	54	166	166	868	854	1,136	1,123
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	9	21	21	29	30	78	81	247	246	1,215	1,183	1,602	1,574
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	12	39	39	42	45	150	157	459	425	2,124	2,124	2,830	2,807
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	43	59	60	152	150	467	460	2,529	2,421	3,267	3,152
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	14	18	18	60	61	143	143	681	666	925	910
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	1	10	11	30	30	38	39	128	124	298	296	1,415	1,411	1,923	1,914
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	6	6	22	22	80	81	116	114	363	368	1,058	1,030	5,037	5,062	6,684	6,685
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	6	4	26	26	73	73	88	86	286	288	812	810	3,861	3,827	5,154	5,116
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	13	19	19	57	57	150	150	792	782	1,042	1,030
City of London	[1]1	[1]1	[3]1	[3]1	[3]1	[3]1	6	7	11	12	19	18	57	59	123	137	579	564	798	800
Metropolitan	[1]6	[1]6	[2]15	[2]17	[3]52	[3]52	195	197	251	227	397	465	1,312	1,391	4,413	4,007	20,274	20,321	26,915	26,683
Totals	48	47	57	57	149	142	621	630	1,485	1,469	2,181	2,262	6,323	6,455	18,923	18,413	90,660	89,993	120,447	119,468

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S = Actual force strength.

31 December 1984

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	39	38	70	68	148	153	468	466	2,277	2,236	3,020	2,979
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	19	19	51	52	140	141	767	739	1,000	994
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	24	55	57	181	180	859	853	1,140	1,136
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	22	31	30	105	107	283	281	1,392	1,345	1,845	1,797
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	20	18	28	29	74	93	235	234	1,086	1,079	1,474	1,464
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	17	24	24	70	71	172	175	835	809	1,128	1,106
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	1	8	8	26	27	37	38	100	101	259	261	1,333	1,323	1,767	1,761
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	35	49	47	130	134	438	436	2,064	2,075	2,734	2,745
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	17	21	21	62	68	180	180	894	886	1,183	1,181
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	19	27	27	78	78	214	214	1,007	928	1,357	1,278
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	12	11	24	24	35	35	135	155	698	687	934	922
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	28	28	59	59	117	118	425	414	2,018	2,014	2,663	2,649
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	18	18	58	58	174	174	890	865	1,164	1,139
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	28	27	92	94	137	135	408	410	1,065	1,072	5,205	4,999	6,943	6,745
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	—	5	4	15	14	15	16	49	49	142	143	749	729	978	957
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	10	11	32	31	54	58	122	123	442	436	2,419	2,387	3,084	3,051
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	23	24	32	32	87	91	258	253	1,165	1,167	1,578	1,580
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	1	9	8	24	24	38	38	105	109	324	319	1,468	1,411	1,972	1,912
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	35	34	49	50	169	174	420	418	2,186	2,164	2,875	2,856
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	14	43	41	70	68	153	151	545	514	2,356	2,301	3,158	3,095
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	25	26	35	35	93	96	284	279	1,285	1,256	1,733	1,703
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	6	12	13	24	26	67	63	184	178	888	863	1,183	1,152
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	5	5	17	20	59	60	68	76	235	246	732	743	3,489	3,441	4,607	4,593
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	16	21	21	66	68	191	192	969	953	1,273	1,260
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	13	12	21	20	60	61	153	149	769	760	1,025	1,010
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	47	48	61	63	189	191	505	504	2,536	2,519	3,357	3,344
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	21	20	28	29	65	66	209	206	983	950	1,316	1,281
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	17	30	27	78	77	211	197	1,021	1,012	1,368	1,341
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	8	35	32	41	35	131	123	330	331	1,709	1,687	2,259	2,220
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	43	45	63	63	185	186	529	530	2,270	2,263	3,109	3,106
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	37	44	44	156	159	446	452	2,173	2,165	2,872	2,873
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	11	31	31	49	48	120	115	336	313	1,553	1,581	2,104	2,103
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	16	24	23	54	53	166	161	868	865	1,136	1,127
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	21	22	29	28	78	80	247	245	1,215	1,216	1,602	1,603
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	12	12	38	39	42	42	158	158	420	417	2,155	2,136	2,830	2,809
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	2	13	13	42	41	56	58	155	152	467	459	2,529	2,548	3,267	3,275
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	18	18	60	61	143	142	681	672	925	916
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	11	30	29	38	37	128	126	298	295	1,415	1,395	1,923	1,897
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	6	5	23	19	80	83	118	114	362	356	1,058	1,028	5,035	4,917	6,684	6,524
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	6	4	26	24	73	72	88	88	286	286	812	804	3,861	3,746	5,154	5,026
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	19	19	57	56	150	147	792	783	1,042	1,029
City of London	[1]1	[1]1	[3]1	[3]1	[3]1	[3]1	6	5	11	11	19	19	57	56	123	130	579	574	798	798
Metropolitan	[1]6	[1]6	[2]15	[2]17	[3]52	[3]52	195	206	251	221	398	458	1,316	1,405	4,409	4,228	20,473	20,125	27,115	26,718
Totals	48	48	57	59	148	140	616	621	1,490	1,459	2,159	2,216	6,352	6,472	18,893	18,596	90,916	89,444	120,679	119,055

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police, and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

31 December 1985

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	39	38	70	69	148	152	468	464	2,277	2,224	3,020	2,965
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	—	1	1	5	5	15	15	19	19	51	52	140	139	167	750	1,000	982
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	25	55	51	186	132	854	855	1,140	1,141
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	22	31	28	105	103	283	279	1,392	1,359	1,845	1,803
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	6	20	19	28	27	94	93	235	235	1,086	1,077	1,474	1,461
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	17	24	25	70	71	172	173	885	824	1,128	1,120
Derbyshire	1	1	1	—	2	1	8	8	26	26	37	37	100	102	259	258	1,333	1,332	1,761	1,765
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	36	47	49	130	133	438	431	2,071	2,080	2,739	2,747
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	17	21	22	66	66	183	177	907	911	1,203	1,202
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	19	27	27	78	76	214	212	1,007	947	1,357	1,293
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	12	12	24	24	35	34	155	153	698	691	934	924
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	28	28	59	60	120	121	425	427	2,025	2,026	2,673	2,678
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	18	18	58	58	174	174	890	877	1,164	1,151
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	28	28	92	93	137	135	408	405	1,065	1,064	5,205	5,046	6,943	6,779
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	15	14	15	15	49	49	142	143	747	743	978	971
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	10	12	32	31	54	56	122	126	442	437	2,419	2,401	3,084	3,068
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	24	25	31	32	89	93	256	254	1,165	1,167	1,578	1,584
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	1	9	8	23	24	38	38	105	107	324	319	1,469	1,437	1,972	1,936
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	12	35	33	49	48	169	176	420	427	2,186	2,158	2,875	2,859
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	4	4	15	10	43	42	70	66	153	156	515	513	2,356	2,211	3,158	3,004
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	25	24	35	36	93	98	284	282	1,285	1,299	1,733	1,750
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	12	12	24	22	67	66	184	179	888	854	1,183	1,141
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	5	3	17	19	59	61	68	77	235	248	732	739	3,489	3,405	4,607	4,554
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	16	21	21	68	68	194	195	969	953	1,278	1,263
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	—	1	1	6	6	13	13	22	22	61	61	154	152	772	761	1,031	1,017
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	48	49	60	62	189	193	505	505	2,557	2,540	3,378	3,368
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	22	21	27	27	65	66	209	210	983	918	1,316	1,251
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	17	30	29	78	77	211	205	1,021	1,014	1,368	1,353
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	—	2	2	9	8	35	33	41	31	131	125	330	320	1,709	1,694	2,259	2,214
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	2	14	13	43	43	63	63	185	182	529	526	2,270	2,233	3,109	3,064
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	37	37	44	44	156	160	446	446	2,173	2,147	2,872	2,850
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	11	31	30	49	48	120	116	336	329	1,553	1,564	2,104	2,102
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	18	20	20	56	56	175	174	859	854	1,136	1,131
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	22	23	25	26	88	92	244	244	1,236	1,231	1,626	1,627
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	2	12	12	38	37	42	42	158	160	459	420	2,116	2115	2,830	2,790
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	2	13	13	42	41	56	57	161	166	468	464	2,572	2,538	3,317	3,283
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	18	17	60	62	143	139	681	698	925	939
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	30	30	38	39	128	128	298	298	1,445	1,415	1,953	1,924
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	6	6	23	21	80	78	118	120	362	364	1,058	1,043	5,035	4,921	6,684	6,555
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	6	4	26	22	73	69	88	87	286	284	812	810	3,861	3,771	5,154	5,049
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	20	20	54	54	160	157	787	773	1,045	1,028
City of London	1[1]	1[1]	1[1]	1[1]	1[1]	1[1]	6	6	11	11	19	19	57	56	123	129	579	558	798	782
Metropolitan	6[1]	6[1]	15[1]	17[1]	52[1]	40[1]	195	185	235	249	430	491	1,334	1,398	4,305	4,387	20,593	19,886	27,165	26,659
Totals	48	48	57	55	148	127	615	594	1,479	1,482	2,180	2,240	6,397	6,509	18,855	18,814	91,124	89,258	120,903	119,127

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes Deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police, and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

31 December 1986

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	12	39	38	70	68	148	146	468	461	2,277	2,252	3,020	2,982
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	19	19	51	53	140	141	767	759	1,000	995
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	25	55	56	186	189	854	856	1,140	1,148
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	22	31	28	105	105	283	276	1,392	1,380	1,845	1,823
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	1	7	7	20	19	28	24	94	97	235	231	1,086	1,086	1,474	1,467
Cumbria	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	17	25	26	70	70	173	184	835	814	1,130	1,121
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	26	37	38	100	101	259	260	1,333	1,324	1,767	1,761
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	36	47	44	131	135	445	449	2,081	2,071	2,757	2,753
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	7	17	18	22	22	66	64	184	175	913	904	1,211	1,193
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	19	18	27	27	78	78	214	213	1,007	952	1,357	1,300
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	12	12	24	24	35	36	155	151	698	696	934	929
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	2	11	11	29	29	59	60	122	124	426	425	2,070	2,065	2,722	2,719
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	15	18	18	58	58	174	171	890	881	1,164	1,152
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	28	28	92	89	137	135	408	408	1,065	1,064	5,205	4,993	6,943	6,725
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	15	15	49	49	142	143	749	743	978	973
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	10	10	32	32	55	57	123	126	452	436	2,428	2,413	3,105	3,079
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	24	25	31	32	89	94	256	248	1,183	1,167	1,596	1,579
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	23	24	38	37	105	105	324	324	1,469	1,461	1,971	1,962
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	10	35	34	49	51	169	181	421	419	2,221	2,177	2,911	2,877
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	12	42	41	69	68	159	160	515	509	2,355	2,296	3,158	3,091
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	25	25	35	38	93	96	284	284	1,285	1,262	1,733	1,716
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	12	12	25	24	66	67	184	175	888	871	1,183	1,157
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	4	4	18	19	60	61	76	81	242	256	752	739	3,525	3,378	4,679	4,540
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	16	16	22	21	67	68	197	198	1,006	979	1,318	1,292
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	13	13	22	22	63	63	155	151	792	783	1,054	1,041
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	13	48	48	60	63	189	194	505	506	2,557	2,532	3,378	3,361
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	23	21	26	28	65	67	209	208	983	934	1,316	1,268
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	18	30	28	78	76	211	209	1,021	1,006	1,368	1,348
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	7	35	30	41	29	131	124	330	324	1,709	1,689	2,259	2,207
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	43	42	63	61	185	185	529	533	2,270	2,259	3,109	3,099
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	38	38	45	44	159	161	446	444	2,177	2,143	2,881	2,846
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	11	31	31	50	49	121	115	336	325	1,578	1,571	2,131	2,106
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	18	20	20	56	56	175	175	909	858	1,186	1,136
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	22	22	25	26	88	92	244	247	1,249	1,208	1,639	1,606
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	10	35	34	38	40	170	166	434	434	2,137	2,092	2,830	2,781
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	41	56	52	162	169	494	480	2,645	2,633	3,417	3,393
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	18	19	61	63	150	149	715	707	967	961
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	30	29	38	39	128	128	298	296	1,445	1,420	1,953	1,926

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	5	5	22	21	80	82	118	118	360	363	1,056	1,054	5,041	4,925	6,684	6,570
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	5	5	22	21	69	70	81	82	286	282	812	805	3,877	3,849	5,154	5,116
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	16	16	21	20	56	55	162	160	785	777	1,049	1,037
City of London	[1] 1	[1] 1	[2] 1	[2] 1	[3] 1	[3] 1	6	5	11	11	19	18	57	56	123	129	579	548	798	770
Metropolitan	[1] 7	[1] 7	[2] 15	[2] 16	[3] 51	[3] 36	191	161	215	237	438	502	1,343	1,402	4,269	4,452	20,986	20,048	27,515	26,861
Totals	49	49	57	58	143	126	604	564	1,456	1,469	2,191	2,242	6,441	6,550	18,872	18,946	91,972	89,762	121,785	119,766

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes Deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police, and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

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Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	14	39	38	70	68	148	152	468	486	2,287	2,278	3,030	3,021
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	14	19	20	51	52	140	140	767	767	1,000	1,001
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	24	55	56	187	188	873	875	1,160	1,165
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	22	22	29	29	105	105	290	290	1,387	1,368	1,845	1,846
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	6	20	21	28	23	94	95	235	238	1,080	1,080	1,474	1,473
Cumbria	1	—	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	18	25	26	70	71	187	189	835	838	1,144	1,151
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	8	26	27	37	38	100	103	263	264	1,355	1,352	1,793	1,796
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	37	47	47	133	134	449	448	2,112	2,113	2,794	2,797
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	7	17	17	22	22	67	68	187	176	933	953	1,235	1,246
Durham	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	7	19	18	27	27	78	78	214	214	1,007	991	1,357	1,339
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	12	11	24	25	36	36	155	153	698	694	935	929
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	29	29	59	60	122	122	426	427	2,070	2,071	2,722	2,725
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	14	22	22	54	56	174	173	890	889	1,164	1,163
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	28	28	92	93	137	136	408	408	1,065	1,071	5,205	5,277	6,943	7,021
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	16	16	48	48	142	143	749	747	978	977
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	10	10	32	31	55	56	123	128	452	455	2,428	2,430	3,105	3,115
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	24	24	31	31	89	96	259	241	1,215	1,199	1,631	1,604
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	1	9	9	23	24	38	34	105	105	324	326	1,469	1,458	1,972	1,959
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	10	35	37	49	50	169	173	421	426	2,221	2,209	2,911	2,910
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	3	2	13	13	42	40	69	69	159	166	515	503	2,355	2,364	3,158	3,159
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	25	26	35	35	93	96	284	280	1,285	1,314	1,733	1,762
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	12	12	25	25	66	66	184	180	888	889	1,183	1,180
Merseyside	1	1	1	1	4	4	18	19	60	62	76	80	242	262	752	758	3,525	3,487	4,679	4,674
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	7	17	17	22	23	67	70	197	198	1,006	990	1,318	1,308
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	13	13	22	22	66	66	159	155	805	810	1,074	1,075
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	2	14	13	48	49	60	62	189	192	505	509	2,632	2,649	3,453	3,478
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	23	23	27	28	64	66	209	209	983	971	1,316	1,307
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	17	30	29	78	77	211	207	1,021	1,042	1,368	1,383
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	7	35	29	41	34	131	131	330	321	1,709	1,733	2,259	2,259
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	13	43	42	63	62	185	186	529	525	2,270	2,287	3,109	3,120
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	38	38	45	45	159	161	446	445	2,227	2,229	2,931	2,934
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	1	11	12	31	30	50	49	121	119	336	333	1,603	1,605	2,156	2,151
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	18	20	20	56	57	175	176	909	911	1,186	1,191
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	22	23	25	23	88	93	244	266	1,249	1,237	1,639	1,647
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	35	33	39	40	173	170	448	441	2,206	2,183	2,917	2,883
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	43	52	53	168	173	499	495	2,688	2,709	3,467	3,493
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	14	18	18	61	63	150	150	729	724	981	977
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	30	29	38	39	128	129	298	298	1,443	1,440	1,953	1,949
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	5	5	22	22	80	80	118	121	360	367	1,056	1,057	5,041	5,005	6,684	6,659
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	5	5	20	20	69	69	81	82	288	288	812	812	3,927	3,928	5,204	5,206
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	16	15	21	22	56	56	162	170	810	824	1,074	1,096
City of London	[1] 1	[1] 1	[2] 1	[2] 1	[3] 1	[3] 1	6	6	11	11	20	21	56	55	123	128	579	557	798	781
Metropolitan	[1] 7	[1] 6	[2] 16	[2] 15	[3] 37	[3] 36	158	158	234	251	492	482	1,409	1,408	4,443	4,316	21,019	20,621	27,815	27,293
Totals	49	47	58	57	129	124	568	566	1,476	1,488	2,247	2,238	6,518	6,605	19,105	18,954	92,498	92,124	122,648	122,203

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes Deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police, and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment.
S = Actual force strength.

1988

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	14	31	37	70	69	148	150	468	462	2,307	2,267	3,050	3,004
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	14	19	20	51	52	140	141	797	771	1,030	1,006
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	14	14	23	24	55	56	187	189	893	877	1,180	1,168
Cheshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	9	22	21	29	28	105	106	290	289	1,402	1,379	1,860	1,836
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	20	20	28	23	94	97	235	237	1,080	1,085	1,474	1,473
Cumbria	1	—	1	1	1	1	7	7	17	17	25	26	70	71	187	188	835	833	1,144	1,144
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	8	9	26	26	37	37	100	104	263	260	1,355	1,353	1,793	1,793
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	35	36	47	48	135	131	449	446	2,143	2,124	2,827	2,803
Dorset	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	17	22	22	67	68	187	189	933	923	1,235	1,228
Durham	1	1	1	—	2	2	8	7	19	18	27	27	78	78	214	214	1,007	987	1,357	1,334
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	6	12	11	24	25	36	35	155	151	698	691	935	922
Essex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	29	29	59	60	122	120	426	427	2,110	2,064	2,762	2,736
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	15	14	22	22	54	56	174	173	890	877	1,164	[illegible]
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	1	6	6	28	28	92	91	137	136	408	412	1,065	1,066	5,205	5,213	6,943	[illegible]
Gwent	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	15	16	16	48	48	150	150	758	744	995	981
Hampshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	10	10	32	33	55	52	127	126	471	457	2,428	2,406	3,128	3,089
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	24	24	31	31	89	94	259	248	1,215	1,197	1,631	1,607
Humberside	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	9	23	25	38	37	105	105	324	325	1,469	1,453	1,972	1,958
Kent	1	1	1	1	3	4	11	10	35	37	49	48	169	175	431	424	2,241	2,224	2,941	2,924

Force	Chief Constable E	Chief Constable S	Deputy Chief Constable E	Deputy Chief Constable S	Assistant Chief Constable E	Assistant Chief Constable S	Chief Superintendent E	Chief Superintendent S	Superintendent E	Superintendent S	Chief Inspector E	Chief Inspector S	Inspector E	Inspector S	Sergeant E	Sergeant S	Constable E	Constable S	Totals E	Totals S
Lancashire	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	41	69	68	159	163	515	502	2,355	2,374	3,158	3,166
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	25	25	35	34	93	105	284	277	1,285	1,297	1,733	1,749
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	12	12	25	25	66	66	196	183	876	885	1,183	1,179
Merseyside	1	1	1		4	4	18	19	60	60	76	83	242	258	752	762	3,525	3,477	4,679	4,664
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	7	17	17	22	24	67	70	197	200	1,026	988	1,338	1,309
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	13	13	23	22	67	66	162	160	832	827	1,106	1,097
Northumbria	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	13	48	49	60	63	189	195	505	511	2,662	2,640	3,483	3,476
North Wales	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	7	23	23	27	28	64	66	209	209	993	969	1,326	1,305
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	17	18	27	27	77	76	211	206	1,025	1,032	1,368	1,370
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	8	35	29	41	34	131	130	330	323	1,744	1,732	2,294	2,260
South Wales	1	1	1	1	3	3	14	14	43	41	63	64	185	186	529	526	2,270	2,283	3,109	3,119
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	38	38	45	47	159	159	446	445	2,247	2,222	2,951	2,927
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	2	1	11	12	31	31	50	51	121	119	336	327	1,613	1,610	2,166	2,153
Suffolk	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	17	18	20	20	56	56	178	175	906	906	1,186	1,184
Surrey	1	1	1	1	2	2	7	7	22	20	25	25	88	93	244	262	1,249	1,252	1,639	1,663
Sussex	1	1	1	1	3	3	11	11	35	32	39	43	173	171	448	448	2,212	2,177	2,923	2,887
Thames Valley	1	1	1	1	3	3	13	13	42	43	52	52	168	174	499	495	2,797	2,763	3,576	3,545
Warwickshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	15	14	18	18	61	63	150	150	729	727	981	980
West Mercia	1	1	1	1	2	2	10	10	30	27	38	41	128	129	298	298	1,455	1,441	1,963	1,950
West Midlands	1	1	1	1	5	5	22	23	80	77	118	118	360	369	1,056	1,05[redacted]	5,111	4,999	6,754	6,650
West Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	5	5	20	20	69	69	81	81	288	285	812	8[redacted]	3,950	3,923	5,227	5,195
Wiltshire	1	1	1	1	1	-	6	6	16	16	21	22	56	58	167	1[redacted]	805	827	1,074	1,094
City of London	[1]1	[1]1	[2]1	[2]1	[3]1	[3]1	6	6	11	11	20	21	56	54	123	[redacted]30	579	565	798	790
Metropolitan	[1]7	[1]6	[2]16	[2]16	[3]37	[3]38	157	166	236	247	496	484	1,429	1,403	4,306	4,228	21,431	20,899	28,115	27,487
Totals	49	47	58	56	129	129	567	578	1,478	1,470	2,249	2,246	6,544	6,598	19,028	18,883	93,449	92,283	123,551	122,290

[1] Includes ranks of Assistant Commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and Commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes Deputy Assistant Commissioner in Metropolitan police, and Assistant Commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes Commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.
E = Authorised establishment at 1 June 1988.
S = Actual force strength at 20 April 1988.

TRANSPORT

East Coast Railway Line

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning overcrowding on trains on the main InterCity east coast line; and what discussions he has had with British Rail on the subject.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received two representations. The replies to both made it clear that this is a management matter for BR.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many passengers travel per day, on average, on all or part of the main east coast rail line between London King's Cross and the north-east of England.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department does not keep information of this kind.

Airlines (Persian Gulf)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Government will advise United Kingdom airlines not to overfly any part of the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. We are in close touch with British airlines operating in the region about measures to safeguard their operations. We fully support initiatives in ICAO to provide for alternative air routes in the region so as to enhance the future safety of international civil aviation.

Roadworks

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list (i) grant-related expenditure for capital and current highways work by local authorities in England for 1988-89 and (ii) the budgets for capital and current highways work by local authorities in England for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures for grant-related expenditure and budgets for highways maintenance (including street lighting) for highway authorities in England in 1988-89 are set out in table 1.

Budgets for capital expenditure in 1988-89 are not yet available. The capital allocations for 1988-89 are set out in table 2. The costs of financing them are incorporated with that for the capital programmes for all other services in the GREs for financing new capital expenditure. They are not separately identifiable.

Table 1
Local authority current expenditure on highway maintenance grant related expenditure and budgets: 1988-89

Shire county area (includes totals for districts)	GRE £ million	Budgets £ million
Avon	25,626	21,740
Bedfordshire	9,578	11,212
Berkshire	15,332	12,955
Buckinghamshire	15,984	15,980
Cambridgeshire	16,931	14,950
Cheshire	23,460	24,352
Cleveland	14,624	15,116
Cornwall	15,598	14,483
Cumbria	17,063	16,129
Derbyshire	21,573	15,979
Devon	34,827	35,061
Dorset	18,084	15,907
Durham	15,525	15,943
East Sussex	14,569	16,680
Essex	31,668	36,114
Gloucestershire	14,319	11,466
Hampshire	36,005	28,666
Hereford and Worcestershire	19,986	14,612
Hertfordshire	22,890	25,046
Humberside	21,786	24,147
Isle of Wight	2,942	3,039
Kent	36,602	38,115
Lancashire	34,774	39,979
Leicestershire	25,033	20,813
Lincolnshire	18,697	18,166
Norfolk	22,898	22,498
Northamptonshire	14,145	11,716
Northumberland	12,574	11,470
North Yorkshire	24,595	21,888
Nottinghamshire	25,432	21,180

Shire county area (includes totals for districts)	*GRE £ million*	*Budgets £ million*
Oxfordshire	12,258	11,712
Shropshire	13,220	10,849
Somerset	16,989	12,932
Staffordshire	26,346	19,676
Suffolk	17,043	14,535
Surrey	27,622	21,677
Warwickshire	10,738	11,882
West Sussex	15,977	14,644
Wiltshire	14,493	15,259
Total Shires	777,806	728,568

Metropolitan districts	*GRE £ million*	*Budgets £ million*
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	6·737	5·696
Bury	4·565	3·758
Manchester	14·266	11·364
Oldham	6·215	5·643
Rochdale	5·293	2·541
Salford	6·300	3·589
Stockport	7·232	4·400
Tameside	6·118	4·685
Trafford	5·901	5·845
Wigan	7·162	6·927
Merseyside		
Knowsley	3·158	5·572
Liverpool	11·792	12·741
St. Helens	4·514	4·020
Sefton	5·688	9·140
Wirral	6·362	5·376
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	4·979	5·213
Doncaster	7·758	9·765
Rotherham	7·085	8·676
Sheffield	14·310	10·706
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	5·973	5·828
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	8·185	8·424
North Tyneside	4·350	5·560
South Tyneside	3·465	5·437
Sunderland	6·668	7·485
West Midlands		
Birmingham	22·521	22·597
Coventry	7·297	7·241
Dudley	7·228	5·160
Sandwell	7·987	7·111
Solihull	4·344	4·789
Walsall	5·708	4·673
Wolverhampton	6·787	5·060
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	11·125	7·409
Calderdale	5·084	6·347
Kirklees	11·188	9·131
Leeds	19·543	14·051
Wakefield	8·576	8·475
Total Metropolitan Districts	281·464	260·435

Local authority current expenditure on highway maintenance grant related expenditure and budgets: 1988-89

	GRE £ million	*Budget £ million*
London boroughs		
City of London	0·502	5·429
Inner boroughs		
Camden	3·406	4·851
Greenwich	5·330	4·292
Hackney	3·907	2·803
Hammersmith and Fulham	2·858	5·494
Islington	2·914	2·612
Kensington and Chelsea	2·725	6·129
Lambeth	4·921	5·143
Lewisham	4·943	8·210
Southwark	4·381	6·602
Tower Hamlets	3·179	8·628
Wandsworth	4·464	5·971
Westminster	5·044	7·812
Outer boroughs		
Barking and Dagenham	2·732	3·488
Barnet	5·340	8·878
Bexley	4·542	5·054
Brent	5·027	3·259
Bromley	7·130	9·784
Croydon	7·138	9·168
Ealing	6·202	4·037
Enfield	5·485	6·449
Haringey	3·477	1·586
Harrow	4·172	5·124
Havering	4·871	5·031
Hillingdon	5·638	8·362
Hounslow	4·170	2·927
Kingston-upon-Thames	2·844	2·826
Merton	3·712	4·613
Newham	4·698	3·028
Redbridge	4·961	5·345
Richmond-upon-Thames	3·712	4·886
Sutton	3·682	4·362
Waltham Forest	4·408	3·599
Total London	142·515	175·782

Table 2
Capital Allocations 1988-89 Highways

	£ million
LONDON BOROUGHS	
Barking and Dagenham	6·210
Barnet	1·110
Bexley	2·870
Brent	1·270
Bromley	8·880
Camden	0·560
City of London	0·720
Croydon	0·800
Ealing	6·820
Enfield	28·050
Greenwich	3·460
Hackney	1·910
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·285
Haringey	6·475
Harrow	9·690
Havering	1·380
Hillingdon	10·710
Hounslow	1·800
Islington	0·480
Kensington and Chelsea	1·170
Kingston-upon-Thames	5·690
Lambeth	0·850
Lewisham	2·530
Merton	6·850
Newham	2·850
Redbridge	1·980
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·750
Southwark	4·470
Sutton	2·830
Tower Hamlets	0·640
Waltham Forest	1·770
Wandsworth	2·700
Westminster	1·850
Total London	127·350

	£ million
SHIRE DISTRICTS	
Glanford	1·751
Kerrier	0·145
North Cornwall	0·005
Richmondshire	0·050
Rossendale	0·055
Scunthorpe	0·086
South Staffordshire	0·075
Stockton-on-Tees	0·001
Total Districts	2·168
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS	
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	4·150
Bury	2·330
Manchester	8·130
Oldham	5·540
Rochdale	1·480
Salford	8·070
Stockport	1·050
Tameside	1·150
Trafford	1·880
Wigan	4·810
Merseyside	
Knowsley	0·780
Liverpool	3·740
St. Helens	1·600
Sefton	1·340
Wirral	2·930
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	1·732
Doncaster	2·020
Rotherham	1·400
Sheffield	8·042
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	4·400
Newcastle upon Tyne	5·630
North Tyneside	1·080
South Tyneside	1·870
Sunderland	5·140
West Midlands	
Birmingham	10·070
Coventry City	4·860
Dudley	2·769
Sandwell	2·340
Solihull	1·320
Walsall	4·850
Wolverhampton	8·130
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	4·400
Calderdale	1·260
Kirklees	3·610
Leeds	4·740
Wakefield	1·480
Total Metropolitan Districts	130·123
County Councils	
Avon	10·600
Bedfordshire	7·010
Berkshire	9·540
Buckinghamshire	2·890
Cambridgeshire	6·970
Cheshire	4·635
Cleveland	8·870
Cornwall	7·230
Cumbria	3·510
Derbyshire	5·440
Devon	10·083
Dorset	10·390
Durham	4·700
East Sussex	6·750
Essex	19·140
Gloucestershire	4·420
Hampshire	11·020
Hereford and Worcester	4·740
Hertfordshire	8·860
Humberside	11·253
Isle of Wight	2·060
Kent	22·200
Lancashire	14·320
Leicestershire	13·620
Lincolnshire	3·230
Norfolk	5·200
North Yorkshire	5·440
Northamptonshire	10·490
Northumberland	1·840
Nottinghamshire	5·850
Oxfordshire	4·670
Shropshire	5·210
Somerset	9·120
Staffordshire	7·870
Suffolk	4·940
Surrey	8·150
Warwickshire	4·442
West Sussex	7·460
Wiltshire	2·420
Total Shires	296·583

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the annual inquiries to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre relate to vehicle excise duty issues.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: About 230,000 of the 2·4 million written and telephone inquiries received at DVLC during 1987 related to vehicle licensing procedures or to specific licensing transactions. There is no breakdown of the 5 million inquiries dealt with by magnetic tape. Most were likely to have related to vehicle keeper and other registration details rather than licensing.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department was first approached about the possible purchase of No. 8 Camrose street, SE2, in connection with the east London river crossing; and why it has not yet been possible to reach a decision.

Mr. Channon: The owner of 8 Camrose street asked the Department to buy the property on compassionate grounds last September. Following further inquiries, the way is now clear for the Department to do so, without prejudice to the decisions still to be taken on the ELRC scheme. The district valuer will be commencing negotiations with the owner.

Traffic Patterns (Toll Roads)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken by his Department on the likely effects on traffic patterns of the introduction of toll roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For London only, the Government have commissioned assessment studies into four particular areas.

It is open to the consultants, as a part of these studies, to consider proposals to charge for the use of specific roads or locations.

Dim-dip Headlights

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the fitting of dim-dip headlights to motor vehicles following the recent decision on this matter by the European Court.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 12 July, at columns *140-41*.

DVLC

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons are employed at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre and at what annual cost; how many requests are received per annum as to details of the registered number of a vehicle; and in what period of time the average response for this information is made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[pursuant to his reply, 8 July 1988, c. 805]:* I regret to say that my previous answer contained an error. The total number of inquiries of the vehicle record received by DVLC in 1987 was 7·4 million, not 4·7 million.

ENERGY

Pluto and Dido Reactors

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the safety of the research reactors Pluto and Dido at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Atomic Energy research establishment at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the statement made by the Health and Safety Executive on 21 June 1988.

Nuclear Stations (Safety)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made any response to the proposals made on 9 June by the European Economic Community Environment Commissioner that member states routinely provide nuclear safety details of operations at nuclear plants to the European Commission.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On 9 June 1988 the Commission of the European Communities issued a proposal for a Council directive on informing the population about health protection measures to be applied and steps to be taken in the event of a radiological emergency. These proposals have yet to be discussed.

Renewable Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in addition to the research priorities set out in "Energy Paper 55," he will review the possibility of further international research and development initiatives, in response to the proposals of the Prime Minister of Norway to the Toronto world conference on the changing atmosphere for a comprehensive international research and information programme on renewable energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Where appropriate the United Kingdom is participating in a number of collaborative research programmes, notably within the framework of the International Energy Agency and the European Commission. We are also working closely with the United States Department of Energy under a bilateral agreement. A review of these activities formed a part of the development of our long-term strategy on renewable energy as outlined in "Energy Paper 55".

The United Kingdom plays a full and active part in the International Energy Agency renewables research programmes, which are reviewed regularly by the agency's renewable energy working party. The United Kingdom has also played the leading role in establishing for the agency a comprehensive information energy technology database, which includes renewable energy information. The agreement for this multilateral information programme was signed in January 1987. Copies of a brochure which describes the programme and its objectives are in the Libraries of the House.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy for copies of "Energy paper 55", on "Renewable Energy in the United Kingdom: The Way Forward", to be distributed to public libraries as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As with all HMSO publications, a copy of "Energy Paper 55" has been sent to six main libraries for copyright purposes:
British Library; National Library of Scotland; National Library of Wales; Bodelian Library; Oxford; Cambridge University Library; and Trinity College Library, Dublin.

Copies of all HMSO publications are also sent to the British Library lending division and are available for loan by anyone in the United Kingdom by arrangement with his local library. In addition, 67 main public libraries automatically receive copies. Copies of the energy paper are also available for sale from the many HMSO bookshops and accredited agents throughout the United Kingdom. These arrangements should ensure the energy paper is readily accessible to all those interested in reading about the Government's long-term plans for renewable energy.

Electricity Generation (Wastes)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out in tabular form *(a)* the volume and *(b)* the toxicity or radiotoxicity of wastes expected to arise from electricity generated, respectively, by (i) coal, (ii) oil, (iii) gas, (iv) nuclear fuel and (v) renewable energies in the years (x) 1979 to present and (y) 1988 to 2025.

Mr. Parkinson: The full information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, in 1985 the CEGB gave evidence to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution on its non-radioactive waste management work; this information was published in the commission's 11th report. The CEGB also contributes to the annual United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory; the 1987 edition of which will be published shortly.

Fast Reactor Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's plans for future public funding of the fast

reactor programme at *(a)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority laboratories at Windscale. *(b)* the authority's laboratories at Harwell and *(c)* the authority's nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay, in the light of proposals by the authority's chairman to seek private funds for fast reactor development.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh), on 13 June 1988, at column *33*.

National Nuclear Corporation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on whose authority the National Nuclear Corporation has undertaken nuclear development work for the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that National Nuclear Corporation has been awarded a contract by the procurement executive of the Ministry of Defence to undertake project management work at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston. This is a matter for the National Nuclear Corporation.

Dounreay

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of the recently published report by the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation on leukaemia in the vicinity of the Dounreay Nuclear Development Establishment, he will invite the operational safety review team of the International Atomic Energy Agency to review the Dounreay plant.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The COMARE report lists a number of recommendations for further work, which will be implemented by the Departments involved. I do not believe that an OSART mission could make a significant contribution to this further work.

Offshore Operations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many notices have been served in respect of safety on offshore operations under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act during each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No prohibition or improvement notices have been issued over the last five years in respect of safety on offshore operations under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The majority of problems highlighted during an offshore inspection are rectified before the inspector leaves the installation. Where this is not possible, the owner is required to carry out the necessary changes withing a set time limit. Any lessons to be learnt are made available to all offshore operators by means of safety notices issued by the safety directorate of my petroleum engineering division.

Drigg (Plutonium Oxide)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will immediately establish an inquiry into the discovery at Drigg of a canister containing plutonium oxide fuel pellets: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The Health and Safety Executive and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution have begun a joint investigation into the circumstances in which this canister came to be disposed of at Drigg many years ago. They will consider the implications of this discovery and report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and myself. Their conclusions will be made public.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 July 1988

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Official Documents (Use of Paper)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will state the amount of paper that was used for official documents in the Houses of Parliament for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Wakeham: This information is not held centrally.

Wines (South Africa)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the progress of inquiries into the use of the facilities of the House by an hon. Member for the stocking and sale of wines from South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: The issue covered in the point of order raised by the hon. Member on 30 June had already been brought to the notice of the House authorities. The approved procedures to remedy the situation and prevent further contravention of the rules were invoked and have since been completed.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue (Correspondence)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on whose authority the Inland Revenue has withdrawn free post facilities in routine correspondence with taxpayers; how much it is estimated will be saved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 29 January 1988, at column *420* and to the Inland Revenue press release of 29 January 1988.

Voted and Consolidated Fund Receipts

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1988-89 *(a)* voted receipts and *(b)* Consolidated Fund extra receipts by Department, in a form consistent with (i) Cm. 288 and (ii) the revised basis for 1988-89.

Mr. Major: Details of voted receipts and Consolidated Fund extra receipts by Department are shown in the main supply estimates for 1988-89 published on Budget day—HC 339-I-XX. The estimates booklets provide tables reconciling the supply expenditure being sought with the provision in Cm. 288 for most Departments.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the period 1982-83 to 1990-91 *(a)* the public expenditure planning total on the definitions of each of the public expenditure White Papers published since 1979, *(b)* the general Government expenditure total on the basis of the definitions of each of the White Papers, *(c)* gross domestic product on the basis taken in each of the White Papers and *(d)* the public expenditure gross domestic product ratio in the basis of the definitions of each of the White Papers, indicating whether the numerator was based upon the planning total or general Government expenditure.

Mr. Major: There have been no significant changes to the definition of the public expenditure planning total or general Government expenditure since 1979. Though the basic concepts have remained unchanged, there have been a number of detailed reclassifications, which are noted in each year's public expenditure White Paper, which provides a nine-year span of data on consistent definitions. Tables in section 5 of the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" (Cm. 288I) include longer runs of data on a consistent basis. An article in the August 1985 issue of *Economic Trends* provided detailed information on "Measuring Public Expenditure" and in particular gave long runs of data for public expenditure as a percentage of GDP on the various different bases which had been used in the past. It also explained and gave figures for general Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP, the concept which has been in use by the Treasury since the 1985 Autumn Statement. Further information on "Long term trends in public expenditure" was given in the October 1987 issue of *Economic Trends*. It would involve a disproportionate amount of work to show for each year in the period requested what the planning total or general Government expenditure would have been using the precise classifications in force for each year's White Paper.

Government-owned Companies

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table in cash terms showing, for each of the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 for each of the organisations which has been included in at least one year in the equivalent of table 4.1 of Cm. 288, all write-offs of loans, public dividend capital or other liabilities, and equivalent information on Goverment-owned companies.

Mr. Major: Write-offs of Government loans and debt for public corporations are given in the table for the calendar years 1979-87. It is not possible to forecast write-offs for 1988-89.

Similar information for all companies that have been Government-owned in at least one year from 1979 is not held centrally and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Year	*Organisation*	*Write-off (at outturn prices) £ million*
1980	National Freight Corporation	100
1980	British Airways Board	160
1981	British Steel Corporation	3,509
1981	Scottish Development Agency	2
1981	Welsh Development Agency	1
1982	British Steel Corporation	1,000
1982	British Transport Docks Board	81
1983	Port of London Authority	24
1983	National Dock Labour Board	24

Year	Organisation	Write-off (at outturn prices) £ million
1984	British Telecom	40
1986	New Town Development Corporation	1,591
1986	Development Board for Rural Wales	33

Note: There were no write-offs in 1979, 1985 or 1987.

Nationalised Industries (Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table in cash terms showing, for each of the years in the period 1982-83 to 1987-88 during which they were in public ownership, the advertising, public relations and promotional expenditure for each of the nationalised industries listed in table 4.1 of Cm. 288.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Expenditure for these purposes is a management responsibility of each nationalised industry's board. Information on such costs is not held centrally. For expenditure on advertising of recent privatisation and residual share sales, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 18 January 1988, at column 473.

Income Distribution

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give tables for income distribution for 1987-88 and 1988-89 in the form of his answer to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East on 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *93-4*, for each region of Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Regional estimates for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are not available. Information on the total numbers in each region in 1984-85 by ranges of income similar to those in my earlier reply have been published in "The Survey of Personal Incomes 1984-85". Further analysis of this information by type of taxpayer would not yield reliable results.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the projected reduction in inheritance tax liability of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 60 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 50 per cent. and *(g)* the bottom 25 per cent. of those liable for inheritance tax in 1988-89 together with the total number of tax units estimated to be liable.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The reduction in inheritance tax liability on transfers in 1988-89 is estimated as follows:

Proportion of taxable estates	£ million
(a) top 1 per cent.	50
(b) top 5 per cent.	110
(c) top 10 per cent.	140
(d) bottom 70 per cent.	50
(e) bottom 60 per cent.	45
(f) bottom 50 per cent.	40
(g) bottom 25 per cent.	35

There are expected to be about 20,000 taxable estates for 1988-89, with a total reduction in tax of £220 million. The reductions in tax are relative to the 1987-88 rate scale, indexed to 1988-89 by reference to the statutory formula.

Earnings

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what proportion of taxpayers earn less than two-thirds of median male earnings for the latest available date.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* It is estimated that in 1987-88 just over 6 million single people and married couples, representing about 30 per cent. of taxpayers, are liable to tax on gross incomes of less than two thirds of median male earnings. (Median full-time adult male earnings in April 1987 were £198·40 per week). The estimate is based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and is provisional.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing, for each region and for Great Britain, the number and percentage of taxpayers paying tax at their top marginal rate for each tax band; their total tax liability expressed in 1988 prices; and the number and percentage of non-taxpaying households; using the most recent available figures.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers there are in each of the income tax bands in each of the English regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and in each case what proportion of the total number of income tax payers in each region they represent.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[pursuant to his replies, 16 June 1988, c. 272 and 27 May 1988 c. 374]:* I regret that incorrect figures for the west midlands and Great Britain were contained in the tables shown in my replies. The corrected information is included in the revised tables. The table showing tax liability has also been revised to include tax paid at composite rate.

. Taxpaying unit in 1985-86 by marginal rate

Region	Thousands						As per cent. of all taxpaying units					
	30 per cent.	40 per cent.	45 per cent.	50 per cent.	55 per cent.	60 per cent.	30 per cent.	40 per cent.	45 per cent.	50 per cent.	55 per cent.	60 per cent.
North	1,000	11	6	5	(2)	(3)	97·2	1·1	0·6	0·5	0·2	0·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,570	24	13	8	3	5	96·8	1·5	0·8	0·5	0·2	0·3
North West	2,070	36	21	10	4	5	96·5	1·7	1·0	0·5	0·2	0·2
East Midlands	1,310	16	11	6	(4)	4	96·9	1·2	0·8	0·5	0·3	0·3
West Midlands	1,700	19	(18)	(11)	4	5	96·8	1·1	1·0	0·6	0·2	0·3
East Anglia	660	(12)	8	5	(3)	(5)	95·3	1·8	1·2	0·7	0·4	0·7
South East	6,200	190	119	75	38	60	92·8	2·8	1·8	1·1	0·6	0·9
South West	1,490	31	14	13	5	(7)	95·6	2·0	0·9	0·8	0·3	0·4
Wales	800	13	7	3	(3)	2	96·6	1·5	0·8	0·4	0·4	0·2

Region	Thousands						As per cent. of all taxpaying units					
	30 per cent.	40 per cent.	45 per cent.	50 per cent.	55 per cent.	60 per cent.	30 per cent.	40 per cent.	45 per cent.	50 per cent.	55 per cent.	60 per cent.
Scotland	1,690	36	18	11	4	6	95·7	2·0	1·0	0·6	0·2	0·3
Great Britain	18,800	393	238	150	71	101	95·2	1·9	1·2	0·7	0·4	0·5
Northern Ireland	429	7	(6)	(2)	(1)	(1)	96·0	1·6	1·4	0·5	0·2	0·2

Tax liability in 1985-86—Marginal rate of tax

£ million

Region	30 per cent.	40 per cent.	45 per cent.	50 per cent.	55 per cent.	60 per cent.
North	1,590	64	43	54	35	87
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,370	142	97	92	51	156
North West	3,070	206	152	108	57	163
East Midlands	2,030	91	84	70	63	157
West Midlands	2,440	112	137	110	59	180
East Anglia	1,030	70	62	55	43	145
South East	10,200	1,100	892	792	585	2,140
South West	2,230	183	102	136	68	214
Wales	1,170	70	51	35	(51)	64
Scotland	2,690	201	138	118	61	210
Great Britain	29,400	2,270	1,790	1,590	1,080	3,520
Northern Ireland	602	42	47	25	15	33

Note: Members of Her Majesty's forces (including those serving in Northern Ireland) and the Merchant Navy are included in the Great Britain figures but excluded from those for regions.

Customs Clearance Depots

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what specific regional factors are taken into account when inland customs clearance depot status is determined; and what specific regional factors are taken into account in determining section 8 grants.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

The regional factors to be taken into account by customs when approving an inland customs clearance depot have not been defined. Each case is considered on its merits and any regional considerations put forward would be taken fully into account.

The criteria for awarding section 8 grants are the same throughout Great Britain.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last made an official visit to a public library.

Mr. Luce: In the course of the last year I have visited seven public libraries, the last one being the new library at St. Albans, Hertfordshire, in May.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the proposed premium book subscription for public libraries.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 14 July 1988:]* The many responses which I have received include comments on the proposed premium book subscription scheme. The work of analysing these responses has begun.

Black and Asian Arts

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita on black and Asian arts in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on black and Asian arts by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years:

Great Britain

	£
1985-86	0·01
1986-87	0·02
1987-88	0·02

Note:
The information for earlier years is not readily available.
These figures relate to Arts Council direct expenditure only, and do not take account of expenditure on black and Asian arts by arts organisations whose Arts Council subsidy appears in other categories. Arts Council grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre are also excluded.

Community Arts

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on community arts in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on community arts by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years:

Great Britain

	£
1985-86	0·04
1986-87	0·05
1987-88	0·03

Note:
The information for earlier years is not readily available.
These figures relate to Arts Council direct expenditure only, and do not take account of expenditure on community arts by arts organisations whose Arts Council subsidy appears in other categories. Arts Council grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre are also excluded.

Literature

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure on literature, per capita, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on literature by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years.

	Great Britain
	£
1985-86	0·03
1986-87	0·03
1987-88	0·03

The information for earlier years is not readily available.
Note: These figures exclude Arts Councils grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre.

Opera

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on opera in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on opera by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years.

	Great Britain
	£
1985-86	0·42
1986-87	0.44
1987-88	0·45

The information for earlier years is not readily available.
Note: These figures exclude Arts Councils grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre.

Orchestral Music

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on orchestral music in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on orchestral music by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years.

	Great Britain
	£
1985-86	0.12
1986-87	0·17
1987-88	0·18

The information for earlier years is not readily available.
Note: These figures exclude Arts Councils grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre.

Dance

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on dance in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on dance by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years.

	Great Britain
	£
1985-86	0·22
1986-87	0·23
1987-88	0·23

The information for earlier years is not readily available.
Note: These figures exclude Arts Councils grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre.

Drama

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on drama in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure on drama by the Arts Councils of Great Britain, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years:

Year	*Great Britain* £
1985-86	0·53
1986-87	0·60
1987-88	0·59

Note:
These figures exclude Arts Council grants to regional arts associations and to the South Bank centre.

The information for earlier years is not readily available.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church of England (Disestablishment)

22. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what plans the Church Commissioners have formulated to prepare for any proposed disestablishment of the Church of England.

Mr. Alison: None.

PRIME MINISTER

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the cost to the Cabinet Office of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

The Prime Minister: The information is available by financial year. The cost to the Cabinet Office of employing management or computer consultants in each financial year from 1983-84 to 1987-88 is as follows:

Year	£
1983-84	152,000
1984-85	423,818
1985-86	329,334
1986-87	505,092
1987-88	417,778

The information cannot be provided by calendar years throughout the period except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list each management or computer consultancy contract

extant in the Cabinet Office as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

The Prime Minister: The following management or computer consultancy contracts were extant in the Cabinet Office on 1 January 1987:

Firm	*Subject or Assignment*
Psychometric Research and Development Limited	Analyses contributing to the Civil Service Commission review of executive officer recruitment
Logica	Information handling study
Diane Bailey Associates	Preparation of information pack on stress management
Synteck Ltd.	Design of a computerised billing system for the Civil Service Occupational Health Service
Hay-MSL Management Consultants	Evaluation of the Performance Bonus Scheme
University of Lancaster	Review of best practice on EO-SEO management training in the Civil Service
T. Schaeffer	Survey of departmental practice in needs analysis
Brunel Institute of Organisation and Social Studies	Development work in connection with methods of identifying management potential
Frank Griffiths Associates Limited[1]	Review of the purchasing and supply organisation in a Government Department
Peat, Marwick Mitchell and Co.[1]	Development of policy evaluation
Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited[1]	Development of policy evaluation
E. R. Sambridge[1]	Preparation of written guidance on Supply and Service Agreements between departments and the central purchasing agencies
M. N. Pickett[1]	Advice on contracts and contract conditions
D. F. Collins[1]	Advice on contract documentation
M. G. Cooper[1]	Review of arrangements for the purchasing and supply function in Government

[1] Costs of these studies were shared with other Government Departments.

Malta

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Malta.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list how many days she has spent outside Great Britain in each year since she became Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The number of days I have spent outside Great Britain on official business are as follows:

	Number of days
1979	30
1980	17
1981	45
1982	33
1983	38
1984	30
1985	46
1986	27
1987	28
1988	[1]21

[1] Up to 18 July.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

British Voice

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Attorney-General if he has any plans to prosecute British Voice for distributing a leaflet, a copy of which has been sent to him, which appears to incite racial discord; and what representations to this effect he has received from the Commission for Racial Equality.

The Attorney-General: Copies of several different leaflets purporting to be printed and published by British Voice have been referred to me, among them two drawn to my attention by the Commission for Racial Equality. At the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions police inquiries have been instituted and they are continuing. No prosecution decision can be reached until they are complete.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in Her Majesty's Land Registry as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

The Attorney-General: The only management or computer consultancy contract extant on 1 January 1987 which affected the Land Registry was a systems engineering contract with IBM United Kingdom Limited.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

The Attorney-General: On the information available the cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of employing management or computer consultants for each financial year from 1983 to 1987 is as follows:

	£
1983-84	41,782
1984-85	433,000
1985-86	262,738
1986-87	185,618
1987-88	361,594

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in the Lord Chancellor's Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

The Attorney-General: The following management and computer consultancy contracts were extant in the Lord Chancellor's Department as at 1 January 1987:

Firm	Assignment
Ernst and Whinney	Systems development audit of Funds Accounting
Atkins Planning	Restructuring of the Project Support Office
Peat Marwick and McLintock	Structured Systems Analysis and Design Methodology (SSADM) Consultancy
Prolog	Assistance with the Crown Court Computer Project

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the cost to Her Majesty's Land Registry of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

The Attorney-General: Land Registry expenditure on management or computer consultancy for the period 1983-87 was as follows:

Year	Amount £
1983	Nil
1984	119,108
1985	123,445
1986	105,946
1987	487

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

St. John Ophthalmic Hospital, Jerusalem

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Order of St. John seeking funds for emergency programmes at St. John ophthalmic hospital, Jerusalem.

Mr. Chris Patten: In May the Lord Prior of the hospital approached me for assistance in connection with financial problems partly caused by the need for the provision of emergency programmes in Gaza. In response I have offered the hospital £100,000 this financial year towards the costs of its outreach programmes and emergency clinics in Gaza. This is the third grant we have made to the hospital since 1984.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Post-16 Qualifications

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to simplify the range of post-16 qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The provisions of the Education Reform Bill, if enacted, will enable my right hon. Friend by order to extend the powers relating to approval of qualifications and syllabuses for pupils of compulsory school age, so that they apply also to full-time pupils and students aged 16 to 19.

However, my right hon. Friend has no present plans to seek the extension to the 16-19 age group of any such powers.

Schools (Health and Safety)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he is considering concerning the regulation of health and safety in schools under local financial delegation.

Mr. Dunn: Guidance on health and safety matters is offered in paragraphs 89-91 of the consultative document on "Financial Delegation to Schools", which was issued on 28 April this year.

Secondary Schools (Pupil Costs)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current average expenditure per secondary school pupil in English local authorities; what is the lowest figure; and what is the highest.

Mrs. Rumbold: Based on actual outturn figures, for 1986-87, local education authorities in England spent an average of £1,340 per secondary school pupil. The figures for individual authorities ranged from £1,145 in Kent to £2,345 in ILEA.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 1 July 1988 there were 1,142 computer work stations of all types in the Department, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, encompassing terminals, personal microcomputers, portable computers and text processors.

The total number of staff in the Department, including HMI and all support staff was 2,474. The ratio of work stations to staff was therefore 1:2·2.

The Department has firm plans to increase the number of work stations of all types to around 1,800 over the next three years. This implies a ratio of work stations to staff of 1:1·4 by 1991.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's information technology strategy committee comprises the deputy secretary responsible for information technology (chairman), the director of establishments, the director of statistics, the head of information technology branch; and representatives of schools 1 branch, FHE 2 branch, pensions branch, teachers supply and training branch, finance branch, establishments and organisation branch, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, and CCTA.

Ministers have not attended any meetings in the past year.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many of the staff in his

Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mrs. Rumbold: One grade 2 officer has attended a course on information technology management in the last 12 months.

Departmental Correspondence (Information Leaks)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary for Education and Science if, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, he will make it his policy to report to the House the action he takes, in the light of the inquiry into the unauthorised leak of information and briefing in relation to correspondence between the private secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Paul Gray, and Mr. Tom Jeffrey of his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not the usual practice to give information on such matters.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what discussions he had with Trafford borough council about the location of a city technology college on the site of the former boy's grammar school in Stretford; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with Trafford borough council about locating a city technology college or arts technology college on sites in Trafford;

(3) if he will list those outside bodies with which he has had discussions concerning locating a city technology college or arts technology college on sites in Trafford; and if he will list those sites.

Mrs. Rumbold: The City Technology College Trust has been negotiating with the Trafford borough council and the LEA for the purchase of the redundant Stretford boys grammar school. The education committee has shown substantial interest in the establishment of a city technology college, but it has not, as yet, been able to find a way to reconcile this interest with its considerable problems of coping with falling secondary school numbers. my right hon. Friend has had no discussions regarding other sites in Trafford.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single European Market

Mr. Andrew Mitchell To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to any reforms which may be required to the structure and organisation of the self-regulatory organisations, for financial institutions, in the light of the completion of the single European market.

Mr. Maude: I see no reason why the completion of the single European market in financial services should require any changes in the regulatory structure.

Langford Scott and Partners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report*(i) the total sum of money paid to investors by his Department following the financial collapse of Langford Scott and Partners in April 1983, separately distinguishing capital and interest repayments and (ii) the number of persons to whom payment was made by his Department following the financial collapse of Langford Scott and Partners in April 1983.

Mr. Maude: A total of £68,425·72 was paid to 13 investors. This sum comprised £49,813·20 in capital and £18,612·52 by way of interest. These payments were made ex gratia without admission of liability.

Libya

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the current figures for trade between the United Kingdom and Libya.

Mr. Alan Clark: For the first five months of 1988 imports (cif) were £58·3 million and exports (fob) £90·4 million. These figures should be treated with more than the usual caution because of major changes to customs procedures introduced in January 1988, details of which were given in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 7 December 1987, at columns 34-35.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration is being given to the extension of Export Credits Guarantee Department cover in respect of trade with Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: ECGD cover for new business with Libya has not been available since 1986. The decision to withdraw cover was made on commercial grounds as a result of the poor payment experience on business covered by ECGD in Libya. At present there are no plans to resume cover.

ECGD keeps cover arrangements for all countries under constant review taking account of current conditions and future prospects for the market concerned.

Financial Services Act

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what surveys have been made of the cost to firms of complying with the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: The most significant survey has been the one commissioned by the Director General of Fair Trading into the impact of the new regulatory regime on independent advisers. Rigorous assessment of costs more generally has been complicated by the transitional arrangements provided for the introduction of various rules. The Director General has, however, indicated in his reports made under the Act that he intends to review the costs of compliance in a number of areas as part of his continuing responsibility for reviewing the effects on competition of the requirements introduced under the Act.

Film, Radio and Television Industry

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action or investigation his Department is undertaking to ensure that a thriving film, radio and television programme-making industry develops in the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Under the Films Act 1985 British Screen Finance Ltd. receives Government funds for investment in

film production, and since January 1986 has supported 40 films. In addition, 30 projects have received Government finance under the development scheme managed by the National Film Development Fund.

Matters relating to radio and television programme making are primarily for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, my Department pursues a range of policies to encourage enterprise and an open and competitive economy, which apply to all industrial sectors, including those referred to by the hon. Member.

On 28 March 1988 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, together with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, referred questions as to possible restrictive labour practices in the film production, television and broadcasting industries to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, under the provisions of section 79 of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will express the volume of manufacturing output as an index with 1979 as 100 giving changes for each year since then; and what was the number of workers in manufacturing for each of these years.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Index of manufacturing output (1979 = 100)*	*All employees in manufacturing (000's)*
1979	100·0	7,251
1980	91·3	6,935
1981	85·8	6,221
1982	86·0	5,863
1983	88·5	5,525
1984	92·1	5,409
1985	94·8	5,364
1986	95·0	5,235
1987	100·0	5,145

Manufacturing is defined as divisions 2 to 4 of the standard industrial classification.

The employment figures are June estimates for each year for Great Britain plus the average of each year's quarterly data for Northern Ireland.

Satellite Broadcasting

Miss Fookes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for what reasons his Department turned down the proposed use of the PAS-1 satellite by the C-SPAN network for the transmission of proceedings of the House of Lords on 4 July; when he expects to complete the review of his Department's policy towards C-SPAN's proposals to transmit coverage of the United States political conventions via Sky Channel; and what discussions his officials have had with British Telecom International concerning the necessary uplinks and downlinks for such transmissions.

Mr. Butcher: Article XIV of the INTELSAT agreement, to which the United Kingdom is a party, provides that private satellites may be used only after the INTELSAT assembly of parties has been appropriately consulted. Consultations on UK-US services using the PAS-1 satellite will not be completed until later this year. Nevertheless, Pan American Satellite submitted an application to the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for temporary authority for use of its satellite to transmit proceedings of the House of Lords. My Department and the US Department of State expressed doubts as to the legality of using the PAS-1 satellite in this way prior to INTELSAT assembly approval. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

A separate application has been made to the FCC for use of the satellite to transmit to the United Kingdom the proceedings of the US Republican and Democratic party conventions. This has not led to a change of views by either side, and I understand that the FCC has now been advised by the US Administration that the application for temporary authority should be denied on legal grounds.

British Telecom (BT) is the United Kingdom signatory to the INTELSAT operating agreement. BT made it clear that the company would have been prepared to provide the necessary facilities for these transmissions if the FCC had issued the necessary authority and United Kingdom obligations under the INTELSAT agreement could have been satisfied.

The Government support the development of private systems to compete with INTELSAT and at the forthcoming assembly of parties my officials will be actively seeking a favourable decision on use of the PAS-1 satellite.

Rover Group

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to place in the Library a copy of the biannual report he intends to submit to the European Commissioner for competition, concerning the implementation of the Rover Group's corporate plan.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. I am not prepared to make available a confidential communication between the United Kingdom Government and the Commission containing commercially sensitive information about a company which will be in full private ownership.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the evidence on which the European Commissioner for competition, Mr. Peter Sutherland, based his statement in the press release dated 13 July entitled "Commission reduces Aid to Rover", regarding the commitment in Rover's corporate plan to investment and restructuring costs of £1·5 billion and regarding the alleged plan by Rover to move from mass car to specialist production as a means of restraining growth in capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member will be well aware of the Government's policy not to comment on commercial and financial details of Rover Group management's plans. With regard to the second part of the hon. Member's question, I should point out that the Commission press release simply stated:

"The planned move by Rover from mass car producer to specialist producer will reduce the danger of aid being used to expand capacity."

Rover Group has of course, made public for some time its intention to follow an evolving product plan for the cars business to take it up-market.

TRANSPORT

Manchester Ship Canal Company

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Manchester Ship Canal Company has applied for an order under the Harbours Act 1964 to change its company structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The company has applied for a harbour revision order which would, among other things, empower it to redeem certain debentures held by the city of Manchester and end the right of the city council to appoint directors. Objections have been made to the application by certain interests, not including the city council, and if the matter cannot be resolved between the parties it will be necessary to hold a public inquiry as provided by the Harbours Act.

Heathrow Airport (Security)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the organisation of the security procedures in the United Kingdom domestic flights section at terminal 1 at Heathrow airport, especially at busy periods, and about the implications for delays of the current non-utilisation of available equipment; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received one approach about this. The question of how many X-ray machines and archway metal detectors are provided at airports, and how many are staffed and operational at any given time, is entirely a matter for the airport authorities and the airlines.

Bus Passenger Miles

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of the bus passenger miles travelled in the metropolitan counties prior toderegulation and of the present figure.

Mr. David Mitchell: I regret that data on bus passenger miles in the metropolitan counties are not available. The latest information on passenger journeys is given on page 7 of the Department of Transport "Statistics Bulletin (88)29 (Bus and Coach Statistics Great Britain 1986/87"), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to aid the exporting ability of the Nottingham and the midlands region by the provision of rail freight facilities direct to the continent.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for the British Railways Board, which is planning freight services through the Channel tunnel to and from a wide variety of destinations in the United Kingdom. Under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, it is required to publish a plan by 31 December 1989 setting out its proposals. It is consulting widely with interested parties in the regions during the preparation of this plan.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which routes will be used for the transport of goods for the continent coming from Nottingham via the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is an operational matter for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a White Paper concerning the impact of the building of the Channel tunnel upon each of the transport systems as they serve Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I see no need for a White Paper. As far as road services are concerned, the tunnel terminal will be connected direct to the M20, and there will be unbroken access by motorway to the M25 and so through to the M4 and other major routes. As far as rail services are concerned, British Rail is required under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act to publish by the end of 1989 a plan setting out its proposals for international passenger and freight through services for the United Kingdom. The board will be consulting widely with interested parties in all parts of Britain, and has in the past two months held three regional seminars covering north, mid and south Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will commission a study of the likely impact upon the Crewe-Holyhead railway line of the Channel tunnel construction scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. This is a matter for the British Railways Board.

Road and Rail Services (Kent)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will examine the present major road and rail services in Kent, especially those connecting Kent towns with London, and consider their efficiency, effectiveness and quality in relation to road and rail services elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The national trunk road network is kept constantly under review. The national programme at present includes 15 major improvement schemes in Kent at various stages of preparation, collectively totalling some 73·5 miles and valued at £223 million (1985 prices). Other smaller but worthwhile schemes are in the regional programme.

We also support the county council's road building programme through the TSG system. In Kent's case we have undertaken to give sympathetic consideration to schemes made necessary by the Channel tunnel. The resources agreed in such cases are additional to those provided for in the county's normal programme.

As regards rail services, it is for British Rail to provide the appropriate level of service within the overall framework of objectives and quality standards that we have set it. The provision of bus services is for the bus operators and local authorities.

A20 (Delays)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning delays experienced by motorists on the A20 southbound road at Sidcup road on Friday 8 July between 7 pm and 8 pm; and if he will make a statement about future improvements to, and maintenance of, this road.

Mr. Channon: Traffic out of London was reduced to one lane around the junction of A20 with A208 Court road from 7 pm on Friday 8 July in order to lay anti-skid surfacing as an accident prevention measure. The work had been postponed because of bad weather. The timing was agreed with the police.

Works on the A20 in Greenwich under consideration are: improvements to junctions with A208 Court road and B236 Green lane; closure of central reserve gaps in Sidcup road; erection of central reserve safety fence to connect with Sidcup bypass safety fence. Maintenance work is carried out as necessary.

A2/M2 (Delays)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning delays experienced by motorists on the A2—M2 southbound carriageway on Friday 1 July between 11 pm and midnight; and if he will made a statement about future improvements to, and maintenance of, this road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret the delays. They were caused by accidents and by the subsequent removal of the contraflow system on completion of major maintenance work.

We have an extensive programme of maintenance on the A2/M2 over the next few years. Every effort is made to minimise delays to motorists.

Rail Services (London)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimates he has made of the cost of providing transport capacity in (i) the London Underground and (ii) the London overground system for an additional *(a)* 500,000 passengers, *(b)* 1 million passengers, *(c)* 1·5 million passengers and *(d)* 2 million passengers;

(2) what is the estimated cost of providing enough trains and staff for London Underground to run trains every three minutes at peak times.

Mr. David Mitchell: The cost and feasibility of improving the service operated on the current rail network and of providing additional capacity are matters which are being considered by the central London rail study announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 25 March. Intitial results are expected shortly, but further work will be needed before a full report can be prepared.

Cross-Channel Ferries

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* each occasion on which a cross-Channel ferry has applied to his Department for amendment to its passenger safety certificate in the last seven months; and on what grounds these applications were made;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* all crew specifications and crew/passenger ratios in regard to the issue of the passenger safety certificate amendments thereof.

Mr. David Mitchell: Excluding changes of ship's name, only one cross-Channel ferry passenger and safety certificate has been amended in the period; in May the lifesaving appliances on the ship in question were upgraded by replacing certain inflatable liferafts which were not fitted with launching devices with others launched by davit. The amendment did not relate to the crew or passenger numbers on the certificate.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what deviation from the specifications of the passenger safety certificate for a cross-Channel ferry are permitted before an application must be made for amendment to those specifications.

Mr. David Mitchell: Deviation from the regulations that contain the specifications for the construction and equipment of cross-Channel ferries is not permitted unless my Department is satisfied that the overall safety of the ships will not be thereby impaired. An application must be made for any exemption from the provisions of the regulations.

Light Aircraft Crash (Report)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight of 20 July 1987, *Official Report*, columns *41-42*, when he expects the report of the Chief Inspector of Accidents on the crash of the Belgian light aircraft into the sea off the Isle of Wight on 30 April 1987 to be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 22 August.

Shipping (Random Checks)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many random checks have been carried out by marine inspectors on all shipping vessels in the last 12 months, by category of vessel.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department's marine surveyors have carried out 1,173 inspections on United Kingdom ships and 2,262 on non-United Kingdom ships in the last 12 months.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for creating equality of opportunity for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: It is one of the aims of this Government that disabled people should be given equality of opportunity in all fields. In the employment field, training courses, grants schemes and a sheltered placement scheme are operated, and local job markets provide a special placement service for the disabled. Advice and encouragement are given to all outside agencies which may also contribute towards providing equality of opportunity for disabled people.

WALES

Housing (Homeless Persons) Act

18. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to seek to repeal or amend the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present.

Speech Therapy and Physiotherapy

15. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to satisfy himself that the non-educational needs of speech therapy and physiotherapy required by pupils in Wales with statements under section 7(1) of the Education Act 1981 are being adequately provided by district health authorities.

Mr. Grist: The number of speech therapists employed by health authorities in Wales has doubled since 1979 from 65 to 130, and the number of physiotherapists has increased by 38 per cent. from 382 to 528 over the same period. Through the manpower steering group the Welsh Office has asked health authorities to estimate how many speech therapists, physiotherapists (and other staff groups) will be required over the next five to 10 years. This should enable action to be taken where appropriate to meet these requirements.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by county, the area of land designated as of outstanding natural beauty up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is as follows:

County	*Designated areas in sq km*
Up to 31 December 1978	
Gwent	117
Gwynedd	370
West Glamorgan	189
From 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1987	
Clwyd	156

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by county, the sites designated as of special scientific interest, and the area of each, up to *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. I am arranging, however, to send the hon. Gentleman, and place in the Library of the House, lists of SSSI's in Wales as at 31 December 1987 showing the site area of each one.

Crown Classification Scheme

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the results of any consumer research regarding public understanding of the Crown classification scheme in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: A survey commissioned by the English tourist board in 1987 on public understanding of the Crown scheme covered Great Britain as a whole. I therefore refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment gave him on 12 July 1988, at column *196*.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's expenditure on centrally controlled management or computer consultants if readily available only from 1984 onwards. The figures are as follows:

Financial Year	*£*
1984-85	93,654
1985-86	55,688
1986-87	27,927
1987-88	94,114

It is not possible to identify without disproportionate costs fees paid to outside consultants in respect of projects not centrally managed.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Peter Walker: The only centrally controlled management or computer consultancy contract extant in my Department at 1 January 1987 was with Ernst and Whinney for advising and assisting in the development of computer auditing. It is not possible to identify without disproportionate costs management or computer consultancy contracts extant at 1 January 1987 in respect of projects not centrally managed.

Farming Unions

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further initiatives have been taken by his Department to promote unity of the farming unions in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department is providing both unions with such information and other assistance as they may find useful in their current exploratory discussions aimed at greater unity.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on initiatives taken by the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union in Wales, respectively, in the current year to promote unity; and what measures are being proposed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I understand that their discussions aimed at establishing closer links between the two bodies are continuing.

Farming Industry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers were employed in each county in Wales in June.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information for June 1988 is not yet available.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what monitoring of the provision of services for mentally

handicapped people is taking place in Wales in line with Her Majesty's Government's response to the second report of the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85.

Mr. Grist: In addition to those arrangements for monitoring in Wales outlined in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 14 July 1988, the Department maintains regular contact with county joint planning teams, and its social work services division is empowered to examine all aspects of personal social services provision for people with a mental handicap in private, voluntary and public sectors.

Housing Capital Allocations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations have been received from Preseli Pembrokeshire and South Pembrokeshire district councils concerning their housing capital allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Grist: The Department has received no representations from South Pembrokeshire district council. Preseli Pembrokeshire district council has undertaken an evaluation of its outstanding housing problems identified by our 1986 Welsh house condition survey. The Department is considering this and the associated resource implications which will we understand form part of the authority's future housing strategy and investment programme.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the housing capital allocations made to each Welsh local authority for 1988-89 together with the amount actually allocated for the present financial year with the percentage of the total applications and allocations each figure represents.

Mr. Grist: Information relating to capital allocations issued to date in the current financial year (1988-89) is given in the following table.

Local authorities provide statements of the total size of housing investment programmes they would like to undertake. They do not bid specifically for their main housing capital allocations which are largely formula based and are only a part of the resources available to carry out their programme.

	Housing capital allocations issued to date current year (1988-89) £000s	*Individual local authority housing capital allocation as per cent. of amount allocatable*
Alyn and Deeside	1,797	1·24
Colwyn	1,662	1·14
Delyn	1,326	0·91
Glyndwr	1,159	0·80
Rhuddlan	2,136	1·47
Wrexham Maelor	3,825	2·64
Carmarthen	2,361	1·63
Ceredigion	1,991	1·37
Dinefwr	1,246	0·86
Llanelli	2,179	1·50
Preseli Pembs	2,022	1·39
South Pembroke	2,472	1·70
Blaenau Gwent	6,956	4·79
Islwyn	3,820	2·63
Monmouth	1,973	1·36
Newport	4,988	3·44
Torfaen	4,636	3·19
Aberconwy	1,301	0·90
Arfon	2,448	1·69
Dwyfor	1,014	0·70
Meirionnydd	881	0·61
Ynys Mon	2,685	1·85
Cynon Valley	5,517	3·80
Merthyr Tydfil	3,682	2·54
Ogwr	4,232	2,92
Rhondda	12,054	8·30
Rhymney Valley	7,202	4·96
Taff Ely	4,443	3·06
Brecknock	1,414	0·97
Montgomeryshire	1,500	1·03
Radnor	777	0·54
Cardiff	11,974	8·25
Vale of Glamorgan	3,193	2·20
Port Talbot	2,415	1·66
Lliw Valley	2,562	1·76
Neath	2,509	1·73
Swansea	7,308	5·03
Yet to be allocated	19,496	13·43
Total Wales	145,156	100·00

Welsh Language

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent computers are being used in schools in Wales which teach through the medium of the Welsh language; if he will list those schools in the *Official Report;* and what proposals he has to finance the making of programmes required in these schools, which would be additional to those from local education authority sources.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A recent HMI survey, to be published on 18 July, considers the use of computers in Welsh-medium learning in primary and secondary schools in Wales. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House shortly. An associated survey established that all secondary schools and the great majority of primary schools use computers.

Detailed information for individual schools is not currently available, but the Welsh Office is presently carrying out a survey of the use of computers in all schools in Wales. Results will be available later this year.

The Welsh Office has provided support under section 21 of the Education Act 1980 for the production of Welsh-medium software. For 1989-90 applications for grant for this purpose will be co-ordinated by the Micro-Electronics Unit (Wales) to ensure that all local education authorities benefit from the developments. The Micro-Electronics Unit (Wales), which was set up with funding from the eight local education authorities and Welsh Office, also produces software in both Welsh and English.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office spent approximately £879,000 on management and computer consultants for

1984-85. Equivalent estimated payments for 1985-86, 1986-87 and for the calendar year 1987 were £1,495,000, £2,665,000 and £3,316,000 respectively. These payments include expenses and VAT as well as fees. Information for the years before 1984-85 is not readily available.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Hurd The following management or computer consultancy contracts awarded by the Home Office were extant on 1 January 1987:

Firm	*Subject of the assignment*
Craton Lodge and Knight Company Ltd.	Assistance with marketing strategy for the Prison Service Industries and Farms
Deloitte Haskins and Sells	Development of a financial management information system for the Probation Service
Professor Samuel Eilon	The development of an evaluation methodology for the Police National Computer Project
Ernst Whinney	Support for automatic finger-printing recognition planning
Express Computer	Financial Management Systems—technical support
Express Computer	Finance Division 1—Performance Study
Fraser Williams	Bootle Bureau Computer—technical support
Doctor Hyatt-Williams	Post-shooting trauma study
International Computers Ltd.	Private Office correspondence—technical support
KMG Thomson McLintock	Office Automation Study
PA Computers and Telecoms	Study of network migration to the Police National Computer
PA Computers and Telecoms	Future development of computer systems in Magistrates Courts
PA Management Consultants	Assist with implementation of "Fresh Start" to the Prison Service
RIPA Consultancy Services	Probation Information Services—technical support
Smith Associates	An analysis of the likely costs and benefits of introducing a mobile data terminal system in police vehicles
Software Sciences	Immigration Service—technical support
Sound Techniques	Evaluation of the use of computers in Magistrates Courts
Systems Designers Scientific	A review of emergency communications service
Touche Ross	Study on scientific support for the police service in England and Wales
White Waghorn	Computerisation of Scientific Research and Development Branch accountancy system
White Waghorn	Financial Management System—technical support

Industry Watch

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the initial impact of Industry Watch in combating crime and vandalism on industrial estates.

Mr. John Patten: Industry watch enables the police, local business and industry and, in some instances, the local authority, to bring their expertise and resources together to introduce measures to prevent crime in industrial areas. Comprehensive information about every industry watch scheme is not held centrally, but we are aware of a number of successful schemes in different parts of the country, including the excellent one at the North Lynn industrial estate in my hon. Friend's constituency. I understand from the chief constable of Norfolk that in the first 12 months from the scheme's introduction in March 1987, no crimes were recorded on the estate by the police. The local crime prevention officer concerned with this scheme is in touch with other police forces interested in establishing industry watch schemes in their areas based on this excellent model.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of petitions sent to his Department by inmates in prison in England and Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
1985	14,323
1986	15,528
1987	14,580

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on the transfer of foreign nationals serving prison sentences in prisons in the United Kingdom to their own country to serve their sentences; how often this has taken place in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom is a party to the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons, together with 11 other member states and Finland, Canada and the United States of America. We would normally agree to transfer under the convention unless that would result in significantly earlier release than would have been possible in the United Kingdom, or there are compelling reasons of public policy for refusal. No petitions for transfer from the United Kingdom have so far been refused.

The convention came into force in the United Kingdom on 1 August 1985. Eleven prisoners were transferred in the year ended 31 July 1986, six in the year ended 31 July 1987, and 10 in the 11 months ended 30 June 1988.

Prisons (Overcrowding)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps the Government plan to take to reduce the problem of overcrowding in prisons and remand centres.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are implementing the programme of measures to produce additional prison places in the short term announced by my right hon. Friend on 30 March. Two new prisons will open in August and September this year, and two temporary prisons will open later in the autumn. Together, these establishments will add about 1,800 places. Capacity at existing establishments will be increased by some 800 places before

the end of the current financial year by the installation of secure prefabricated accommodation. A further 1,000 places will be provided in purpose-built blocks at existing establishments around the end of 1989. Taken together, these measures will provide over 3,500 extra places by the end of the next financial year. At the same time, the capacity of many establishments is being increased by smaller scale building works and the injection of additional resources.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Hurd: At present there are some 2,100 computer work stations in the Department. This represents about one terminal for every 18 staff in post or, excluding the prison service, which accounts for some two thirds of the Department's complement, one for every six staff. "Work station" is here taken to include linked terminals and "stand-alone" microcomputers, but to exclude portable text processors. These figures are likely to increase substantially over the next five years but it is difficult to predict by what factor.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Hurd: The senior information technology strategy committee in the Home Office is the Home Office information technology committee, which has the following membership:

Principal Establishment Officer (Chairman) (grade 2).
Principal Finance Officer (grade 3).
Heads of senior representatives of most of the functional departments, mainly at grade 3 level.
Head of Research and Planning Unit.
Head of IT Division.
Head of Computing and Pay Services.
A senior representative of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, HM Treasury.

The committee is composed of officials, and Ministers do not attend its meetings: other means exist of bringing information technology matters to ministerial attention.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Hurd: In the past 12 months, two under secretaries (grade 3) have attended management tutorials in information technology. A deputy secretary (grade 2) and an under secretary have attended general management courses which included sessions on information technology. Other members of staff in the grades in question have attended presentations on specific subjects relating to information technology.

Gloucester (Law and Order)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gloucestershire regarding the law and order situation in the Barton street area of Gloucester; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will meet urgently the chief constable of Gloucestershire to discuss the law and order situation in the Barton street area of Gloucester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have recently received a report from the chief constable on the policing of the Barton street area of Gloucester about which my right hon. Friend wrote to my hon. Friend on 5 July. He has no current plans to meet the chief constable.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will pay an official visit to the Barton street area of Gloucester to view the law and order position there: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the level of policing in force in the Barton street area of Gloucester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received representations from my hon. Friend.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet a delegation of residents from the Barton street area of Gloucester to discuss the breakdown of public order there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Responsibility for operational decisions on policing the Barton street area are for the chief constable of Gloucestershire and it would not be right to intervene. The chief constable is committed to the effective policing of the area and I understand from him that resources are devoted to it and to other parts of the county commensurate with his duty to maintain the peace and to enforce the law throughout Gloucestershire.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will commit additional resources to the Gloucestershire constabulary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No application for an increase in the police establishment has been received from the police authority. Any such application would be considered along with those from other authorities, in the light of advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate and within the limits of the extra posts available.

Passports

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what extra resources of people or equipment would be necessary to bring down the waiting time for a passport from the Glasgow office to 14 days; and if he has any plans to provide these resources;

(2) what is the policy of his Department regarding a satisfactory waiting time for the issue of a straightforward, non-urgent passport.

Mr. Renton: Non-urgent applications posted to the Glasgow passport office are now being processed within 11 working days, and those lodged in person within four working days. This improvement in the service has been achieved mainly as a result of the additional staff allocated to the office earlier this year, referred to in my reply to a recent question from the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie).

Passport application forms advise applicants to allow at least a month for non-urgent postal applications. Urgent applications are given priority. Our aim, once the computerisation programme has been completed in all passport offices, is to process applications in much less than a month.

Local Radio

Mr. Sayeed to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when he next meets the chairman of the BBC, he will raise with him the implications of the corporation's plans to reduce the funding of existing local radio stations for the Government's commitment to an increase in the quantity and quality of local radio provision.

Mr. Renton: No. I have to tell my hon. Friend that I have already made it clear on a number of occasions that it is for the BBC to decide for itself how much of its resources to commit to local radio.

Turkish President (Visit)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what instructions were given to police officers on the occasion of the arrival of General Evren on 13 July concerning the distribution of leaflets and holding of placards by the public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that officers were given no specific instructions about the distribution of leaflets. They were however instructed to move demonstrators who were carrying banners and placards, whether they were in support of or against the visit, to separate, pre-selected locations in order to prevent an outbreak of disorder between the opposing factions. Once at such locations, banners and placards were permitted to be displayed.

Football Matches (Offences)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were arrested, how many charged and how many convicted following offences committed inside English Football League grounds during the 1987-88 football season.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There were 6,147 arrests at Football League matches in England and Wales during the 1987-88 season. Details of charges and convictions arising from offences at football matches are not held centrally.

Immigration (Members' Representations)

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is now in a position to report the outcome of his review of hon. Members' representations in immigration cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. The review, which I announced on 16 November has now been completed. I have today placed in the Library a copy of revised draft guidelines for handling these representations and my hon. Friend the Minister of State is writing to all Members enclosing a copy of the draft guidelines. There will be an opportunity to debate the draft guidelines before their introduction, which we hope will be around the end of the year.

Separate but similar draft guidelines are also being issued today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in connection with Members' representations about the operation of the immigration control overseas.

Offenders (Punishment)

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish proposals for punishing more offenders in the community.

Mr. Hogg: I have today published a Green Paper, "Punishment, Custody and the Community" (Cm. 424). It describes the policies we shall be pursuing in the next year and puts forward proposals for future changes. We would welcome comments on these ideas.

Prisoners

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will state for each of the last 24 months (i) the number of category A, B, C and D prisoners in prisons on the last day of each month, and (ii) the number of category A, B and C prisoners who had *(a)* been accepted, and *(b)* been released, during that month;

(2) if he will list for each prison in the United Kingdom, for each of the last 24 months, the number of category A, B, C and D prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* The information readily available centrally is given in the following tables. Further figures could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Sentenced adult males discharged from Prison Department establishments on completion of sentence or on licence: by security category and type of sentence, 1986-87

Number

Security category	*Fine defaulters*		*Immediate imprisonment*	
	1986	*1987*[1]	*1986*	*1987*[1]
Category A	—	—	10	10
Category B	300	200	2,000	1,500
Category C	3,000	3,100	20,900	21,000
Category D	1,500	1,500	11,000	11,300
Not recorded	9,100	8,900	6,200	6,900
All discharges	13,800	13,700	40,200	40,800

Note: The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

[1] Provisional figures.

Population (1) of adult male sentenced prisoners in prisons and remand centres in England and Wales on 31 March: by security category and prison, 1986 and 1988

	1986						1988					
	Security category						Security category					
Prison or remand centre	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*Not recorded*	*Total population*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*Not recorded*	*Total population*
Remand centres												
Latchmere House	—	2	8	1	25	36	—	—	2	1	29	32
Risley	—	—	65	—	16	81	—	1	41	1	28	71
Local prisons												
Bedford	—	12	63	20	27	122	—	7	65	26	44	142
Birmingham	4	67	278	58	149	556	—	114	233	73	121	541
Bristol	—	128	136	40	145	449	—	104	124	44	186	458
Brixton	—	5	8	6	88	107	—	8	30	22	328	388
Canterbury	—	10	41	18	70	139	—	8	49	14	91	162
Cardiff	—	32	97	19	130	278	—	33	76	19	241	369
Dorchester	—	15	81	2	29	127	—	37	45	5	28	115
Durham	—	28	294	21	206	549	1	39	345	26	441	852
Exeter	—	20	58	70	83	231	—	19	112	45	90	266
Gloucester	—	43	90	16	60	209	—	15	123	36	38	212
Hull	10	35	47	1	63	156	—	15	11	8	156	190
Leeds	5	103	294	45	75	531	1	97	260	54	147	559
Leicester	8	25	81	34	40	188	8	37	74	31	53	203
Lewes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	71	8	96	183
Lincoln	—	20	128	29	104	281	4	28	143	23	135	333
Liverpool	6	108	542	59	370	1,085	3	125	557	26	570	1,281
Manchester	3	48	321	50	328	750	1	76	308	70	372	827
Norwich	1	35	99	5	64	204	—	11	104	12	37	164
Oxford	—	10	61	21	49	141	—	3	46	27	44	120
Pentonville	—	59	215	158	107	539	—	8	113	48	221	390
Reading	—	18	44	14	36	112	—	21	79	21	29	150
Shrewsbury	—	7	61	4	57	129	—	15	71	14	81	181
Swansea	—	57	112	8	22	199	—	18	85	8	65	176
Wandsworth	4	164	419	39	842	1,468	10	403	577	61	472	1,523
Winchester	3	125	179	28	32	367	—	128	167	19	53	367
Wormwood Scrubs	34	169	270	85	186	744	24	80	65	31	322	522
Closed training prisons												
Acklington	—	—	440	5	16	461	—	—	395	7	43	445
Albany	41	274	43	1	5	364	42	160	58	5	37	302
Aldington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	74	14	18	106
Ashwell	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	314	43	32	389
Blantyre House	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	44	—	1	45
Blundeston	—	217	164	11	15	407	—	184	183	11	31	409
Camp Hill	—	—	436	26	18	480	—	—	375	35	77	487
Channings Wood	—	—	391	56	13	460	—	—	453	40	29	522
Coldingley	1	97	113	9	6	226	1	79	113	19	28	240
Dartmoor	—	396	315	13	23	747	—	387	171	44	27	629
Erlestoke	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	67	8	16	91
Featherstone	—	—	327	35	141	503	—	—	457	44	30	531
Frankland	38	266	49	—	54	407	47	298	38	1	22	406
Full Sutton	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	144	43	3	26	231
Gartree	45	232	25	2	9	313	52	222	19	—	18	311
Grendon	—	111	36	5	24	176	—	133	65	8	23	229
Haverigg	—	—	492	8	33	533	—	—	465	10	43	518
Highpoint	—	—	599	58	46	703	—	—	402	75	269	746
Lancaster	—	—	214	13	1	228	—	—	215	11	28	254
Lewes	—	82	63	13	69	227	—	82	39	7	14	142
Lindholme	—	—	336	9	98	443	—	—	389	182	187	758
Littlehey	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	279	17	32	328
Long Lartin	48	312	12	3	19	394	62	312	15	2	30	421
Maidstone	—	395	115	12	14	536	—	385	83	20	29	517
Northeye	—	—	387	9	39	435	—	—	112	28	82	222
Norwich (Britainia)	—	—	134	29	17	180	—	—	119	24	48	191
Nottingham	—	137	129	13	13	292	—	115	138	27	14	294
Parkhurst	27	115	29	4	17	192	43	154	16	—	34	247
Portsmouth (Kingston)	—	116	13	4	—	133	—	123	6	4	10	143
Preston	—	—	501	18	66	585	—	—	317	11	30	358

Prison or remand centre	1986 Security category A	B	C	D	Not recorded	Total population	1988 Security category A	B	C	D	Not recorded	Total population
Ranby	—	—	363	10	5	378	—	—	397	—	5	402
Send	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	77	3	20	100
Shepton Mallet	—	—	218	7	14	239	—	—	229	1	19	249
Stafford	—	—	622	33	36	691	—	—	715	49	67	831
Stocken	—	—	265	14	13	292	—	—	271	9	21	301
Thorp Arch	—	—	57	1	4	62	—	—	134	6	12	152
The Verne	—	—	474	17	29	520	—	—	476	20	25	521
Wakefield	66	589	23	7	49	734	72	578	17	14	56	737
Wayland	—	—	388	43	49	480	—	—	367	30	80	477
Wymott	—	—	741	14	107	862	—	—	572	23	58	653
Open training prisons												
Ashwell	—	—	—	391	—	391	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ford	—	—	—	517	—	517	—	—	—	567	—	56
Highpoint	—	—	—	35	—	35	—	—	—	70	—	70
Kirkham	—	—	—	574	—	574	—	—	—	621	—	62
Leyhill	—	—	—	327	—	327	—	—	—	374	—	37
Morton Hall	—	—	—	157	—	157	—	—	—	185	—	18
Rudgate	—	—	—	344	—	344	—	—	—	350	—	35
Spring Hill	—	—	—	202	—	202	—	—	—	202	—	20
Standford Hill	—	—	—	361	—	361	—	—	—	379	—	39
Sudbury	—	—	—	350	—	350	—	—	—	479	—	47
All prisons and remand centres	344	4,684	12,606	4,620	4,465	26,719	386	4,814	12,695	4,855	6,189	289

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approxiate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
n/a = Not applicable.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Service

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what body is responsible for recruitment into the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service; and what procedures are set for such recruitment.

Mrs. Chalker: The Civil Service commissioners are responsible for the recruitment to the administrative grades of the Diplomatic Service. The procedures are the same as for entry into "fast stream" posts in Home Civil Service. Applicants who pass an initial written qualifying test undergo a two-day series of tests, group exercises and interviews at the Civil Service selection board (CSSB). Candidates who perform sufficiently well at CSSB are invited to attend a final selection board (FSB), which is chaired by a Civil Service commissioner and normally includes one or more representatives of the Diplomatic Service. Candidates for the Diplomatic Service take a language aptitude test before attending the FSB.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects a graduate from a polytechnic to be recruited into the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service.

Mrs. Chalker: As soon as a graduate from a polytechnic is successful in the selection process undertaken by all candidates. The Civil Service commissioners and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have gone to considerable lengths in recent years to encourage students in all institutions of higher education to apply for "fast stream" posts in both the Diplomatic Service and the Home Civil Service.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what qualities are expected from applicants recruited into the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service.

Mrs. Chalker: They are expected to combine good basic intellectual skills with strong personal qualities. Applicants must be adaptable and physically and mentally resilient; in the course of a career they will have to produce high quality work in conditions that may be unpleasant or dangerous. They should have the ability to communicate well both orally and in writing and show potential for assuming managerial responsibilities.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service were serving in his Department in each of the years 1978 to 1987, inclusive.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department's computerised records do not distinguish between administrative and executive group staff in all cases. The approximate figures are as follows:

	Number
1978	857
1979	847
1980	807
1981	789
1982	780
1983	776
1984	785
1985	781
1986	784
1987	779

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what methods are used to make known the procedures for entrance into the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service and the designation and job descriptions of posts which become vacant in the service.

Mrs. Chalker: All Diplomatic Service entry competitions are advertised in the national press. Additionally, each year the Civil Service Commission sends all careers advisers in universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education details of forthcoming schemes and copies of the competion regulations. These include details of the selection procedures involved. Each applicant for the competition is provided with a copy of these recruitment regulations. The procedures are also made known through a range of careers booklets and publicity distributed to universities and polytechnics by the Civil Service Commission and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and through briefing talks given to university and polytechnic students.

Lists of posts likely to fall vacant in a particular grade over a 12-month period are circulated annually to all Diplomatic Service mainstream grades up to grade 4. Officers are invited to fill in a form indicating their preferences. Details of specific jobs to which an officer might be considered and officers' career plans are discussed by officers and personnel managers.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applicants for posts in the administrative group of the Diplomatic Service in each of the years 1985 to 1987, inclusive, were *(a)* male and *(b)* female; and what percentage in each case was successful.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures were:

	Applicants		*Percentage successful*	
Year	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1985	1,206	774	1·5	1·3
1986	1,220	859	1·4	1·3
1987	1,383	964	1·9	0·9

Khmer Rouge

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is proposing to review Her Majesty's Government's support at the United Nations for the Khmer Rouge and its allies in the light of Prince Sihanouk's resignation.

Mr. Mellor: Her Majesty's Government do not support the Khmer Rouge. The United Nations General Assembly has not voted on the credentials of the representatives of Democratic Kampuchea since 1982. If there is a vote at the next session we shall consider our position in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the grades of staff and numbers in each grade in his Department.

Mrs. Chalker: The list of grades in the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is:

Diplomatic Service Grades
Senior Grades
Grades 4 to 10
Legal Advisers
Secretarial Grades 1-3c
Security Officer Grades
Queen's Messengers
Technical and Communication Grades

Home Civil Service Grades
Grades 1A to 7
Senior Executive Officer
Higher Executive Officer
Higher Executive Officer D
Administration Trainee
Executive Officer
Administrative Officer
Administrative Assistant
Telephonist
Economists Grades
Librarian Grades
Research Officer Grades
Museum Grades
Laboratory Attendants
Statistician Grades
Information Officer Group
Medical Group
Science Group
Professional and Technology Grades
Secretarial Group
Chef/Cook Class
Investigating Officer Class
Cartographic and Recording Draughtsman Class
Photographer Grades
Process and General Supervisory Class—Grades A and C to E
Stores Officer Class—Grades B to D
Support Manager Grades
Telecommunication Technical Grades
Teleprinter Grades
Cypher and Telecommunication Grades
Translators
Lecturers

Numbers in each grade fluctuate from month to month, in accordance with operational requirements and the rates of retirements, resignations, recruitment, inward and outward transfers and secondments, and promotions. The information requested for all grades employed in the FCO is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Arrested Britons (Majorca)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a consular officer will next pay a visit to the five Britons arrested in Majorca on 1 July; and what advice was offered by the officer on his last visit.

Mr. Mellor: The persons concerned were conditionally released on 14 July 1988. The charges against them still stand.

During his last visit to them, prior to their release Her Majesty's consul at Palma sought to confirm their wellbeing. He did not offer any specific advice, as it is for their Spanish lawyer to provide any advice which they might require about their cases.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the preservation of historic buildings in Jamestown and elsewhere on St. Helena.

Mr. Mellor: None, although it has always been our policy to liaise closely with the St. Helena Government over the need to preserve historic buildings on St. Helena.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The cost to my Department of employing management or computer consultants was as follows:

	£ Thousands
1984-85	328,518
1985-86	502,181
1986-87	580,371
1987-88	662,156

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The management or computer consultancy contracts extant in my Department as at 1 January 1987 were as follows:

Firm	*Subject of assignment*
Coopers and Lybrand	Regional Review
Computer Sciences	Review of Agricultural Census data processing
IBM United Kingdom	Systems engineering support
P A Consultants	Strategy study on integrated management information systems
Sequel Information	Review of Agricultural Census data processing
Touche Ross	Dairy Crest foods
Touche Ross	MAFF/Milk Marketing Board agency agreement on milk quotas
Wootton Jeffries	Development of IBAP butter stocks system

Food Labelling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to require all food to bear full ingredient and nutritional labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Food Labelling Regulations 1984 implement European Community directive 79/112 and already require most pre-packaged foods to carry a list of ingredients. The exemptions are Community based, but I anticipate that the European Commission may make proposals to remove some of them such as for alcoholic drinks. I have issued guidelines to industry suggesting the information and format that should be given for the nutrition labelling of foods; I expect that the European Commission will make proposals for a Community regime in this area shortly.

Food Additives

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to prohibit the addition of unnecessary substances to food and the use of unnecessary processes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Independent expert advisory committees provide advice to Ministers on the use of substances throughout the food chain. The Food Act 1984 makes an offence the addition of any substances to food or the use of any process on food which will render the food injurious to health. Furthermore, in the exercise of regulation-making powers on the composition of food, Ministers are required by the Act to restrict as far as practicable the use of substances of no nutritional value.

Brewery Tenants

Miss Lestor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the Brewers Society code of practice on tenant security; and what action his Department will take in response to these representations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 14 June, at column 135.

Farming Industry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farmworkers were employed in each county in England in June.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that information for June 1988 is not yet available. The latest information, taken from the June 1987 census, on the numbers of farmers and workers by county in England is as follows:

Numbers of Farmers and Workers by County in England at June 1987

County	*Farmers*[1]	*Workers*[2]
Cleveland	570	564
Cumbria	7,764	4,970
Durham	2,639	2,249
Northumberland	3,020	3,283
Tyne and Wear	331	429
Humberside	4,649	7,556
North Yorkshire (North Allerton)	9,752	9,021
North Yorkshire (Beveley)	1,156	2,869
South Yorkshire	1,783	1,882
West Yorkshire	3,579	3,222
Derbyshire	4,432	3,447
Leicestershire	3,331	3,745
Lincolnshire	7,600	14,541
Northamptonshire	2,336	2,879
Nottinghamshire	2,495	3,759
Cambridgeshire	4,598	8,774
Norfolk	6,083	13,539

County	Farmers[1]	Workers[2]
Suffolk	4,393	8,689
Bedfordshire	1,575	2,522
Berkshire	980	1,976
Buckinghamshire	2,194	3,058
East Sussex	2,472	3,727
Essex	4,295	8,029
Greater London (East)	170	468
Greater London (South East)	348	773
Hampshire	3,364	7,316
Hertfordshire	1,401	2,523
Isle of Wight	577	831
Kent	5,080	15,979
Oxfordshire	2,461	4,130
Surrey	1,799	4,119
West Sussex	2,351	6,609
Avon	2,327	3,607
Cornwall	7,866	5,810
Devon	12,279	9,651
Dorset	3,450	4,386
Gloucestershire	3,660	4,745
Isles of Scilly	70	93
Somerset	6,544	6,808
Wiltshire	3,441	5,137
Hereford and Worcester	7,885	10,651
Shropshire	5,796	6,281
Staffordshire	5,229	4,866
Warkwickshire	2,769	3,389
West Midlands	580	766
Cheshire	5,081	5,426
Greater Manchester	1,786	1,625
Lancashire	6,867	6,881
Merseyside	628	941
England	175,836	238,541

[1] Includes whole and part-time farmers, partners and directors.
[2] Includes salaried managers and regular whole-time, part-time, seasonal and casual workers.

ENVIRONMENT

Spandau Prison

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what extra amounts were paid out on the contracts for the demolition of Spandau prison over and above the agreed tender price;

(2) what is the current position on the contract for the demolition of Spandau prison; what was the outturn time period and the outturn price; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what was the total amount of the successful tender for the demolition of Spandau prison; and what was the time period quoted in the tender.

Mr. Chope: The amount of the successful tender was DM1,696,286 and the contract period was two months. The work took six and a half weeks and was completed on 4 November 1987. The outturn cost was DM1,658,963 and the final account was settled on 19 November. No extra amounts were paid on the one contract. The full cost was met by the German Federal Government.

Gas and Electricity Meters

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the installation in accessible places of gas and electricity meters for easy reading in all new housing developments.

Mrs. Roe: The siting of electricity and gas meters in new housing developments is a matter for developers and their agents to agree with their local supply authorities.

Bonamy Estate, Southwark

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates of (i) all meetings since 25 February 1983 between officials of his Department and officers of the London borough of Southwark to discuss the Bonamy estate and (ii) all correspondence *(a)* from his Department to the London borough of Southwark and *(b)* from the London borough of Southwark to his Department in relation to the Bonamy estate; if he will list all moneys granted by his Department to the London borough of Southwark for expenditure on the Bonamy estate; if he will list all expenditure approved by his Department and all permission to spend approved by Department in relation to the Bonamy estate; and if he will publish all relevant correspondence.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 25 February 1983 meetings have taken place on 13 July 1983, 13 September 1983, 9 March 1984, 28 August 1984, 15 November 1984, 26 August 1985, 9 May 1985, 21 August 1985, 25 February 1986 and 4 November 1986.

Since 25 February 1983 capital expenditure of £0·3 million has been approved (30 September 1985) with eligibility for subsidy at 75 per cent. of the loan charges.

Other than housing subsidy, no Exchequer grants have been paid.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no plans to publish the correspondence about the Bonamy estate.

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have received extra housing investment programme allocations in 1988-89, to provide additional accommodation for the homeless, under the initiative he announced on 17 June; what additional housing investment allocation each local authority has received under this initiative; how many units of accommodation each local authority has estimated will result, comprising *(a)* local authority dwellings refurbished, *(b)* hostel places provided by local authorities, *(c)* hostel places provided by housing associations and *(d)* other dwellings or places provided by local authorities; and how quickly these units are expected to become available.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities estimate that the additional allocation of £21·1 million we have given them following our announcement in June will provide nearly 1,900 extra units of accommodation for the benefit of homeless people. These units should be available in the current financial year. The further details requested are set down in the table.

Allocations by Region and Authority
Estimated additional units of accommodation

Authority	*Allocation £K*	*LA Dwellings refurbished*	*LA Hostel places*	*HA Hostel places*	*Other*
Northern Region					
Hartlepool	400	22	0	0	0
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	100	7	0	0	0
Middlesbrough	75	5	0	0	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	125	18	0	0	0
North Tyneside	100	24	0	0	0
Total	£800,000	Total Units 76			
South West					
Gloucester	100	0	0	5	0
Poole	100	0	0	5	0
Restormel	100	0	0	5	0
Weymouth and Portland	100	0	0	0	5
Woodspring	100	0	0	4	0
Total	£500,000	Total Units 24			
Eastern					
Cambridge	180	0	0	0	25
Ipswich	170	7	0	0	0
Southend	30	0	7	0	0
Thurrock	120	0	11	0	0
Total	£500,000	Total Units 50			
North West					
Blackpool	10	0	48	0	0
Bolton	240	52	0	0	0
Carlisle	95	32	0	0	0
Lancaster	200	40	0	0	0
Manchester	1,800	144	0	0	300
Rochdale	80	0	0	0	8
Rossendale	140	0	0	0	48
Salford	140	0	0	0	24
Wigan	15	64	0	0	0
Total	£2,720,000	Total Units 760			
South East					
Brighton	250	0	0	0	6
Dover	380	0	0	0	8
Horsham	50	0	3	0	0
Hove	250	0	0	0	5
Lewes	100	0	6	0	0
Maidstone	300	0	0	0	6
New Forest	200	0	10	0	0
Oxford	250	7	0	0	0
Reading	200	0	0	0	8
Shepway	43	0	0	0	9
Slough	150	0	8	0	0
South Oxfordshire	250	0	0	0	8
Wokingham	77	0	0	0	3
Total	£2,500,000	Total Units 87			
West Midlands					
Birmingham	509	34	0	0	0
Dudley	100	10	0	0	0
Staffs Moorlands	125	0	0	0	5
Walsall	200	20	0	0	0
Worcester	366	0	0	0	12
Total	£1,300,000	Total Units 81			
Yorkshire and Humberside					
Barnsley	184	12	0	0	0
Bradford	200	20	0	0	0
Kirklees	226	19	0	0	0
Leeds	200	5	16	0	0
Sheffield	290	48	0	0	0
Total	£1,100,000	Total Units 120			

Authority	*Allocation £K*	*LA Dwellings refurbished*	*LA Hostel places*	*HA Hostel places*	*Other*
East Midlands					
Amber Valley	60	0	3	0	0
Derby	40	0	0	0	2
Derbyshire Dales	30	3	0	0	0
High Peak	40	2	0	0	0
Kettering	50	3	0	0	0
Leicester	250	16	0	0	0
Northampton	50	3	0	0	0
Nottingham	200	0	0	0	8
Oadby and Wigston	70	0	0	0	2
Total	£800,000	Total Units 42			
London					
Brent	898	18	0	0	13
Camden	925·5	9	0	31	0
Ealing	500	0	28	0	3
Greenwich	444·5	37	0	0	7
Hackney	900	87	0	0	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	593	12	0	0	16
Haringey	900	0	0	0	36
Hounslow	250	0	14	0	0
Islington	600	22	0	0	27
Lambeth	401	0	0	20	0
Lewisham	600	0	0	0	18
Newham	866	16	0	0	10
Southwark	400	40	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	922	34	0	0	0
Waltham Forest	200	5	12	0	0
Wandsworth	500	20	0	0	0
Westminster	600	36	0	0	13
Total	£10,500,000	Total Units 584			
Merseyside Task Force					
Liverpool	150	18	0	0	0
Wirral	150	0	0	40	0
Total	£300,000	Total Units 58			
Grand Total	£21·1 million	Total Units 1,882			

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he used in selecting *(a)* which schemes should be approved for additional housing investment programme allocations, *(b)* which local authorities should receive additional housing investment programme allocations and *(c)* what extra housing investment programme allocations each local authority should receive under the initiative he announced on 17 June, to provide additional accommodation for the homeless.

Mrs. Roe: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 23 June, at columns *705-6*.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will estimate the approximate expenditure per head for each of the local authority functions or responsibilities that is consistent with a standard level of service that arises from a community charge of £202 for each community charge payer;

(2) whether he will estimate the performance criteria for each of the major local authority functions or responsibilities that allowed him to arrive at a standard level of service that arises from a community charge of £202 for each community charge payer.

Mr. Howard: The standard level of service associated with the estimated community charge for spending at need of £202 in 1988-89 is the grant related expenditure assessment for each local authority in 1988-89. Details of the construction of these assessments are given in the DOE publication "Grant Related Expenditure 1988-89—How the expenditure needs of local authorities are assessed for block grant." The actual assessments for individual services for each local authority are given in the related DOE publication, "The Technical Handbook of Grant Related Expenditure 1988-89." Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the difference in cost as expressed in the Price Waterhouse report between operating the existing rating system for five years and implementing and operating the community charge for five years.

Mr. Howard: At constant prices the collection costs for rates for five years would be about £1 billion and the cost of collecting the community charge would be between £1·8 and £2·1 billion. The increase in collection costs needs to be viewed against the fact that every 1 per cent. reduction in local government expenditure secured from the discipline of the new arrangements would yield savings of £500 million a year.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he will make in respect of poll tax liability of single members of the armed forces living on a military base but remaining on the electoral register at the parental home.

Mr. Howard: Members of the United Kingdom armed forces will pay the personal community charge to the local authority in whose area they have their sole or main residence, with the exception of those who have their sole or main residence in buildings designated under paragraph 11 of schedule 1 to the Local Government Finance Bill. In that case, they will instead make a payment to the Government, which will pay contributions in aid of community charges to the local authorities concerned.

Annunciator Monitors

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the screen sizes of the five annunciator monitors purchased in 1986.

Mr. Chope: Twenty inches.

Prospect Estate

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, subsequent to meeting a delegation from the borough of Rushmoor on 26 May, he has accepted its case for subsidy, for the current and subsequent financial years, to nullify the effects of the abolition of project control in the matter of major technical repairs on the Prospect estate.

Mrs. Roe: I will inform the council as soon as I have reached a decision on its application for a special determination for subsidy, and I will inform the hon. Member at the same time.

Warrington and Runcorn (Rented Property)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 7 July, if he will now provide the information requested concerning the identity of those to whom he sent copies of letters relating to decisions on the transfer of management of rented property belonging to Warrington and Runcorn development corporation; why that information was not provided in the answer of 7 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The Secretary of State has no role in the decision of the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation for the interim management of the new town rented housing in Warrington. No decision letter on management has therefore been issued by my Department.

Self-build Housing Associations

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those self-build housing associations which have received financial assistance from the Government for projects in the inner cities during the past five years, showing under what programme this was given and to what value.

Mrs. Roe: The following self-build housing associations have each received £1,000 loan finance under the Housing Corporation's approved development programme and guarantees from the corporation in respect of additional borrowings:

Associations	*Total scheme cost to date (£)*
Riverside	758,000
Glengall	485,000
Zenzele	127,056
Woolwell	636,378
Roborough	632,040
Fosse	232,000
Dingle Mount	480,000
Seaton Carew	576,147
Baytree	593,000
Bolton Lodge[1]	—

[1] £290,923 of the loan advanced on this scheme was written-off by the Corporation and the scheme transferred to the North British Housing Association as a fair rent scheme.

In addition, my Department provided £28,615 to the Self Help Community Housing Association under the urban programme.

Leeds Housing Action Trust

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what form the Leeds city council was consulted at any stage leading up to the announcement of the Leeds housing action trust.

Mrs. Roe: Leeds city council, like all local authorities in England, was sent a copy of the Department's consultation document on housing action trusts published in October 1987. The council responded on 30 October 1987 and a copy of its response was placed in the Library.

Following the announcement about housing action trusts on 11 July, my right hon. Friend wrote to the leader of the Leeds city council the same day inviting the council and representatives of tenant groups to a meeting to discuss his proposals for a housing action trust in Leeds.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the criteria for choosing the particular 7,123 houses comprising the proposed Leeds housing action trust.

Mrs. Roe: In choosing the areas which might be covered by housing action trusts, my right hon. Friend has taken account of the matters listed in clause 60(5) of the Housing Bill.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last paid an official visit to Leeds, in particular South Seacroft, Gipton and Halton Moor areas.

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning saw each of these areas when he made an official visit to Leeds last September.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of the wishes of the tenants of the Gipton, Seacroft and Halton Moor estates proposed for a housing action trust; and what steps he has taken to consult the tenants directly.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend wrote to the leader of the Leeds city council on 11 July inviting the councils and representatives of tenant groups to a meeting to discuss his proposals for a housing action trust in Leeds. In addition, he has written to all residents in the Halton Moor, Seacroft South and Gipton estates who might be affected by the established of a housing action trust.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has done an analysis of the voids and rent arrears in the estates of Gipton, Halton and South Seacroft, Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The Department receives a copy of Leeds city council's quarterly review of statistics about housing estates in Leeds, including information about voids and rent arrears.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information was available to him about the renovation programmes that have recently taken place to the housing stock in Gipton, South Seacroft and Halton estates in Leeds before he made his announcement of 11 July on the designation of housing action trusts.

Mrs. Roe: The council provides information about its renovation programme for these and other estates as part of its housing investment programme submission to the Department. Additional information has also been made available in support of bids for additional allocations under the estate action programme.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he had before 11 July about the progress of the priority estates programme scheme initiated in conjunction with his Department in the area now designated as a housing action trust.

Mrs. Roe: There is no departmental priority estate project in the area now proposed as a housing action trust. Leeds city council, however, has itself designated certain areas, including one at South Seacroft, as priority estates. Information about progress at South Seacroft was included in the council's 1987 housing investment programme strategy statement. In addition, the Department has information on progress on estate action projects at South Girton and Halton Moor.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of *(a)* the recent housing investment programme resources in the area comprising the Leeds housing action trust and *(b)* his Department's estimates of the amount needed to bring the housing stock in the Leeds housing action trust up to current day housing standards.

Mrs. Roe: It is for Leeds city council to determine how much of its housing investment programme resources should be allocated to individual estates and programmes. Through estate action we have provided additional housing investment and urban programme resources totalling £2·1 million since 1986-87 in the area which might be covered by a housing action trust.

Decisions on the precise areas which might be designated will be taken in the light of consultants' studies and of local views. It will be for the housing action trust, if established, to consider its proposals for the area, in consultation with the local authority and local people.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures for the tenancy turnover in Gipton, South Seacroft and Halton Moor council estates, Leeds.

Mrs. Roe: Leeds city council publishes a quarterly review of statistics which contains information about lettings on its individual estates.

Single Market

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether initiatives leading to the single European Community market by 1992 will involve and include harmonisation of member countries' limits of liability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: In July 1987, the European Commission, as part of an initiative to explore further areas of harmonisation in the construction industry, commissioned a study of liability, indemnity and insurance arrangements in the members states. A draft report will be available shortly. We are keeping representatives of the construction industry and its clients informed of developments.

Limehouse Link

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there will be a public inquiry into the compulsory purchase orders required for the Limehouse link.

Mr. Trippier: A public inquiry into the London Docklands Development Corporation (Limehouse Link, Tower Hamlets) Compulsory Purchase Order 1988 is being arranged. The decision not to call in the planning application in respect of the Limehouse link road proposal was taken after consideration of all relevant matters and of all representations made to the planning authority and to my Department. The Limehouse link would not be a trunk road, but would be a distribution road within docklands, constructed and owned by the LDDC.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who was consulted in the latest announcement not to call a public inquiry into the Limehouse link.

Mr. Trippier: The decision not to call in the planning application in respect of the Limehouse link road proposal was taken after consideration of all relevant matters and of all representations made to the planning authority and to my Department.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Limehouse link will form part of a trunk road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. The Limehouse link and other distributor roads within docklands will be constructed and owned by the LDDC.

Self Builders

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Housing Corporation has any plans to revise its lending policy to self builders.

Mrs. Roe: The Housing Corporation is currently reviewing the position on self build housing associations and will submit any proposals for change to my Department in due course.

Non-domestic Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each rating authority *(a)* the non-domestic rate poundage for 1988-89 and *(b)* the amount to be received from non-domestic rates in 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed in the Library a table containing the requested information. The estimated non-domestic rate yield was calculated by multiplying each poundage by the non-domestic rateable value in that area.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, assuming the implementation of the proposals in the Local Government Finance Bill, he will list what each local authority would have received from the national non-domestic rate pool in 1988-89 based on a national non-domestic rate poundage of 239·5p.

Mr. Ridley: Non-domestic rates are expected to yield about £8·9 billion in 1988-89. Under the proposals contained in the Local Government Finance Bill this would be distributed to local authorities as £245 per adult.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the information he has collected on the accumulated capital receipts held by local authorities at the end of March 1988.

Mr. Ridley: This information is not yet available.

Salmon Fishing (Rates)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate, by local authority area, the loss of non-domestic rates revenue from salmon fishing resulting from Government amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to my right hon.Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on 7 March 1988, at column *78*.

Central Manchester Development Corporation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the directors of the Manchester urban development corporation, their remuneration and details of any elected office they have held or hold.

Mr. Trippier: The membership and annual remuneration of the board of the Central Manchester development corporation is as follows:

Chairman: Dr. James Grigor (£14,223).
Deputy Chairman: Mr. Derek Boothman (£6,436).
Members: Mr. Ken Alford, Mrs. Deborah Buchanan, Mr. John Collins, Councillor Jack Flanagan, Mr. Raymond Gerrard, Councillor Mrs. Joyce Hill, Mr. Bob Scott, Councillor Graham Stringer (each £3,770).

The three councillors are members of Manchester city council. No other board members currently hold elected office.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of job vacancies in Cumbria; and what measures are being taken to ease any skills shortage.

Mr. Nicholls: There were 2,019 unfilled vacancies, excluding community programme vacancies, registered at jobcentres in the county of Cumbria in May 1988, the latest date for which figures are available. It is estimated, nationally, that about one third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

The existence of unfilled vacancies should not necessarily be taken as evidence of skill shortages; some vacancies will remain unfilled for other reasons while some arise as a result of job-changing and will be essentially of a short-term nature.

It is primarily for employers to supply the skills they need by providing the proper incentives and by making the necessary investment in training.

The Government have given a lead by more than doubling their own investment in vocational education and training since 1979, especially through the two-years YTS for school leavers and employment training—the £1·4 billion training programme for unemployed adults. The Training Commission monitors skill supply and demand at national and local levels to inform employers and assist in the planning and targeting of government training programmes.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the representations he has received on the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: Following extensive consultation, the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission has submitted proposals to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on regulations for the control of substances hazardous to health. My right hon. Friend has received no other representations on this subject.

Special Steels Ltd. (Sheffield)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on which dates in each of the last five years Health and Safety Executive inspectors visited the factory of Special Steels Limited, Bacon Lane, Sheffield; if, for each such visit he will summarise the action taken by the executive; how many notified or reported accidents or dangerous occurrences have occurred at the factory in each of the last five years; and for each such notified or reported accident what action was taken by the Health and Safety Executive on receipt of the notification or report.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have made three visits to Special Steels Limited, Bacon Lane, Sheffield during the last five years.

On 30 April 1985, HSE inspectors carried out an accident investigation and afterwards sent a letter to the company. On 20 March 1987, inspectors made a preventive inspection visit followed by verbal advice. On 24 June 1988 a visit was made to investigate a fatal accident and a prohibition notice was issued.

No other accidents or incidents have been reported to HSE during the last five years.

Employment Training Scheme

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the remuneration to be made available to trainees taking up places on the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The level of training allowances on employment training have been set to ensure that all trainees will be better off on the programme than remaining unemployed and on benefit. In addition, trainees will be reimbursed all fares over £5 per week and paid lodging costs for training away from home. There will be assistance with the cost of any special clothing needed and lone parents will receive child care costs of up to £50 per week for each child. Trainees who successfully complete their training plan will also receive a training bonus of up to £200, depending on their level of achievement.

All these allowances will be free from deductions for income tax and national insurance contributions and all trainees entitled to income support will retain their passport to other social security benefits. This is a substantial package which should provide an incentive to all unemployed people to take advantage of the high-quality training on offer.

Companies (Employee Involvement)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further conclusions he has drawn from more recent employee involvement statements in company directors' reports in accordance with section 235 and schedule 7 of part V of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Nicholls: I have today placed a survey of a sample of recent reports in the Library of the House. It shows a continuing improvement in the reporting of employee involvement practices.

Tourism

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the arrangements for Government support for the tourism industry.

Mr. Fowler: The tourism industry is now one of Britain's largest and fastest growing industries. In 1987, a record 15·4 million visits were paid to the United Kingdom from overseas. The total turnover of the industry was some £18 billion. A total of 1·4 million people work in the main tourism-related sectors. An additional 41,000 jobs were created in the year to December 1987, and turnover rose by some 5 per cent.

The importance of tourism is now more widely understood than it was a few years ago. That, in large part, is due to the efforts of the industry itself. It is also due to the work of the English tourist board, the other national tourist boards, and the British Tourist Authority, and to the work of Government in supporting the industry, described in a series of publications of which "Tourism '88" published in May, is the fourth.

Given the degree of interest there now is in tourism, the degree of support for it, and the changing nature of the industry, the time is right for the Government to look at their policies to see that they are as relevant as possible to the current situation. I am therefore setting in hand a review of the role of Government—in particular of my own Department—in relation to the tourism industry, which I expect to be completed by the end of this year.

The Government continues to recognise the importance of the industry, and remains committed to providing the economic and regulatory framework within which the industry can prosper. The levels of funding by my Department; the mechanisms by which these funds are applied; and the implications for the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board and their activities will obviously have to be considered by the review against the background of the wider role of Government and their wish to see such activities carried out in the private sector wherever possible. The review will also clearly need to consider the cost-effectiveness of this funding in a climate where continued expansion of jobs and business is anticipated.

My right hon. Friends in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own arrangements for tourism and the review will not be looking at these and how they apply to their national tourist boards, although clearly my right hon. Friends will be interested in the outcome of the review.

I have also consulted the chairman of the BTA and ETB, who has assured me of his full support and co-operation, and the review will take account of the boards' views.

There is every indication that tourism will continue to grow in importance to the economy and for the creation of jobs. This review will help the Government to continue creating the framework for that to happen.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Special Needs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the monthly numbers and amounts of loans for special needs since April, together with the comparable figures for grants one year ago.

Mr. Portillo: The table shows numbers and financial amounts of payments from the discretionary part of the social fund for April, May and June. These data are provisional. Single payment data were collected in four-weekly periods and figures corresponding to calendar months could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Data for the two periods most closely approximately to the hon. Member's request are therefore given. For urgent needs single payments only the number of decisions is available, not the number of awards.

Social Fund	*11 April 1988 to 30 April 1988*	*1 May 1988 to 31 May 1988*	*1 June 1988 to 30 June 1988*
Budgeting loans awards	3,229	20,808	34,903
expenditure £ million	0·64	4·4	7·6
Crisis loans awards	15,753	24,765	28,279
expenditure £ million	0·7	1·0	1·2
Community care grants			
awards	1,542	4,769	6,783
expenditure £ million	0·3	1·1	1·7

Supplementary Benefit	8 April 1987 to 5 May 1987	6 May 1987 to 2 June 1987	3 June 1987 to 30 June 1987
Single payments awards 000s	159	179	173
expenditure £ million	12·7	14·0	13·5
Urgent needs payments single payments decisions	1,104	1,026	1,081
expenditure £ million	0·085	0·107	0·99

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of claimants below pensionable age who have been dependent on supplementary benefit for five years or more, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: The information is as follows:

Year	Thousands
1977	218
1978	227
1979	234
1980	251
1981	281
1982	308
1983	348
1984	409
1986	535
1987	659

Source: Annual statistical inquiries.

There was no annual statistical inquiry in 1985: the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Unemployed Claimants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of unemployed claimants and their dependants as a percentage of all claimants under pensionable age, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: The table shows the number of unemployed supplementary benefit claimants and their dependants as a percentage of supplementary benefit claimants under pensionable age and their dependants.

Year	Percentage
1977	52·83
1978	48·98
1979	47·99
1980	57·56
1981	64·76
1982	66·82
1983	65·00
1984	64·14
1986	62·63
1987	58·23

Source: Annual statistical inquiries. There was no annual statistical inquiry in 1985: the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Smoking-related Diseases

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated percentage of hospital beds taken up by people with smoking-related diseases.

Mrs. Currie: The available information for diseases associated with smoking is given in the table. Not all illness from these diseases is attributable to smoking. In particular, smoking is only one of a number of causes of ischaemic heart disease.

Estimated average number and percentage of NHS acute and geriatric beds used daily by people with smoking-related diseases. England 1985

Disease	ICD[1]	Number[2]	Percent Acute and Geriatric
Malignant Neoplasm of:			
Trachea, Bronchus and Lung	162	1,765	1·2
Lip, Oral cavity and Pharynx	140-149	271	0·2
Oesophagus	150	344	0·2
Larynx	161	160	0·1
Diseases of Circulatory System:			
Ischaemic Heart Disease	410-414	5,511	3·7
Chronic Pulmonory Heart Disease	416	91	0·1
Aortic Aneurysm	441	213	0·1
Diseases of the Respiratory System:			
Bronchitis and Emphysema	490-492	916	0·6
Chronic Airways Obstruction (not elsewere classified)	496	1,572	1·0
All Diseases Listed above		10,843	7·2
Acute and Geriatric Specialties		150,680	100

Notes:
[1] International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.
[2] Based on the hospital in-patient inquiry and SH3 1985

Child Health Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will instruct all district health authorities to report annually on arrangements for child health services.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities already report to the Department on developments in health services, including child health, in the annual round of planning statements.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement about the future role of nurses in the development of child health services;

(2) if he will make a statement about the future role of health visitors in the development of child health services;

(3) if he will make a statement about the future role of clinical medical officers and senior clinical medical officers in the development of child health services.

Mrs. Currie: The role of the profession involved in child health services is a matter for the professional bodies concerned and is a topic which is currently under discussion. They have set up a working party to review current practice in child health surveillance and to make recommendations for future practice. Their report is expected early next year.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the future role of general practitioners in the development of child health services.

Mrs. Currie: The recent White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) makes clear the Government's intention that general practitioners should increasingly be involved in health surveillance of children under the age of five. Subject to discussions with professional interests we envisage introducing an allowance payable to general practitioners who receive appropriate training and who provide child health surveillance services under arrangements to be agreed between family practitioner committees and district health authorities. It is recognised that the greater involvement of general practitioners in the services will take place gradually and that there will continue to be an important role for the community health services in child surveillance.

Benefits

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes he intends to make to social security benefits for people living in lodgings.

Mr. Portillo: The Government announced in April 1987 that help with housing costs for income support recipients living in ordinary board-and-lodging accommodation would be transferred to the housing benefit scheme in April 1989. This group will thus receive help on the same basis as the majority of households on income-related benefits.

We have today written to the local authority associations to consult them on the necessary changes to the housing benefit regulations.

We have also decided arrangements for providing transitional protection to people who would receive less benefit overall as a result of the change in benefit rules. People in supported lodgings receiving personal care from their landlords will be eligible for long-term transitional protection. For families in hotels who are not sponsored by local authorities, we will provide transitional protection for twelve months. Three months' transitional protection will be provided for people aged 25 or over and young people under 25 in vulnerable groups. Other young boarders will not receive transitional protection, but they will no longer be subject to the present limits on the period for which they can receive benefit as a boarder in any one area.

Transitional protection will be paid by the local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security and will be reduced by increases in the normal rate of income support in payment.

The local authority associations have been asked to comment on the draft regulations by 8 August. The final housing benefit regulations, along with the associated income support regulations, will be laid before Parliament shortly thereafter.

Disablement Services Authority

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent on car phone installation for both officers and members of the Disablement Services Authority; and if he will give details of the running costs of car phones and of their usage and cost effectiveness in relation to other communication systems.

Mr. Scott: These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority to which the hon. Member should address questions.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the level of funding of research into myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A number of representations about funding for research into myalgic encephalomyelitis have been received.

The main agency through which the Government support medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Griffiths Report (Representations)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had from the chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee in regard to the Griffiths report; what reply he has sent or will be sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee has written to my right hon. Friend to give the views of his committee on the recommendations put forward in the Griffiths report. My right hon. Friend replied on 14 July that we will take the points raised into account in framing our own proposals.

Allowances (Tribunal Appeals)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the average delay between the submission of documents concerning an appeal to the tribunal in respect of social security allowances and the appeal being heard.

Mr. Portillo: The latest available administrative statistics on social security appeal tribunals for Great Britain relate to appeals heard in the quarter ending 31 December 1987. For appeals heard in the three months to December 1987 the average time between submission of the appeal documents to the tribunal and the hearing was 16·1 weeks.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many transitional protection housing benefit payments have been made by the Glasgow unit;

(2) how many written and telephone inquiries have been received by the Glasgow housing benefit unit;

(3) how many of the applications for housing benefit transitional protection payment received by the Glasgow unit have been refused as being ineligible for a payment;

(4) how many applications for housing benefit transitional protection payments have been received by the Glasgow unit.

Mr. Portillo: As planned, the transitional payments unit became fully operational this month, making the first

payments on Thursday 14 July. Up to 13 July the unit had received 19,628 written inquiries, 18,867 telephone inquiries and 77,750 applications for transitional payments. Already 14,892 inquiry forms, to obtain the information necessary to assess eligibility for payment, have been sent out to local authorities, and inquiries are now being sent out to local authorities at the rate of 4,500 per day. In the 190 cases where they have been returned assessments have been made. Ninety-six applicants were found to be ineligible for payment and in the other 94 cases applicants have been notified of their award and 18 payments were made on Thursday 14 July. These figures take no account of transitional payments being made to income support cases by the Glasgow unit.

Dental Treatment Claims

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the average time, and details of the range of times which it is taking the Department of Health and Social Security agency benefits unit in Newcastle upon Tyne to process claims from dental patients for payments for treatment.

Mr. Portillo: No separate details of clearance times are available in respect of dental claims. Information derived from a recent small sample of all claims for remission or refund of NHS charges suggests that about 43 per cent. of claims are cleared within 15 working days and about 84 per cent. within 20 working days. The average clearance time is a little under 15 working days, but this figure masks a wide variation in clearance times due to the need to seek further information in some cases.

Waste Paper (Recycling)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of waste paper in his Department is recycled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Waste paper in the Department is disposed of by the most economic means available, including sale to paper merchants, but no records are kept of what proportion is recycled.

Disabled Persons (Survey)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the precedent following the 1971 Amelia Harris report, he intends to advise local authorities to use the same format as the current survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to conduct their own surveys of people with disabilities in their areas in compliance with their duties under section 1 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Scott: Local authorities have a clear duty under section 1 of Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to inform themselves of the number of disabled people in their areas and of their need for services. It is for individual authorities to determine how to fulfil this statutory duty. The reports of the recent series of OPCS surveys on disability are not yet published, and it is premature to speculate on the potential use of the OPCS's methodology at local level.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what dates he received the results of each of the four surveys on disablement conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Scott: At the end of May the complete text of the first OPCS report on the prevalence of disability among adults was received by the Department. Subsequent reports have not yet been completed.

Departmental Employees (Statistics)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many employees within his Department are currently employed in London and the south-east of England; what percentage of these are engaged in work which can only readily be done within this area; and what consideration he has given to the relocation of units within his Department to Manchester and other regional centres.

Mr. Moore: On 1 June there were approximately 99,000 staff in post in my Department, of whom 29,000 (including 22,000 in the regional social security organisation) were located in London and the south-east. I have accepted in principle that relocating some work would provide a better way for my Department to conduct its business by improving efficiency and by providing a better service to the public.

Detailed work is going forward urgently to identify those functions in both headquarters and some local offices which could be relocated. I shall consider all alternative locations which will enable my Department to improve efficiency.

Family Income Supplement

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families employed in farming received family income supplement in April 1987.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 13,000 in farming and related occupations.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in each of the three categories mentioned in regulation 70(2) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 were receiving income support at the latest date for which information is available from the Derby London road and Becket street offices of his Department.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people entitled to supplementary benefit long-term rate did not claim at that rate at the latest date for which figures are available; how many of those were aged 60 to 79 years; how many of these are entitled to income support including the higher pensioner premium; how many are currently in receipt of income support with that premium; and what would the cost be of 100 per cent. take up.

Mr. Portillo: A note on the latest available take-up estimates for supplementary benefit (which are for 1983) has been put in the Library. The note repeats a reply previously given on 30 October 1986 at columns *231-34*. Supplementary benefit take-up estimates for pensioners are particularly uncertain. The reasons for this are briefly outlined in the note described above and a more technical explanation entitled "Supplementary Benefit Take-Up,

1983: Technical Note" is also in the Library. Take-up estimates for income support are not yet available and will not be so for some years. On the assumptions set out in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" some 150,000 pensioners aged 60 to 79 would receive the higher pensioner premium.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many invalidity benefit claimants were in receipt of *(a)* each of the rates of the invalidity allowance and *(b)* the additional component, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: At April 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 220,000 people in receipt of the high rate of invalidity allowance, 154,000 in receipt of the middle rate, and 135,000 in receipt of the low rate. These figures exclude those whose additional pension (previously known as additional component) extinguished their entitlement to invalidity allowance. There were 692,000 people in receipt of additional pension.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the average amount of additional component payable to invalidity benefit claimants and *(b)* the maximum possible amount of additional component for invalidity benefit claimants, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: At April 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the average amount of additional pension payable to all invalidity benefit claimants was £4·30. The maximum possible amount at that time was £29·11. From April 1988 the maximum has risen to £34·75.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants were eligible for severe disablement allowance, but did not claim it because they were already in receipt of supplementary benefit and would not have been any better off financially if they claimed severe disablement allowance, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: I regret that reliable estimates are not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* married women, *(b)* single women and *(c)* men are excluded from severe disablement allowance because of the 80 per cent. test of disablement.

Mr. Scott: Available information relates to claims disallowed because of failure of the 80 per cent. test and, as at 7 April 1987, is as follows:

(a) 10,111
(b) 2,202
(c) 3,629

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants *(a)* were transferred from non-contributory invalidity pension and housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension to severe disablement allowance in November 1984, *(b)* have been awarded severe disablement allowance since November 1984 and *(c)* are in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

(a) 251,900 (i) non-contributory invalidity pension 197,100
(ii) housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension 54,800
(b) 45,000 (estimated as at 4 April 1987)
(c) 260,100 (i) men 102,200
(ii) women 157,900.

Benefit Claims (Persons Abroad)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many forms DLSB/A11, DLSB/A11A and DLIS/536, reporting claims for supplementary benefit or income support by persons from abroad, were received by the office of the chief adjudication officer in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Portillo: The number of supplementary benefit and income support claims by people from abroad notified by local social security offices in each of the last 12 months is as follows:

Period ending[1]	*Urgent cases payments*
30 June 1987	70
28 July 1987	121
25 August 1987	118
22 September 1987	120
20 October 1987	79
17 November 1987	97
15 December 1987	103
12 January 1988	71
9 February 1988	151
8 March 1988	88
5 April 1988	108
29 April 1988	137
31 May 1988	150
30 June 1988	326

[1] Length of period varies.

Period ending[1]	*Claims by European nationals*
30 June 1987	82
28 July 1987	149
25 August 1987	181
22 September 1987	160
20 October 1987	177
17 November 1987	213
15 December 1987	156
12 January 1988	138
9 February 1988	163
8 March 1988	124
5 April 1988	85
3 May 1988	65
31 May 1988	61
28 June 1988	166

[1] All periods are 4 weeks.

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what monitoring of the provision of services for mentally handicapped people is taking place in line with Her Majesty's Government's response to the second report of the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 30 March at columns *547-48*.

Cervical Cancer Testing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when a consultant pathologist will be appointed to lead the work of cervical cancer smear testing in North Staffordshire district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that a consultant pathologist has been appointed to run the cervical cancer screening programme in North Staffordshire health authority and that she took up the post on 1 June 1988.

Ms. Walley To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to improve the quality of cervical smears tests taken from women in North Staffordshire district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Guidance on quality in taking and examining smears was issued to health authorities in January this year. I understand that the North Staffordshire health authority is undertaking a programme of action under the circular.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied that women in North Staffordshire district health authority are receiving the results of their cervical smear test within the time limit set by the Government.

Mrs. Currie: The guidance issued to health authorities in January this year stated that laboratories must aim to send results to the doctors who submit a smear within one month of receiving it. I understand that the average length of time for submission of results to doctors in North Staffordshire district health authority is now four weeks, compared to eight weeks in March this year. There remains a small backlog of smears to be cleared, including those which are the subject of clinical discussion with Christie hospital.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Soley To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing the total number of households receiving *(a)* a rent allowance and *(b)* a rent rebate and the total cost of such payments and their average value in each of the years 1979 to 1987 (i) in Great Britain, (ii) in England, (iii) in Wales and (iv) in Scotland;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the total number of *(a)* home owners, *(b)* council tenants and *(c)* other tenants receiving a rate rebate and the total cost of such rebates and their average value in each of the years 1979 to 1987 (i) in Great Britain, (ii) in England, (iii) in Scotland and (iv) in Wales.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The information available is given in the tables. Before 1982-83 assistance with housing costs was through the supplementary benefit scheme administered by the Department and the rebate and allowance scheme run by the Department of the Environment. Housing benefit was introduced for some supplementary benefit claimants from November 1982 with full implementation for all claimants following from April 1983. The data for the years prior to 1982-83 are based upon the rent rebate and allowance and rate rebate schemes only. The data for 1982-83 combine information from both the old and new schemes.

Housing benefit:
Expenditure, number of recipients and average amounts 1979-1987

	Rent rebate			*Rent allowance*		
	Expenditure £ million	*Numbers thousands*	*Average value £ annum*	*Expenditure £ million*	*Numbers thousands*	*Average value £ annum*
1979-80						
Great Britain	238	1,205	197·51	40	220	181·82
1980-81						
Great Britain	317	1,330	238·35	48	240	200·00
1981-82						
Great Britain	497	1,590	312·58	50	250	200·00
1982-83						
England	769	2,431	316·33	66	234	282·05
Scotland	110	468	235·04	6	19	315·79
Wales	50	151	331·13	2	7	285·70
Great Britain	929	3,050	304·69	74	260	284·62
1983-84						
England	1,659	2,984	555·97	483	911	530·19
Scotland	212	565	375·22	30	64	468·75
Wales	109	185	589·19	23	42	547·62
Great Britain	1,980	3,735	530·12	536	1,015	528·08
1984-85						
England	1,786	2,984	598·53	615	969	634·67
Scotland	237	570	415·79	42	64	656·25
Wales	122	189	645·50	31	47	659·57
Great Britain	2,145	3,745	572·76	688	1,080	637·04
1985-86						
England	1,896	2,944	644·00	739	1,022	723·09
Scotland	267	577	462·74	56	74	756·76
Wales	131	188	696·81	40	53	754·72
Great Britain	2,294	3,710	618·33	835	1,150	726·09

	Rent rebate			Rent allowance		
	Expenditure £ million	Numbers thousands	Average value £ annum	Expenditure £ million	Numbers thousands	Average value £ annum
1986-87						
England	1,980	2,944	672·55	829	1,044	794·06
Scotland	306	588	520·14	72	77	935·06
Wales	135	188	718·09	46	59	779·66
Great Britain	2,421	3,720	650·81	947	1,180	802·54
1987-88						
England	2,078	2,976	698·25	921	1,095	841·10
Scotland	344	593	580·10	87	93	935·48
Wales	141	192	734·38	49	62	790·32
Great Britain	2,563	3,760	681·65	1,057	1,250	845·60

Note: Separate figures for England, Scotland and Wales are not available before 1982-83.

Housing Benefit:
Expenditure, Number of Recipients and Average Amounts 1979-87

		Number of recipients[1] [3]				
	Rent rebate expenditure (£ million)	Home owners (thousands)	L.A. tenants (thousands)	Private tenants (thousands)	Total	[2] Rebate (£ annum)
1979-80						
Great Britain	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,065	65·25
1980-81						
Great Britain	267	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,350	79·70
1981-82						
Great Britain	374	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,700	101·08
1982-83						
Great Britain	673	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,320	126·50
1983-84						
England	1,045	2,265	3,000	810	6,078	171·93
Scotland	134	165	383	30	578	231·83
Wales	41	151	181	35	367	111·72
Great Britain	1,220	2,581	3,564	875	7,020	173·79
1984-85						
England	1,164	2,264	2,942	859	6,065	191·92
Scotland	148	117	611	62	790	187·34
Wales	48	159	181	35	375	128·00
Great Britain	1,360	2,540	3,734	956	7,230	188·11
1985-86						
England	1,277	2,133	2,886	867	5,886	216·96
Scotland	181	121	579	75	775	233·55
Wales	52	149	174	36	359	144·85
Great Britain	1,510	2,403	3,639	978	7,020	215·10
1986-87						
England	1,400	2,100	2,900	896	5,896	237·45
Scotland	192	122	599	67	788	243·65
Wales	58	146	178	42	366	158·47
Great Britain	1,650	2,368	3,677	1,005	7,050	234·04
1987-88						
England	1,477	2,083	2,908	922	5,913	249·79
Scotland	221	112	583	56	751	294·27
Wales	62	141	181	44	366	169·40
Great Britain	1,760	2,336	3,672	1,022	7,030	250·36

[1] The numbers of recipients by tenure type is not available prior to 1983-84.
[2] Expenditure cannot be separated by tenure type. The average value is therefore the total expenditure divided by the total number of rate rebate recipients.
[3] Separate figures for England, Wales and Scotland are not available prior to 1983-84.
n/a = Not available.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings to public funds will accrue from the move of his Department to Richmond House.

Mr. Moore *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The move of my Ministers and 480 support staff to Richmond house is designed to improve operational efficiency rather than

release financial savings. Hitherto my Department has had no premises within the Division bell area nothwithstanding the heavy parliamentary duties of DHSS Ministers.

DEFENCE

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details of the management and computer consultancy contracts extant in the Ministry of Defence as at 1 January 1987 are set out in the table. The contracts listed include all those consultancies handled centrally by the management services division.

Firm	*Subject of assignment*
Management Consultancy Contracts	
Arthur Young	Evaluation of accounting software packages at the Fleet Maintenance Repair Organisation
Arthur Young	Study to determine cost and support management objectives—Director General Aircraft (Navy)
Arthur Young	Assistance with provision of policy statements for vehicle studies
W. S. Atkins	Repair strategy for the Naval Air Repair Organisation
Coopers and Lybrand	Future commercial organisation of Royal Dockyards
Deloitte Haskins and Sells	Assistance with the study into the functions and activities of the Stores and Clothing and Research Development Establishment
Economists Advisory Group	Consultancy assistance with the management audit of Service Messes
Harold Whitehead and Partners	Enabling contract for consultancy assistance to Management Services (Organisation) Division
Hay Management Consultants	Interim communications assistance for the Royal Dockyards
Impell Corporation	Assistance in obtaining Nuclear Site Licences at Royal Dockyards
MEL	Pilot study on configuration management at Royal Dockyards
New Business Developments Ltd.	Senior Management support to Director General Ship Refitting
P.A. Management Consultants	Study into contracting for reliability and maintainability
P.A. Management Consultants	Study into management and control of major repairable units of air stores—Director General Aircraft (Navy)
P.A. Management Consultants	Consultancy study to review capacity management—Director General Aircraft (Navy)
P.A. Management Consultants	Provision of advice and assistance to the Director General Aircraft (Navy)
Peat Marwick McLintock	Study into support structures at the RAF's supply organisation at Harrogate and Carlisle
Price Waterhouse	Assistance to Director General Ship Refitting to implement management change at Royal Dockyards
N. M. Rothschild	Merchant Bank advisor to the Royal Ordnance Factories
Samuel Montagu	Merchant Bank advice to the Royal Dockyards
Touche Ross	Assistance in evaluation of commercial bids for Royal Dockyards
Touche Ross	Implementation assistance with commercial accounting system for Royal Dockyards
Computer Consultancy Contracts	
Admiral Computing Group	Consultancy for classified system
Arthur Andersen	Management information system; long term costings study
Computer Sciences Co Ltd	Study into computer replacement at Royal School Signals, Blandford
Computer Sciences Co Ltd	Aero Engine Repair Project
Computer Sciences Co Ltd	Consultancy advice for the Army Scaling Authority computer project
Computer Sciences Co Ltd	Project Management consultancy for a classified project
Coopers and Lybrand	Naval Information Technology Strategy Study
Crowntek International Ltd	Provision of advice on Naval management information systems
Data Logic Ltd	Consultancy advice on the development of ADP systems onboard Naval ships
Data Logic Ltd	Software development for Army supplies
Data Logic Ltd	Review of Navy Stores and Transport Data Communications
ICL (UK) Ltd	Consultancy for HQ Strike Command; Air Staff Management Aid
International Computers Ltd	Database consultancy advice
International Computers Ltd	Consultancy support to RAF Engineering Systems; RAF Swanton Morley
LOGICA UK Ltd	Document tracking and registry system project
PE Consulting Group	Implementation of computer aided production control system at Royal Dockyard Rosyth
SCICON Ltd	ADP consultancy support for Principal Directorate Accountancy Services
Software Sciences Co Ltd	RAF Stations integration study database support
Thurston Software Consultants	Provision of advice for Director General Defence Quality Assurance database

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low flying area 8.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 8 covers

(a) the counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, and parts of the counties of Lancashire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Staffordshire and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Blackpool, South, Preston, South Ribble, Blackburn, Hyndburn, Burnley, Calder Valley, Halifax, Shipley, Bradford, West, Bradford, North, Bradford, South, Pudsey, Leeds, North-West, Leeds, West, Leeds, Central, Morley and Leeds, South, Batley and Spen, Huddersfield, Southport, Lancashire, West, Chorley, Rossendale and Darwen, Crosby, Wigan, Makerfield, Leigh, Bolton, West, Bury, North, Bolton, North-East, Bolton, South-East, Heywood and Middleton, Rochdale, Bury, South, Littleborough and Saddleworth, Colne Valley, Dewsbury, Bootle, Wirral, West, Wirral, South, Wallasey, Birkenhead, Liverpool, Riverside, Liverpool, Walton, Liverpool, West Derby, Liverpool, Broadgreen, Liverpool, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, Garston, Knowsley, North, Knowsley, South, St. Helens, North, St. Helens, South, Warrington, North, Warrington, South, Worsley, Eccles, Oldham, West, Oldham, Central and Royton, Manchester, Blackley,

Manchester, Central, Manchester, Gorton, Manchester, Withington, Manchester, Wythenshawe, Stretford, Davyhulme, Altrincham and Sale, Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge and Hyde, Denton and Reddish, Stockport, Salford, East, Hazel Grove, High Peak, Barnsley, West and Penistone, Sheffield, Hillsborough, Sheffield, Hallam, Rotherham, Sheffield, Brightside, Sheffield, Central, Sheffield, Heeley, Sheffield, Attercliffe, Wentworth, Rother Valley, Ellesmere Port and Neston, City of Chester, Eddisbury, Tatton, Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton, Macclesfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, North, Stoke-on-Trent, Central, Stoke-on-Trent, South, Staffordshire, Moorlands, Mid-Staffordshire, Burton, Derbyshire, West, Derbyshire, North-East, Derby, North, Derby, South, Derbyshire South, Bolsover, Mansfield, Amber Valley, Ashfield, Erewash, Broxstowe, Nottingham North, Nottingham, East, Nottingham, South, Leicestershire, North-West, Staffordshire, South-East, Meriden, Warwickshire, North, Cannock and Burntwood, Wolverhampton, North-East, Wolverhampton, South-West, Wolverhampton, South-East, Aldridge-Brownhills, Walsall, North, Walsall, South, Dudley, West, Dudley, East, Halesowen and Stourbridge, West Bromwich, West, West Bromwich, East, Warley, West, Warley, East, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, Perry Barr, Birmingham, Erdington, Birmingham, Ladywood, Birmingham, Small Heath, Birmingham, Hodge Hill, Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, Yardley, Birmingham, Northfield, Birmingham, Selly Oak, Birmingham, Hall Green, Solihull, Coventry, North-West, Coventry, North-East, Coventry, South-West, Coventry, South-East, Halton, Barnsley, East, Chesterfield and South Ribble and parts of the parliamentary constituencies of Blackpool, North, Fylde, Wyre, Lancaster, Ribble Valley, Pendle, Keighley, Skipton and Ripon, Leeds, North-East, Leeds, East, Normanton, Hemsworth, Wakefield, Barnsley, Central, Don Valley, Doncaster, North, Bassetlaw, Sherwood, Gedling, Rushcliffe, Loughborough, Bosworth, Nuneaton, Rugby and Kenilworth, Warwick and Leamington, Stratford-on-Avon, Bromsgrove, Staffordshire, South, Ludlow, The Wrekin, Shropshire, North, Stafford and Alyn and Deeside.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county or region and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low flying area 14.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying Area 14 covers *(a)* the regions of Grampian, Highland, Orkney, Shetland, Tayside and the Western Isles and parts of the counties of Central, Fife and Strathclyde and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Orkney and Shetland, Western Isles, Caithness and Sutherland, Ross, Cromarty and Skye, Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, Moray, Aberdeen, North, Aberdeen, South, Tayside, North, Dundee, North, Dundee, East, Banff and Buchan, Gordon, Kincardine and Deeside, Argyll and Bute, Perth and Kinross, Angus East, Fife, Central, Fife, North-East and parts of the parliamentary constituencies of Cunninghame, North, Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, Greenock and Port Glasgow, Dumbarton, Stirling, Clackmannan, Dunfermline, West, Dunfermline, East and Kirkcaldy.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low flying area 19.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 19 covers *(a)* the counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Antrim, East, Antrim, North, Antrim, South, Belfast, East, Belfast, North, Belfast, South, Belfast, West, North Down, South Down, Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Foyle, Lagan Valley, Londonderry, East, Newry and Armagh, Strangford, Mid-Ulster and Upper Bann.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating in the Wash area of intense aerial activity.

Mr. Freeman: The minimum authorised height for flying in the Wash area of intense aerial activity overland is 250 ft; within the confines of the range danger area aircraft may descend to 100 ft, and in respect of Harrier aircraft only, 85 ft on their final approaches to target; senior commanders may authorise flying below 250 ft beyond 3 nautical miles of the coast for specialised operational training.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating in the Cultybraggan danger area, D 602;

(2) what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating over the landward portion of the Foulness danger area, D 128;

(3) what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating over the landward portion of the Hythe danger area, D 141.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

(a) at the Cultybraggan danger area D 602, the minimum operating height when the area is activated is 4,000 ft. At other times a 250 ft minimum separation distance (MSD) is operated;

(b) with regard to the landward portion of the Foulness danger area, I assume that the hon. Member is referring to danger area 138—Shoeburyness—which incorporates Foulness island. When the danger area is activated the minimum permitted heights vary from 4,000 ft to 60,000 ft dependent on the type of trial. When inactive normal United Kingdom low flying restrictions apply;

(c) at the Hythe danger area D 141, when activated between 0800 and 2359 hours daily, the minimum permitted height is 2,000 ft; when inactive 250 ft MSD is followed;

(d) at Cultybraggan and Hythe aircraft may transmit with prior approval from the danger area co-ordinating authority.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the minimum height at which military aircraft are permitted to fly while conducting attacks in the Spadeadam range danger area;

(2) what is the minimum height at which military aircraft are permitted to fly while conducting attacks in the Otterburn range danger area;

(3) what is the minimum height and maximum speed at which military aircraft are permitted to fly in the run-up to simulated targets in the Spadeadam area of intense aerial activity.

Mr. Freeman: Further to my answer of 1 July 1988 to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) at column *399* of the *Official Report*, fixed wing aircraft are permitted to fly at 100 ft minimum separation distance (MSD) and at 550 knots during their final approach to target when within the centres of Spadeadam and Otterburn range danger areas. In addition, Harrier aircraft undertaking live firings may fly at 85 ft MSD within these areas. The overwhelming majority of approaches to these ranges are undertaken at heights of 250 ft MSD and above: however, on the few occasions when the border tactical training area is activated, aircraft in their approach to these ranges from that area may fly through the Spadeadam area of intense aerial activity at heights of 100 ft MSD.

Hang Gliding

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the co-operative trials with the British Hang Gliding Association in 1987 including the encouragement of hang glider pilots to use notified hang gliding sites.

Mr. Freeman: Following discussions between the British Hang Gliding Association (BHGA) the Ministry of Defence and the National Air Traffic Services, a voluntary trial was instigated whereby, during the period 1 March to 31 October 1987, members of the BHGA would seek to confine their weekday flying activity to 36 specified sites in the United Kingdom. It was agreed that military aircraft would bypass these sites by 1 nautical mile and would not overfly them at heights of less than 1,000 ft. The trial indicated that these arrangements might well enhance flight safety. Accordingly, the trial is continuing during the current year, with a few modifications, mainly to the boundaries of the specified sites. If this extension confirms the success of these arrangements, they might well be adopted on a permanent basis.

Mr. Kirkwood: *To ask the Secretary of State for* Defence how many air misses between hang gliders and military aircraft were reported in each year since 1979; and how many were in risk category A.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Category A*	*Others*	*Total*
1979	0	2	2
1980	0	0	0
1981	0	1	1
1982	0	0	0
1983	0	1	1
1984	0	5	5
1985	1	1	2
1986	2	7	9
1987	1	3	4

Bird Strikes

Mr. Kirkwood To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total number of bird strikes suffered by military aircraft in each year since 1979; and how many resulted in the aircraft crashing.

Mr. Freeman The information requested for each complete year since 1979 is as follows

Year	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Royal Air Force	464	621	693	785	768	779	743	710	685
Army	14	21	35	34	27	26	42	46	38
Royal Navy	18	25	24	37	27	43	26	36	16
Procurement Executive	14	21	26	20	20	28	22	12	19
Total	510	688	778	876	842	876	833	804	758

As a result of these bird strikes, there were 14 major accidents resulting in serious damage to, or destruction of, the aircraft involved.

AIDS

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans to carry out AIDS testing on Britain's service men and service women.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 20 May 1988, at columns *611-12*.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of *(a)* the chemical warfare material transported across the United Kingdom for decontamination or destruction at Porton Down, *(b)* the transportation employed, *(c)* the routes used and *(d)* the safety precautions taken to safeguard the public.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom does not possess chemical weapons, but there are occasional discoveries of chemical warfare materials dating back as far as the two World Wars. In such cases the material is transported to the chemical defence establishment at Porton Down for disposal. While it is not our policy to give details, strict precautions are observed in the method and routing of such transport.

Trident Submarines

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what impact the current industrial dispute at VSEL, Barrow has had on the building of Trident submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: As a result of the industrial dispute at VSEL, some slight delays are now being experienced in the construction of HMS Vanguard and HMS Victorious.

Royal Arsenal, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to reach a decision about the future location of the Directorate General of Quality Assurance and the possible redevelopment of the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich.

Mr. Sainsbury: The investment appraisal of a number of options relevant to current circumstances is nearly complete.

Persian Gulf (Air Defence)

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what elements of an air defence umbrella are available to ships of the Armilla patrol, and other allied navies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not for me to comment on the capabilities of allied navies, but I can confirm that the ships of the Armilla patrol are equipped with an air defence capability relevant to the range of threats they face in carrying out their operational tasks. It would not be in the interests of the safety of our naval forces engaged in the Armilla patrol to reveal specific capabilities.

Helicopters

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the implications for the helicopter ordering programme of the latest developments at Westland.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 5 July at column *541*.

Persian Gulf (Iranian Aircraft)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will make available to *(a)* the Iranian inquiry and *(b)* the American inquiry into the shooting down by USS Vincennes of an Iranian airliner, the intercepts of radio traffic relating to that aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A recording of warnings heard on the civil distress frequency at the time of the incident has been passed to the United States Government. Although international distress frequencies are widely monitored and this information is likely to be available from many sources, any such request from other interested authorities would be carefully considered.

Royal Navy

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the average age of the Royal Navy's escort force of destroyers and frigates as at 1 January *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1974, *(c)* 1980, *(d)* 1984, and *(e)* 1988, and provide an analysis of the age of the vessels concerned at each of those dates: (i) under five years, (ii) five to 10 years, (iii) 10 to 15 years, (iv) 15 to 20 years, and (v) in each year of age over 20 years.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

Age[1]	*1970*	*1974*	*1980*	*1984*[2]	*1988*[3]
Average Age (years)	10·3	10·6	11·7	13·1	12·3
Number of DD/FF					
Under 5 years	17	13	14	12	9
5-10 years	28	16	8	8	12
10-15 years	21	25	17	10	7
15-20 years	1	13	24	15	10
20-21 years	—	—	1	2	3
21-22 years	—	—	—	1	3
22-23 years	3	—	—	4	2
23-24 years	1	—	2	1	1
24-25 years	—	—	—	1	1
25-26 years	2	—	—	—	—
26-27 years	4	—	—	—	1
27-28 years	1	—	—	1	—
28-29 years	—	—	—	—	—
29-30 years	—	—	—	—	—
30-31 years	—	1	—	—	—

[1] As at 1 April for each year. Full information as at 1 January is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

[2] The figures for 1984 reflect the loss of HM ships Antelope, Ardent, Coventry and Sheffield in the Falklands conflict in 1982 and the necessary running on of older ships as a result.

[3] The average age of the destroyer/frigate force now stands at just over 12 years following the paying off HM ships Plymouth and Diomede and the acceptance of HMS Coventry.

SCOTLAND

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cost to the Scottish Development Agency of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 6 May 1987 at columns *445-46* which includes the information requested by the hon. Member.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 31 March 1988 at column 646.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many research projects into myalgic encephalomyelitis his Department is currently funding; and how much is being provided in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department is not at present funding direct research into myalgic encephalomyelitis but is funding at a total of £38,700 a surveillance project on viral infections which has relevance to this condition.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations about the level of funding of research into myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This issue was raised in some representations about the private Member's Bill on myalgic encephalomyelitis proposed by the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood). A project on the serological surveillance of Coxsackie B virus infection, which is relevant to this condition, is currently being funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department. Argyll and Clyde health board has part-funded research relating to myalgic

encephalomyelitis and on the advice of one of the Scottish Home and Health Department's committees the Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust has recently offered funding for a research project also relating to this condition.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all cases and circumstances in which solicitors are entitled to make applications to the Scottish Legal Aid Board for a verbal grant of legal aid cover under the emergency legal aid scheme; and if he will make a statement on the possibility of extending those cases and circumstances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Legal Aid Board will grant emergency legal aid in response to an oral application for civil legal aid in the following categories:

when there is imminent danger of assault to the pursuer and an interdict is sought;

when there is a serious risk of child-snatching or a child has been snatched very recently and proceedings must be brought for custody and/or delivery and/or interdict;

where a defender has to oppose a motion for custody, interim aliment or orders under the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981.

An announcement to this effect was made in the September 1987 edition of the "Journal of the Law Society of Scotland". A copy is available in the Library.

It is for the board to consider whether an extension to the special categories should be made. The Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1988, which were laid before the House on 11 July, will extend the categories of work which can be undertaken before an application is made to the board. This should help to reduce the present number of emergency applications being made.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will direct the Scottish Legal Aid Board to ensure that, where an application for an increase to the level of the authorised cover under an advice and assistance scheme certificate was initially refused but subsequently successfully reviewed, the effective date of increase should be from the date of initial refusal.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to give such a direction. There is no provision for review of refusal by the board of an application to exceed the financial limit for legal advice and assistance, which is currently £50 but is planned to be increased to £60 from 1 August. If additional information becomes available, any further authorisation granted is effective only from the date of approval.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to review the seven-day time deadline within which solicitors must submit to the Scottish Legal Aid Board completed applications for emergency legal aid cover under the full civil legal aid scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The Scottish Legal Aid Board currently requires within seven days a written application for emergency legal aid where authority to proceed in urgent cases has been given by telephone. The Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1988, laid before the House on 11 July, extend the range of specified urgent steps a lawyer can take on behalf of the client without prior approval of the board. This change should significantly reduce the current number of emergency grants of legal aid.

The regulations have been developed in consultation with the Law Society of Scotland and the board following my right hon. and learned Friend's undertaking to take account of various representations.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what considerations underlie his policy for Scotland to have a uniform business rate with the rest of Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: The objectives of the reform of business rates are the protection of businesses from undue impositions by local authorities and a fairer basis of valuation.

Mr. Tony Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what Scottish legislation will be necessary to introduce a uniform business rate throughout Great Britain; and when such legislation will be introduced.

Mr. Lang: Legislation for such a purpose could not apply to Scotland alone. It is too soon to say what legislation applying throughout Great Britain would be needed.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what gains there will be for Scottish business and industry from a uniform business rate throughout Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: The effects of such a rate on Scottish business would depend on the level at which it was set, which cannot be estimated at present for the reasons I gave in my reply to the hon. Member on 19 May at column *515*.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans to meet representatives of Scottish business and industry to discuss progress towards a uniform business rate in Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: There are no plans to do so at present.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), Confederation of British Industry (Scotland) and chambers of commerce about a uniform business rate in England and Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Representations have been received from these bodies supporting a uniform business rate at Great Britain level.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what time limits for agreement have been imposed on the valuation experts of the Inland Revenue and representatives of the Scottish assessors in their discussions seeking harmonisation of valuation practice in Scotland and England and Wales prior to the introduction of a uniform business rate in the three nations.

Mr. Lang: I understand that these discussions are making significant progress and that it is hoped to reach agreements on some key areas in time for these to take effect at the 1990 revaluations. There is, however, no question of my right hon. and learned Friend seeking to impose particular time limits.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is the practice of the Forestry Commission to seek the views of the local highways authority before either approving a woodland grant scheme or carrying out planting itself, in order to determine any costs in highways improvements required to permit subsequent extraction of timber; and whether approval to plant can be refused as a result of any such consultations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Where, under agreed arrangements, a local authority is consulted by the Forestry Commission about a planting proposal, it may express its views on the adequacy of local roads to carry timber traffic. However, because of the time-lag of many years between planting and harvesting, the Commission does not accept that the existing state of local roads provides grounds for a valid objection to planting taking place.

Timber Extraction

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide extra financial support to local authorities to help with the costs of upgrading rural roads and bridges to allow the extraction of timber.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for the local authorities to identify their needs in the production of their transport policies and programmes statements and to determine the priority to be given to forestry road schemes. I take full account of such work in determining capital allocations, but I have not been persuaded of the case for extra support.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) why, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 13 May, *Official Report*, columns *217-18*, the Forestry Commission is permitted to plant land which fails to meet the Treasury target rate of return; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will instruct the Forestry Commission to desist from commercial planting on poor quality land, and land subject to windthrow risk where rates of return below 3 per cent. are expected.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In his forestry policy statement of 10 December 1980 at columns 927-28, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) indicated that the Forestry Commission's new planting programme would, for social reasons, take place partly in the more remote and less fertile areas. It has always been accepted that such planting is likely to give a return below the target rate, and my right hon. and learned Friend sees no reason to introduce a change of policy.

Drumbuie Oil Platform Inquiry

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange for a copy of the 1974 Drumbuie oil platform inquiry report and the volumes of evidence pertaining thereto, to be placed in the Library.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am arranging for a copy of the report and decision letter to be placed in the Library.

Forestry Grants

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct the Forestry Commission in future to list in its annual reports the number of grant and felling licence applications referred to each regional advisory committee of the Forestry Commission, and the number *(a)* withdrawn or resolved by amendment, *(b)* referred to the forestry commissioners and *(c)* approved by the commissioners for grant aid.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall ask the Forestry Commission to consider whether information on the lines requested by the hon. Member might reasonably be provided in its annual reports.

Glasgow Garden Festival

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals have been made for the disposal of the tourist attractions at the Glasgow garden festival.

Mr. Lang: This is a matter for the Scottish Development Agency and the festival company. Several attractions are leased or provided by sponsors and their after-use is the responsibility of their owners. The agency has a responsibility to minimise the net cost of the festival to the public purse and will take this into account in the consideration currently being given to arrangements for disposal of other festival assets.

Community Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has about the impact on voluntary organisations in the social work field of the ending of the Manpower Services Commission's community programme;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact on social work services of changes in the Manpower Services Commission's community programme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am aware of the concern expressed by some voluntary organisations that they will not be able to continue schemes currently operating with funding from the Training Commission. Existing community programme sponsors have been advised of the opportunities available for participation in the new employment training programme. Decisions on participation are for organisations to reach individually, and I would not necessarily expect to be informed of the outcome in each case.

Rating Valuations

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available to his Department about the impact of different valuation practices in England and Wales, and Scotland on *(a)* the Scottish tourist industry, *(b)* retailing and *(c)* distribution and storage plants.

Mr. Lang: We have received a number of representations which suggest that where rate bills for certain subjects or classes of subject are higher in Scotland than they would be for comparable subjects or classes of subject in England and Wales the cause of the difference is the difference in valuation practice. But I have little evidence that distinguishes clearly between the effect of differences in valuation practice and other causes.

Health Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since 1979 he has removed the disability of a health board member to participate in matters being considered by his or her health board under the terms of the National Health Service (Health Boards: Membership, Procedure and Payment of Subscription) (Scotland) regulations 1975, section 12(2).

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Ambulances

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is the intention of the Scottish ambulance service to privatise the non-emergency services; and whether tenders are currently being sought for the private provision of these facilities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is our intention to introduce competitive tendering for non-emergency patient transport. Consideration is currently being given to how this can be achieved but no tenders have yet been sought.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the money being allocated to tackle hospital waiting lists is going to the private sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total allocations of funds to reduce waiting lists has not yet been made.

Farming (Employment)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farmworkers were employed in each county in Scotland in June.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: the altest available information is that which I provided in my replies to the hon. Member on 25 May 1988 at columns *190-91*.

The June 1988 Scottish agricultural census returns are currently being processed and final results will be available in the autumn. I will write to the hon. Member then.

Education Reform

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will be in a position to make a statement on the unauthorised disclosure of communications between No. 10 Downing street and his office relating to opting-out in Scottish schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: As I have previously informed the hon. Member, on 16 May at column *350* in accordance with normal practice this is not a matter about which I am prepared to give any details.

Islands (Exchequer Subsidies)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much annual subsidy per head of population of the Scottish islands comes from the United Kingdom Exchequer.

Mr. Rifkind It is not clear what subsidy my hon. Friend has in mind. Figures for public expenditure per head of population of the Scottish islands are not available.

Wild Birds (Killing)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *20*, he will give a breakdown of the 546 wild birds known to have been killed in Scotland by the use of poisoned bait between 1 January 1979 and 30 June 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers and species of wild birds known to have been killed in Scotland by the use of poisoned bait between 1 January 1979 and 30 June 1988 are as follows:

	Number
Golden eagles	25
White-tailed eagle	1
Buzzards	104
Peregrine falcons	3
Greenland falcon	1
Sparrowhawks	4
Kestrels	3
Hen harrier	1
Marsh harrier	1
Tawny owls	4
Herons	6
Corvids	272
Gulls	65
Pigeons	20
Song birds	31
Waterfowl	5

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will provide the full text of senior counsel's opinion on all of the questions raised by the Scottish Special Housing Association at the time it sought senior counsel's opinion on several points, including the transfer of houses to new landlords, in 1987;

(2) what was the date on which the Scottish Special Housing Association received the opinion of senior counsel on the subject of tenancy status in relation to the transfer of houses to new landlords;

(3) what was the date in 1987 on which the Scottish Special Housing Association sought the opinion of senior counsel on the subject of tenancy status in relation to the transfer of houses to new landlords;

(4) if he will provide the full text of all questions on which the Scottish Special Housing Association sought the opinion of senior counsel in 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since these questions raise issues which are for the Scottish Special Housing Association to consider in the first instance and I understand that the Scottish Special Housing Association takes the view that the documents are covered by the privilege given to communications between a legal adviser and his client, it would not be appropriate for me to publish the test of either document.

However, on the basis of information provided by the Scottish Special Housing Association, I understand that the Scottish Special Housing Association submitted a memorial on 16 April 1987 for the opinion of senior counsel on certain management issues, including certain issues relating to tenancy status, arising from the recommendations of the policy review of the association carried out in 1986. Senior counsel replied on 29 April 1987.

Private Landlords

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of prosecutions instigated against private landlords *(a)* by category of offence and *(b)* for each sheriffdom for contravening (i) Housing Acts and regulations made under them, (ii) environmental health Acts and regulations made under them, (iii) building Acts and regulations made under them, and (iv) any other legislation relating to their landlord activities, for each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information which is available on the number of prosecutions in Scotland under housing, public health and building legislation is given in the table.

Private landlords cannot be distinguished from other offenders in the statistics collected by the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Persons and companies proceeded against Scotland

Year	*Housing (Scotland) Acts*	*Public Health (Scotland) Acts*	*Building (Scotland) Acts*
1980			
Sheiffdom			
Dumbarton	—	1	—
Dumfries	1	—	—
Edinburgh	—	—	1
Falkirk	—	1	1
Glasgow	—	—	1
Hamilton	—	1	1
Jedburgh	—	—	2
Kirkcaldy	—	—	5
Lanark	—	—	2
Linlithgow	—	—	1
Lochmaddy	1	—	—
Perth	3	—	—
Stirling	—	1	—
District			
Aberdeen	—	—	4
Dumbarton	—	1	—
Falkirk	—	1	—
Glasgow	—	4	—
1981			
Sheriffdom			
Dumbarton	—	6	—
Dundee	—	—	1
Edinburgh	—	—	1
Falkirk	—	—	3
Inverness	—	1	—
Perth	—	—	2
Peterhead	—	—	1
Selkirk	—	—	1
Stirling	—	1	—
District			
Aberdeen	—	—	2
Edinburgh	—	—	2
Glasgow	—	1	1
1980			
Sheriffdom			
Dumbarton	—	2	—
Elgin	1	—	—
Falkirk	—	1	2
Kirkcaldy	—	—	3
Linlithgow	—	—	1
Perth	1	—	—
Selkirk	—	—	1
District			
Aberdeen	—	—	1
Glasgow	—	1	1
Falkirk	—	2	—
1983			
Sheriffdom			
Arbroath	—	1	—
Dumbarton	1	1	—
Duns	—	—	1
Hamilton	—	—	1
Kilmarnock	—	1	—
Kirkcaldy	—	—	2
Paisley	—	3	—

Year	Housing (Scotland) Acts	Public Health (Scotland) Acts	Building (Scotland) Acts
Perth	2	—	1
Selkirk	—	—	1
Wick	—	—	1
District			
Falkirk	—	8	—
Roxburgh	—	—	1
1984			
Sheriffdom			
Dingwall	—	1	—
Edinburgh	—	—	1
Falkirk	—	1	—
Glasgow	—	2	—
Hamilton	—	—	3
Inverness	—	—	1
Jedburgh	—	—	1
Kirkcaldy	—	—	2
Paisley	—	1	—
District			
Falkirk	—	8	—
Glasgow	—	1	—
Kirkcaldy	—	—	1
1985			
Sheriffdom			
Dunfermline	—	—	1
Edinburgh	—	—	2
Glasgow	1	1	—
Hamilton	—	—	4
Inverness	—	—	1
Paisley	—	1	—
District			
Cunninghame	—	1	—
Strathkelvin	—	1	—
1986			
Sheriffdom			
Banff	—	—	1
Dumbarton	—	—	2
Edinburgh	—	—	3
Falkirk	—	1	2
Glasgow	—	1	—
Hamilton	—	—	1
1987			
Sheriffdom			
Dumbarton	—	2	1
Dunoon	—	—	2
Edinburgh	—	—	1
Haddington	—	—	1
District			
Glasgow	—	1	—

Note: Prosecutions which were taken in the sheriff court are shown against the sheriffdom in which the offence occurred. Other prosecutions are shown against the district in which the offence took place.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring of the provision of services for mentally handicapped people is taking place in Scotland in line with Her Majesty's Government's response to the second report of the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report of the Social Services Committee (Session 1984-85) and the Government's response referred to the provision of services in England. As far as Scotland is concerned, the provision of services by health boards for mentally handicapped people is monitored as part of the wider monitoring of boards' implementation of the priorities for the Scottish Health Service as set out in the report "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties". The Scottish Home and Health Department has nearly completed the second round of that monitoring.

As regards social work, local authorities' proposals for capital expenditure are considered as part of the wider arrangements for determining capital allocations. Statistical returns showing the development of residential and other schemes are received and published annually. There also are arrangements for assessing progress by local authorities in the development of particular schemes.

Salmon Fishing (Rates)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate, by local authority area, the loss of non-domestic rates revenue from salmon fishings resulting from Government amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Lang: The detailed information requested is not available. The effect of the provisions for de-rating salmon fishings will depend on the creation of district salmon fishery boards in areas where these do not exist at present, and on the separate entry in the valuation roll of salmon fishing rights which are not so entered at present.

Electricity (Privatisation)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in discussions with the Scottish electricity boards on privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have given careful consideration to the steps necessary to reorganise the industry to create two companies for privatisation as proposed in the White Paper "The Privatisation of the Scottish Electricity Industry". In these discussions I have borne uppermost in mind the objectives stated in the White Paper of minimising disruption within the industry and ensuring the companies are viable and satisfactory balanced in operational terms and in terms of future profitability and prospects.

I have concluded that the nuclear assets will be shared between the successor companies to the present boards in relation to their relative size, through a subsidiary jointly and exclusively owned by the parent companies.

In order to ensure that the South company receives a satisfactory proportion of flexible and quick response capacity, the pumped storage station at Cruachan will transfer from the North company to the South company, and there will be contractual arrangements whereby the South company purchases hydro output from the North, based on 200MW of capacity on a firm basis. It will be open to the companies to contract for further supplies on a fully commercial basis.

In order to ensure that each company has the full range of fossil fuels generation available to it there will be contractual arrangements to make 600MW of coal-fired capacity available to the North and to make 50 per cent. of the oil/gas-fired capacity at Peterhead available to the South.

Finally, there will be arrangements for the sharing of spinning and standing reserves which will ensure that the operating costs of the system are minimised.

The benefits of nuclear power will therefore remain available to all Scottish consumers, both companies will have access to the full range of fossil fuel sources and the benefits of hydro generation (in terms of its low marginal costs) will be retained for the customers of the successor company to the NSHEB. These arrangements will ensure that two companies are created which are fully capable of operation on an independent basis but which will have strong commercial incentives to co-operate to minimise overall costs. The companies will be fully viable on the basis of their existing customer base and I do not therefore propose any adjustment of the present boundaries. New arrangements will also be devised to ensure that both companies have equitable opportunities to export power to England and Wales over the interconnector.

Negotiations are now proceeding between the boards on the detailed terms of the contracts. In addition, discussions continue on a range of other matters concerning privatisation with a view to legislation being introduced at the earliest opportunity.

ENERGY

Offshore Petroleum Licensing Round

4. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he is able to announce the arrangements for the 11th offshore petroleum licensing round.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am now able to give further details of the arrangements for offshore petroleum production licences to be issued in 1989. A total of 212 blocks or part-blocks will be available for licensing, distributed as follows:

	Number
Northern North Sea	47
Faroes/Shetland Area	10
Orkney/Shetland Area	12
Hebridean Platform	7
Outer Moray Firth	17
Forth Approaches	2
Central North Sea	48
Irish Sea/Manx Basin	19
Southern North Sea	43
Cardigan Bay	2
English Channel	5

I have arranged for a full list of the blocks offered in the round to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. As in the past, it has been necessary in the case of many of the blocks to specify additional conditions which the operator will be required to observe when undertaking activity on the licence. These are designed to take into account the concerns of defence, fishing, environmental and navigational interests.

I have laid before the House new regulations under which licences will be offered and awarded as a result of this licensing round. The regulations will come into force on 4 August and a formal notice inviting applications will be published in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast Gazettes on 5 August. Applications will be returnable on 7 or 8 February 1989.

Licence awards will be made at the discretion of the Secretary of State, on the basis of financial and technical competence, and the contribution the applicant is prepared to make towards expeditious, thorough and efficient exploration and development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom continental shelf. All applicants will be interviewed on their plans for the acreage for which they are seeking a licence and the exploration work commitments they would be prepared to make if a licence is awarded to them. The safety record of applicants and their current arrangements in respect to safety will, as before, be factors taken into account in deciding the award of licences. Guidance on the format of applications, and the information required, will be available from my Department as soon as the Gazette notice has been published.

Except in the case of a few blocks in deep water areas, licences will be issued on standard terms, which will provide for an initial period of six years, during which the licensee will be expected to complete any work programme agreed as a condition of the award. The applicant must then relinquish 50 per cent. of the licence area. Thereafter he may retain the remaining 50 per cent. for a period of up to 30 years. If, however, after 12 years of the 30-year term no field development has been approved the licensee will be required to surrender the licence, unless the Secretary of State decides otherwise.

Licences awarded in deep water areas will be similar in all respects except that the licence will last a total of 48 years. The initial term will be eight years, followed by a mandatory 50 per cent. relinquishment of the acreage. If after a further 16 years no development has been approved the licensee will be required to surrender the licence, unless the Secretary of State decides otherwise.

I have introduced the new provisions in order to take further steps towards ensuring that acreage is not left unworked for long periods, as has sometimes happened in the past. In other respects the model clauses incorporated into licences will be similar to those incorporated into licences issued as a result of the 10th offshore round. Licence rentals will remain unchanged from those set at the time of the 10th round.

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Parkinson: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure £*
1983-84	313,000
1984-85	296,000
1985-86	72,000
1986-87	247,000
1987-88	279,000

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in his Department as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Parkinson: The following consultancy contract were extant as at 1 January 1987:

Consultancy	*Subject*
Price Waterhouse Associates	Database development for oil and gas reservoir monitoring.
Z & S Ltd.	Computerised display of geological data.
Information Builders UK Ltd.	Supply of advisory services for "Focus" computer software system.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will arrange urgent interviewing of relatives telephoned by deceased crew of Piper Alpha about gas leaks prior to the disaster.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have already made the arrangements to which the hon. Member refers. The technical investigation team from my Department and the Health and Safety Executive has also called publicly for anyone who believes they have information which may be relevant to the cause of the disaster to contact it. A press statement has been issued and advertisements are being placed in local newspapers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will include in the terms of reference for the public inquiry into the Piper Alpha oil rig disaster consideration of any changes in the way in which oil is processed once it is piped ashore.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 14 July 1988.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if there was on the Piper Alpha platform an emergency shut-off valve on each of the gas import/export pipelines; and where those valves were located.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On Piper Alpha there were three gas import-export pipelines. All were fitted with emergency shutdown valves which were located near the top of the pipeline risers on the platform.

Renewable Energy Sources

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what investigations his Department has carried out into the reliability of industrial crop growing as a permanent renewable energy source; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department, within its biofuels research and development programme, is continuing to evaluate the prospects for energy forestry in terms of its practicality and economics. In addition, earlier studies were carried out into the prospects of growing catch crops and also the harvesting of natural vegetation but these proved to be unattractive in economic terms.

The forestry programme and been reviewed in the publication ETSU R32, "The Potential for Wood as a Fuel in the UK", and the catch crop work in ETSU R35, The potential for catch crops and natural vegetation as fuel in the UK. Arrangements have been made to place both documents in the House of Commons Library.

UKAEA (Inquiry)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be given full access to the complete Manley report of 1984 during the forthcoming inquiry into the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority;

(2) whether the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be given full and open access during its forthcoming inquiry into the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to *(a)* the Fitzsimmons report (1983) into financial mechanisms used by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, *(b)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority FBR report (1983) into the future of the fast breed reactor, *(c)* the Peat, Marwick and Mitchell report (1982) into the efficiency and economy

within the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and *(d)* the internal DEA report (1982) into the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority fast reactor programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department will give careful consideration to any request from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to see departmental documents.

Grant-aided Surveys Scheme

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many energy consultants have made representations to him regarding the Energy Efficiency Office's announcement withdrawing the grant-aided surveys scheme; how many of those consultants objected to the changes; and how many supported the decision.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department wrote to some 400 consultants who had carried out a survey under the energy efficiency survey scheme to notify them of the closure of the scheme and the reasons for that decision. We have received only three written representations in response. All three argued against the decision.

British Coal

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to privatise the coal trading interests of British Coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is our ambition that all activities of British Coal should be returned in due course to the private sector. The possibility of privatising British Coal's peripheral activities is kept under regular review.

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on British Coal involvement in the private sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal's major interests in private sector companies are set out at page 43 of the corporation's report and accounts for 1987-88. It is British Coal's intention to continue to pursue the disposal of peripheral activities where suitable opportunities present themselves. The Government welcome this.

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the proposed financial arrangements for the purchase of British Fuels Ltd. by British Coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have made it clear thatfurther acquisitions of businesses by British Coal, where my approval is required, will be agreed only if it is likely to help achieve greater efficiency. The recent increase in British Coal's stake in British Fuels Ltd. from 20 per cent. to 50 per cent. did not require my approval. It did not require any injection of cash on British Coal's part, and it left the company in the private sector. British Coal have given assurances that trading between them and British Fuels Ltd. will continue to be on an arm's-length basis.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the British Coal Corporation's external financing requirement for 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: I announced on 26 May that I would be reviewing the corporation's external financing limit for 1988-89, in the light of the higher than expected expenditure on redundancy lump sums incurred in the closing days of 1987-88 but actually paid in 1988-89. After taking account of some offsetting savings I have now agreed that the external financing limit should be increased by £80 million from £670 million to £750 million. In reflection of this and other minor changes, the external financing now envisaged is made up as follows:

	Revised		*Previous*
	£ million	*£ million*	
Restructuring grant		207	116
Other non-deficit grants		270	273
Net borrowing:			
Voted loans (including refinancing of existing debt)	1,800		
Net other loans repaid	(1,527)	273	281
		750	670

This increase will be met from the reserve and does not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Energy Efficiency Office

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on the Energy Efficiency Office of 9 June, *Official Report*, column 635, if he will outline the evidence of wide public appreciation of the potential value of energy surveys upon which his decision was based.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our day-to-day contacts, many of which are through the Department's regional energy efficiency officers, indicated a general increased awareness of the value of surveys. We also took account of research undertaken by the European Commission in the north-west and north-east of England, and the evidence of our follow-up inquiries of applicants who had benefited from grant-aided surveys.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what instructions or guidance his Department has given with regard to the construction of accommodation modules on oil and gas installations, and in particular with regard to the materials with which these modules are constructed; when these instructions or guidelines were issued; and if they were made retroactive.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Guidance is issued to the offshore industry generally, through a number of documents which my department publishes. These include "Offshore Installations: Guidance on design and construction" (published in 1984), "Offshore Installations: Guidance on fire fighting equipment" (published in 1980) and "Offshore Installations: Guidance on life saving appliances" (published in 1978).

Amendments to, and new editions of, guidance documents are not intended to apply automatically to installations which have a certificate of fitness. However, operators are advised to design all new constructions and to carry out alterations and repairs in accordance with the latest guidance; and, if there are any overriding safety requirements, operators are advised to apply the new guidance to existing offshore installations immediately.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what instructions or guidance he has given to the operators of oil and gas installations concerning the location of emergency shut-off valves on pipelines to and from oil and gas installations; when these instructions or guidelines were issued; and if they were made retroactive.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Operators of oil and gas installations receive guidance from the Department of Energy through its "Submarine Pipelines Guidance Notes", which were last published in October 1984. These require that the pipeline should be equipped with an emergency shut-down system with shut-down valves positioned to ensure that as much of the pipeline as possible may be isolated in an emergency. Guidance is not made retroactive.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 July 1988

TRANSPORT

Kyle and Maclay Railway Lines

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans to privatise the Kyle and Maclay railway lines.

Mr. David Mitchell: No, and this applies also to the route to Mallaig.

British Rail

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss future investment proposals to reduce overcrowding on InterCity services.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. InterCity investment is a commercial matter for British Rail. I am always happy to approve any investment with a sound financial return.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss future investment proposals for services between Cardiff and Crewe with regard to reducing overcrowding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans to do so; this is essentially a management matter for British Rail. I have, however, asked the chairman to bring forward proposals for loading standards for the provincial sector, and I look forward to receiving these as soon as possible.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statisticl results of such monitoring.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State reported to the House last year we have taken the following initiatives:

For taxi and hire car operators:
—A thorough review of the legislation has been started.

For bus, coach and lorry operators:
—We have proposed dropping a number of superfluous items from annual roadworthiness tests.

For international hauliers:
—Considerable success in negotiations to increase lorry permit quotas for Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

For caterers:
—British Rail are providing increased opportunity to tender for on-train trolley services.

For business men with roadside premises:
—We have consulted about revising local highway authorities' powers over planning applications, with a view to changes later this year.

For airline operators:
—The EC Council of Ministers has agreed on a package of liberalising measures, as a first step towards completion of the iternal market in 1992.

For Shipowners:
—The law on marine pilotage has been reformed and simplified, we have consulted about simplifying crew accommodation regulations; and provision has been made in the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 to enable further pressure to be put on EC member states to move towards liberalisation of shipping cabotage.

For MOT testing garages:
—The revised conditions of appointment for MOT testing garages have been reviewed.

The transport and road research laboratory monitors the effects of bus deregulation under the Transport Act 1985. Other measures do not lend themselves in the same way to the use of statistical performance indicators.

Trailers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take action to ensure that trailers registered abroad and entering the United Kingdom carrying imported goods are required to meet the standards needed for Department of Transport certificates required of British registered trailers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If the hon. Member is referring to plating and test certificates, large trailers from other EC member states must be tested annually, to comply with EC roadworthiness directive 77/143. Foreign trailers must not exceed United Kingdom maximum limits on axle and gross weights. Basic safety standards are also applied by international conventions. These provisions are enforced by checks of vehicles at ports and at the roadside.

Road Improvements (North-West)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he is giving to a greater emphasis on road improvement schemes in urban areas; and if he will make a statement about the implication of such schemes for the north-west.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Great emphasis is already given to road improvement schemes in urban areas. They stimulate the development of new industries and create new job opportunities. In urban areas in the north west, national road schemes worth about £400 million have been recently completed or are under construction or planned, and about £125 million of local road schemes will benefit from transport supplementary grant. This investment in the north-west's highways infrastructure is a visible sign of the Government's commitment to the regeneration of the region's urban heartlands.

M4 (Maintenance)

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will take steps to minimise the number of night-time closures made necessary by the maintenance works due to take place from the end of July between junctions 3 and 1 on the M4 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. We shall try to do all these repairs over one weekend to keep any inconvenience to a minimum. After consultation with the police we have decided to close the London bound (eastbound) carriageway of the M4 between junction 3 at The Parkway and junction 1, east of Chiswick roundabout for a period

between 9 pm on Friday 29 July and 6 am on Monday 1 August. This is to facilitate essential carriageway resurfacing work and the replacement of waterproofing on the bridge decks.

If all goes well, we hope to re-open this section of the motorway to traffic by lunchtime on Sunday 31 July.

Wide publicity will be given to the closure. It will be supported by signs to keep motorists fully informed. Delays to traffic are likely to be significant. We are advising motorists to allow plenty of time for their journeys. If the weather seems likely to prevent the work being done, no start would be made and it would then be necessary to transfer the work to a subsequent weekend.

Chapter 2 Jet Aircraft

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take in the light of the recent European civil aviation conference recommendation on chapter 2 jet aircraft.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government undertook in the airports policy White Paper of 1985 to work towards the eventual phasing out of chapter 2 aircraft. It was recognised that this would be a long and expensive process. Since then we have continued to play an active role with ECAC and thus welcome, as an important first step, its recommendation to ban the addition of nearly all chapter 2 jet aircraft to member state's registers from 1 October 1990. To give effect to the recommendation in the United Kingdom will require legislation. The necessary statutory instrument will be introduced next year.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take in the light of the reports on the Channel tunnel and airports policy launched by the North of England Regional Consortium, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has read these reports with interest and I have commented on some aspects of NOERC's recommendations on airports policy in my answers of 12 July to the right hon. Gentleman.

The Government are already on record as supporting the provision of a second terminal at Manchester when this can be justified by demand and return on capital. Public sector borrowing restrictions apply to regional airports only so long as they remain under the control of local authorities. The North of England Regional Consortium may wish to send copies of the airports policy document to the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority in light of the CAA review referred to in my answer to the right hon. Gentleman of 12 July, column 145.

As far as the Channel tunnel is concerned, the issues raised in the consortium's report are mainly for the British Railways Board, to whom I understand the consortium has already sent a copy. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has in the past discussed with the consortium its concerns about the impact of the tunnel on the north of England.

ENVIRONMENT

Rural Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he will take to ensure the adequate provision of housing for rent and for purchase at affordable prices for people in rural areas.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend set out his proposals for increasing the supply of low cost housing in rural areas in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 5 July, *Official Report,* column 548. No further steps are planned at present.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many employees have been appointed to the shadow National Rivers Authority by the water authorities; to what positions; and at what salaries.

Mr. Moynihan: Until the establishment of the National Rivers Authority, water authorities retain statutory responsibility for all their functions, including those that will pass to the National Rivers Authority. All appointments made by individual water authorities are for jobs as employees of the water authority concerned.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in his proposals to privatise the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 12 May, *Official Report,* at column 199.

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities bid for extra housing investment programme allocations in 1988-89, to provide additional accommodation for the homeless, under the initiative he announced on 17 June; what additional housing investment allocation each local authority bid for under this initiative; and how many units of accommodation each local authority estimated would result, comprising *(a)* local authority dwellings refurbished, *(b)* hostel places provided by local authorities, *(c)* hostel places provided by housing associations and *(d)* other dwellings or places provided by local authorities.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 23 June, *Official Report,* at columns 701-706. My Department did not specifically seek additional bids beyond those listed in that reply. However, four authorities submitted further proposals, which are listed in the following table.

Authority	Bid £k	Estimated additional units of accommodation: Local authority dwellings refurbished	Local authority hostel places	Housing association hostel places	Other
Eastern Region					
Ipswich	170	7	0	0	0
Merseyside Task Force					
Liverpool	200	18	0	0	0
Wirral	170	0	0	40	0
Northern Region					
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	100	7	0	0	0

Water Directives

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what legal actions his Department has initiated in cases where water authorities have been found not to be complying with European Economic Community directives; and under what powers.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on this subject on 11 July, *Official Report*, column 40.

Water Supply (Disconnections)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of domestic consumers who have been disconnected from their water supply in each water authority in England, Scotland and Wales in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested by the hon. Member has been collected by the Department for water authorities only since 1984-85 as part of the water authorities' annual charges returns. Information on statutory water company disconnections is not collected by the Department.

Numbers of disconnections in Wales and Scotland are matters for the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland respectively.

The figures are as follows:

Authority	Household disconnections for non-payment: 1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
North West	110	238	457	448
Northumbrian	70	59	300	480
Severn Trent	650	1,074	1,000	932
Yorkshire	25	189	293	560
Anglian	218	774	2,268	1,586
Thames	788	225	576	1,594
Southern	115	1,249	1,152	1,164
Wessex	0	0	0	32
South West	76	404	404	324
England	2,052	4,212	6,450	7,120

Housing and Population Statistics

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give, for every county, borough and metropolitan district council in England, the total area, number of dwellings, population and population density.

Mrs. Roe: Following is the latest available information:

Estimates of area, Population, Population Density and Dwelling Stock; Non-Metropolitan Counties, London Boroughs and Metropolitan Districts in England.

	[1]Area April 1987 (hectares)	[2]Population mid 1986 (number)	[3]Population Density (persons per ha)	[4]Dwellings April 1987 (number)
Avon	134,599	946,600	7·03	372,000
Bedfordshire	123,462	521,000	4·22	197,200
Berkshire	125,886	734,100	5·83	271,300
Buckinghamshire	188,279	612,900	3·26	231,000
Cambridgeshire	340,914	635,200	1·86	248,400
Cheshire	233,325	946,500	4·06	367,800
Cleveland	59,086	557,600	9·44	215,000
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	356,442	448,200	1·26	191,400
Cumbria	682,455	486,600	0·71	197,900
Derbyshire	263,098	916,800	3·49	367,000
Devon	671,096	999,000	1·49	405,300
Dorset	265,427	638,200	2·40	273,100
Durham	243,362	599,600	2·46	243,000
East Sussex	179,530	689,700	3·84	298,300
Essex	367,189	1,512,100	4·12	601,300
Gloucestershire	264,251	517,100	1·96	206,000
Hampshire	378,022	1,527,700	4·04	594,600
Hereford and Worcester	392,650	654,500	1·67	256,300
Hertfordshire	163,416	985,700	6·03	375,500
Humberside	351,256	848,500	2·42	338,900
Isle of Wight	38,063	124,600	3·27	52,000
Kent	373,063	1,500,900	4·02	594,200
Lancashire	306,951	1,380,700	4·50	555,800
Leicestershire	255,297	875,000	3·43	334,100
Lincolnshire	591,470	567,300	0·96	234,900
Norfolk	536,953	727,800	1·36	307,700
Northamptonshire	236,737	554,400	2·34	220,100

	[1] Area April 1987 (hectares)	[2] Population mid 1986 (number)	[3] Population Density (persons per ha)	[4] Dwellings April 1987 (number)
Northumberland	503,167	301,000	0·60	122,200
North Yorkshire	831,235	699,800	0·84	288,600
Nottinghamshire	216,362	1,006,400	4·65	397,900
Oxfordshire	260,781	574,700	2·20	204,800
Shropshire	349,013	392,700	1·13	153,600
Somerset	345,120	448,900	1·30	181,500
Staffordshire	271,616	1,021,000	3·76	397,200
Suffolk	379,663	628,600	1·66	255,000
Surrey	167,924	1,011,400	6·02	399,000
Warwickshire	198,054	480,700	2·43	186,100
West Sussex	198,935	694,700	3·49	289,300
Wiltshire	348,063	545,200	1·57	215,400
Greater London				
City of London	274	4,800	17·69	3,300
Barking and Dagenham	3,419	148,100	43·32	58,800
Barnet	8,953	304,600	34·02	117,500
Bexley	6,065	220,100	36·30	85,600
Brent	4,421	255,700	57·84	93,400
Bromley	15,179	297,000	19·57	[5]118,300
Camden	2,171	183,300	84·43	84,700
Croydon	8,658	319,300	36·88	125,000
Ealing	5,547	295,500	53·27	106,000
Enfield	8,115	265,400	32·71	102,800
Greenwich	4,744	217,800	45·92	87,900
Hackney	1,948	187,100	96·01	77,100
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,616	150,800	93·26	70,100
Haringey	3,031	196,100	64·68	83,100
Harrow	5,082	201,900	39·73	77,200
Havering	11,776	238,100	20·22	90,400
Hillingdon	11,037	232,000	21·02	94,100
Hounslow	5,852	194,900	33·30	80,200
Islington	1,489	168,000	112·83	75,100
Kensington and Chelsea	1,195	137,400	115·04	76,500
Kingston upon Thames	3,756	133,800	35·61	55,600
Lambeth	2,727	245,000	89·83	110,600
Lewisham	3,473	232,000	66·80	97,800
Merton	3,796	164,800	43·42	69,200
Newham	3,637	205,200	56·43	84,100
Redbridge	5,647	227,900	40·36	89,500
Richmond upon Thames	5,526	162,000	29·31	72,400
Southwark	2,880	216,000	75·01	97,000
Sutton	4,342	168,700	38·86	67,700
Tower Hamlets	1,973	152,800	77·42	66,600
Waltham Forest	3,966	215,800	54·42	87,100
Wandsworth	3,491	257,100	73·65	109,500
Westminster, City of	2,158	176,100	81·62	102,900
Greater Manchester				
Bolton	13,973	261,600	18·72	104,400
Bury	9,918	172,600	17·40	68,500
Manchester	11,621	451,400	38·85	184,800
Oldham	14,112	220,000	15·59	87,200
Rochdale	15,975	206,600	12·93	81,900
Salford	9,687	239,300	24·70	94,700
Stockport	12,605	289,900	23·00	113,800
Tameside	10,323	215,200	20·85	86,300
Trafford	10,565	216,300	20·47	86,400
Wigan	19,895	306,600	15·41	119,100
Merseyside				
Knowsley	9,739	163,800	16·82	57,800
Liverpool	11,291	483,000	42·78	198,600
St. Helens	13,347	187,900	14·08	70,200
Sefton	15,272	298,000	19·52	114,600
Wirral	15,772	334,800	21·23	137,000
South Yorkshire				
Barnsley	32,864	222,200	6·76	88,100
Doncaster	58,153	289,300	4·97	111,500
Rotherham	28,278	252,100	9·91	[6]93,500
Sheffield	36,756	534,300	14·54	218,300
Tyne and Wear				
Gateshead	14,323	207,300	14·47	85,800
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	11,187	281,400	25·15	115,500

	[1] Area April 1987 (hectares)	[2] Population mid 1986 (number)	[3] Population Density (persons per ha)	[4] Dwellings April 1987 (number)
North Tyneside	8,377	192,300	22·95	83,200
South Tyneside	6,357	156,900	24·67	63,800
Sunderland	13,762	297,700	21·63	117,700
West Midlands				
Birmingham	26,430	1,004,100	37·99	392,400
Coventry	9,654	310,400	32·15	121,900
Dudley	9,794	300,900	30·72	118,800
Sandwell	8,559	301,100	35·18	119,800
Solihull	18,007	202,200	11·23	76,200
Walsall	10,606	261,800	24·69	98,800
Wolverhampton	6,892	251,900	36·54	98,500
West Yorkshire				
Bradford	36,657	463,100	12·63	178,400
Calderdale	36,376	193,100	5·31	77,500
Kirklees	40,992	376,600	9·18	150,400
Leeds	56,215	710,900	12·65	288,100
Wakefield	33,317	309,300	9·28	122,700

[1] Area data for shire counties, London boroughs and metropolitan districts as used for the 1988-89 RSG settlement. Source: Ordnance Survey.
[2] Registrar General's population estimate at mid-1986. Source: OPCS Monitor PP1 87/1.
[3] Population density calculated as the ratio of population (Mid-1986) to Area (April 1987).
[4] Dwelling stock as reported by local authorities in their housing investment programme returns (HIP1) for April 1987.
[5] Figure for Bromley relates to April 1984 HIP return.
[6] Figure for Rotherham relates to April 1986 HIP return.

River Mersey

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made on the clean up programme for the River Mersey.

Mr. Moynihan: Substantial progress has been made in laying the foundations for the success of the mersey basin campaign. Apart from other developments upstream direct benefits will flow from the completion by the North water authority of new sewage treatment facilities, specifically at Sandon dock, Liverpool and on the Wirrall. Significant landward developments have also taken place at Albert dock, Salford quays and Wigan pier. Phase I of the Mersey basin programme attracted some £66 million from the European regional development fund and phase II which envisages some £73 million ERDF is now before the European Commission for decision. A voluntary sector network has been set up to ensure effective participation by the community and has attracted £115,000 of private sector sponsorship for specific project support. Efforts continue to bring all sectors into this long term campaign.

Gravel Extraction

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards appeals against refusal of planning permission for gravel extraction in green belt and environmentally sensitive rural areas; and what guidance he issues to local authorities in respect of such development.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's policy on mineral extraction in green belts is set out in planning policy guidance note 2. It recognises that minerals can be worked only where they are found and that their extraction need not be incompatible with green belt objectives, provided that high environmental standards are maintained and that the site is well restored. There is no specific policy on mineral extraction in environmentally sensitive rural areas, but general guidance may be found in minerals planning guidance note 1.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to prevent the importing of polychlorinated biphenyls into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Waste substances containing polychlorinated biphenysl are imported into the United Kingdom for safe disposal by specialist high-temperature incineration. Such trade is in the best interests of environmental protection. Polychlorinated biphenyls cannot be sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent the production of polychlorinated biphenyls in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Polychlorinated biphenyls are not manufactured anywhere in the United Kingdom. The Control of Pollution (Supply and Use of Injurious Substances) Regulations 1986 prohibit their sale.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to whether the three-day period allowed for waste disposal authorities to check the contents of cargoes of imported toxic waste is sufficient to allow a proper chemical analysis of such cargoes.

Mr. Moynihan: The three-day period is intended to give notice to waste disposal authorities so that they can monitor and verify the arrival of a consignment at its intended disposal facilities. Producers of special wastes, including importers, must certify the composition of consignments and disposers must ensure that the

composition complies with site licence conditions. Analysis should be undertaken by these parties in order to comply with their obligations, and is not constrained by the three day period. Waste disposal authorities, as part of their enforcement duties, may check on the composition at any time.

Water (Privatisation)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that those consumers paying water rates be offered, in a paper sent to them together with their accounts, a priority opportunity to buy shares in their local water authority on privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: Decisions have yet to be taken on ways of encouraging customers of water authorities to invest in the successor companies. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's suggestion, and I shall keep it in mind.

Building Contracts

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish recommendations following the report of the working party on building industry contracts set up by the Minister for Housing in January 1987; whether the report included comments about the transferability of contractors' guarantees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The report of the working party will be published shortly. It will include a section on the operation of guarantee schemes and codes of practice in the building industry.

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be consulting local authorities on proposals to strengthen their powers to deal with houses in multiple occupation as announced by the Minister for Housing and Planning the hon. Member for Bristol, West on 9 June.

Mr. Waldegrave: Copies of a consultation document have been sent to every local authority in England, and to organisations and individuals who are interested in HMO problems. I have also arranged for copies to be placed in the libraries. The paper proposes that there should be a revised definition of an HMO; a fitness standard including means of escape from fire; that the management regulations should apply to all HMOs instead of simply to those on which a management order has been served; that the control order process should be simplified, and that local authorities should be able to charge a fee for registration schemes. Depending on the results of consultation, appropriate amendments to the existing legislation will be made in the next Housing Bill. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be consulting the Welsh local authorities separately.

PRIME MINISTER

Southern Africa (IRA)

Q7. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister what information she has on recent meetings between representatives of the Irish Republican Army and southern African terrorist organisations; and what assessment she has made of the implications of such meetings for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards terrorism.

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that any information will be thoroughly investigated.

Petitions

Q15. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy on the way in which petitions to the Government are responded to.

The Prime Minister: Petitions presented to No. 10 Downing street receive replies as appropriate from No. 10 or the Government Department concerned.

Kent

Q62. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Kent.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Common Fisheries Policy

Q90. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to ensure that the introduction of the single European market will not affect the structure of the common fisheries policy, with particular reference to access agreements and the total allowable catch system; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The common fisheries policy was agreed in 1983. It lasts at least 20 years with a mid-term review. The Government are wholly committed to the structure of the CFP which represents a very fair deal for the United Kingdom. However we recognise that the single European Market may require adjustments such as harmonising fish hygiene regulations to facilitate trade but these will not affect the basic agreement including arrangements for access and total allowable catches.

Bristol

Q113. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to pay an official visit to Bristol.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Official Information

Q149. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister whether, in the light of the Government's proposals for reforming the Official Secrets Acts, she has any plans to issue new guidance to *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* Ministers of the Crown about the rules and procedures governing the disclosure of official information and the mechanism for determining whether a particular proposed disclosure is authorised; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As the White Paper on reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 made clear, once new legislation is in place it will be necessary to amend the conduct rules for Crown servants on the disclosure of official information, in consultation with the Civil Service trade unions.

Persian Gulf

Q152. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the Persian Gulf.

The Prime Minister: I hope to stop over briefly in the Gulf on the way to and from Australia, but have no plans at present to pay an official visit.

Singapore

Q164. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about her forthcoming visit to Singapore.

The Prime Minister: I shall be visiting Singapore briefly on my way to Australia at the end of the month and shall be having talks with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Mr. Nelson Mandela

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she has sent birthday greetings to Mr. Nelson Mandela on his 70th birthday; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On 15 July my right hon. and learned Friend, the Foreign Secretary, issued a statement on behalf of the Government which read as follows:

Mr. Nelson Mandela has now spent 26 years in prison. The British Government have long called for his immediate and unconditional release, and indeed the release of all political prisoners. On the eve of Mr. Mandela's 70th birthday, we renew that call.

The release of Mr. Mandela is crucial to the prospects for peaceful change within South Africa. It would be an important gesture of reconciliation by the South African Government and would help to create a climate of confidence in which dialogue across the racial divide on South Africa's future would become possible in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Lebanon

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what humanitarian assistance Her Majesty's Government have provided recently to the Lebanon.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have recently provided from the aid programme two grants totalling £1·2 million. The first is for £1 million to UNICEF for its health care and water supply projects in Lebanon; the other is for £200,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross for its 1988 emergency appeal for Lebanon. This appeal covers a range of protection, tracing and relief activities. Our latest contribution is part of Her Majesty's Government's long and continuing commitment to Red Cross operations in Lebanon.

THE ARTS

Public Libraries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make it his policy to accept representations on his Green Paper entitled "Financing Our Public Library Service" submitted after the closing date of 30 June.

Mr. Luce: The work of analysing the responses has now begun. I will try to take account of any late entries received during July, but that must be the end. The consultative period lasted four months.

Marketing

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he is now ready to make the further announcement on marketing the arts referred to in the arts debate on 20 May, *Official Report*, column 1204.

Mr. Luce: The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA), in collaboration with IBM and seven other major businesses, have today announced details of a new organisation. It is to be known as "Business in the Arts", which they are setting up to encourage business men to put their talents and professional skills at the disposal of arts organisations on a voluntary basis, to improve the quality of business management in the arts. An important aspect of this initiative will be the use of business training schemes to support arts managers and the extension of the links with universities and colleges. The organisation will be run by ABSA and funded by the eight businesses initially. I am delighted to support this extremely worthwhile initiative and have agreed to contribute £25,000 from my marketing budget for each of the first two years in recognition of the funds put up by the business community.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how long replies to Inland Revenue queries made in Welsh take to process in relation to the equivalent requests in English.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The times are normally the same for inquiries—whether in Welsh or English—made to Inland Revenue offices in Wales. Inquiries in Welsh to offices outside Wales may take longer to deal with than those made in English as it will normally be necessary to obtain translations.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that every letter sent by a person in Wales to the Inland Revenue which is written in Welsh will have a reply in the Welsh language.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue's practice is that inquiries written in Welsh to its tax and collection offices in Wales will receive a reply in that language. Where inquiries in Welsh are made to offices elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it would be the practice to try to provide a reply in Welsh.

Economic and Finance Control

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lilley: The Ecofin Council met in Brussels on 11 July. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council discussed the Commission's second quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community and broadly endorsed the Commission's analysis. The Commission made a procedural statement on indirect tax approximation, but substantive discussion was postponed to the informal meeting of Finance Ministers in September. The Council agreed by qualified majority a common position on a directive on major shareholdings which sets requirements for the disclosure of holdings in EC companies.

Industrial Dredging

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what restrictions have already been applied to the maximum depth at which industrial dredging can be conducted; and what guidelines he has issued.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* No general guidelines have been issued by the Crown Estate Commissioners. Each licence application is dealt with on a site-by-site basis. A maximum dredging depth will be imposed in the light of scientific advice in order to ensure that the surface of the seabed remains fundamentally the same as it was before dredging commenced.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what restrictions have already been applied to ban the discharge of fine material from industrial dredgers if adjacent shellfish or spawning grounds might be blanketed; and what guidelines he has issued.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* No general guidelines have been issued by the Crown Estate Commissioners, but the screening on board of dredged material is strictly controlled, especially where dredging takes place close to fishing grounds. Appropriate conditions will be contained in the licence granted by the Crown Estate Commission.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Military Equipment (Shippers)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the nature of the communications between Her Majesty's Government and shippers of military equipment, in particular Sea Cadet missiles, as to the responsibility of shippers to ensure that such equipment does not pass through or arrive in the hands of Soviet interests; and to which other persons or organisations such communications have been directed.

Mr. Alan Clark: Exports of military equipment are controlled under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987. Where goods are subject to control it is the responsibility of the person presenting the goods for export to ensure that an export licence is produced to Customs and Excise and that the goods are exported in accordance with the descriptions on, and conditions of, the licence.

Communications between Her Majesty's Goverment and exporters or shippers on matters relating to the export of military equipment would take the form of advice, or requests for information, clarification or undertakings, in connection with the licensing process.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The prime objectives of the DTI are to stimulate individual initiative and enterprise, and to help businesses to improve their efficiency by spreading knowledge of best practice and by cutting red tape. We aim to promote the development of all businesses, large and small, but we recognise that small firms need particular help if they are to achieve their full potential. This is reflected both in the organisation of the Department and in the range of services that we offer.

The White Paper "DTI—the Department for Enterprise" published in January announced changes in the structure of the Department designed to improve communications with business. Since then, the regional network has been strengthened and extended: 20 new satellite offices and three sub-offices have been opened and the number of staff employed in regional offices has been increased by about 20 per cent. The whole purpose of these changes is to make the Department more accessible to smaller firms and to develop closer communications with them.

In January, we also launched the enterprise initiative, the biggest and most comprehensive self-help package ever offered to British business. Much of the package is aimed specifically at small and medium size businesses. In particular, the consultancy initiatives are designed to encourage independent firms or groups with fewer than 500 employees to use consultancy services to improve their efficiency in key management areas—design, marketing, quality, manufacturing systems, business planning and financial and information systems.

There has been a very strong response to the enterprise initiative. Up to 1 July, we had received 96,472 inquiries for general information followed up by 60,233 inquiries about specific initiatives.

Inquiries about specific initiatives can be broken down as follows:

	Number
Consultancy	17,329
Exports	11,220
Regional Selective Assistance	9,668
Regional Enterprise Grant	5,113
Research and Technology	6,072
Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology	2,956
Business and Education	7,245

Rapid progress is being made in handling applications for the consultancy initiatives. A total of 7,993 applications have been received and 6,148 business reviews completed. A total of 4,815 have been referred to scheme contractors for consultancy to proceed and 158 projects have been completed. Over 80 per cent. of the applications approved for consultancy are from firms with fewer than 100 employees and about one third of the total have been from firms employing fewer than 10.

A range of financial support continues to be available to firms which meet the criteria for regional selective assistance (RSA). Over 20 per cent. by value of DTI offers of RSA in the last three years have been made to firms with fewer than 200 employees; this amounts to some £100 million in grant offered. Following the introduction in February 1987 of simplified arrangements for RSA offers of up to £25,000, grants of this size now account for nearly 10 per cent. of the value and 60 per cent. of the number of all new RSA offers, compared with 5 per cent. and 45 per cent. respectively before simplification.

A new scheme was introduced on 1 April 1988 in recognition of the particular problems that very small firms face in raising finance. The regional enterprise grant scheme provides fixed-rate grants to assist firms with fewer than 25 employees with investment and innovation projects in the development areas. The scheme has streamlined procedures and simple documentation to minimise the burden on small firms' managers.

The Department also provides a wide range of services to exporters through the medium of the British Overseas Trade Board. Although these services are not aimed exclusively at small businesses, they are designed with the needs of such firms very much in mind. Small firms account for over 70 per cent. of the board's contacts with industry.

We are currently looking to improve the overall quality of the services on offer so that they better reflect customers' needs. In particular, independent research commissioned by the Department has shown that there is a great deal of untapped export potential amongst small companies. Our aim is to encourage and help them to develop that potential.

The small firms merit award for research and technology. (SMART) competition was relaunched in the spring as a regional initiative. It now offers 100 awards worth up to £37,500 each, with 20 of these reserved for individuals and small firms working in urban programme areas. When the competition closed for entries on 30 June, over 900 applications had been received; at first sight, the overall standard seems very promising.

The enterprise and deregulation unit, which has been based in the DTI since July 1987, continues to co-ordinate and develop the Government's policy of reducing burdens on business both domestically and in the EC. The aim is to simplify those regulations which are necessary and get rid of those which are not. That helps all firms but is particularly important for small businesses which lack both resources and expertise in handling bureaucracy; requirements which impose negligible costs on large firms can be a real burden on smaller firms. A White Paper later this year will report on the further progress of the deregulation initiative both within DTI and across Whitehall.

LHW Futures and DPR Futures

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many complaints he has received about *(a)* LHW Futures and *(b)* DPR Futures in 1986, 1987 and 1988 to date.

Mr. Maude: During the years 1986, 1987 and 1988, to date, the Department of Trade and Industry received the following number of complaints concerning these companies:

	1986	*1987*	[1]*1988*
LWH Futures	1	5	9
DPR Futures	1	11	27

[1] To date.

DPR Futures

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of his inquiry into the affairs of DPR Futures.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Financial Services Act (Authorisations)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the applications of *(a)* Harvard Securities plc and *(b)* LHW Futures Ltd., for authorisation under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: I understand that Harvard Securities plc has applied for membership of The Securities Association and for authorisation under section 25 of the Financial Services Act from the Securities and Investments Board. Both applications are currently being considered and meanwhile the company holds interim authorisation by virtue of paragraph 1(1) of schedule 15 to the Act.

LHW Futures Ltd. has applied for membership of the Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers. That application is currently being considered and the company therefore also holds interim authorisation.

Applications for membership of a self-regulating organisation recognised under the Act or for authorisation under section 25 are matters for the organisation concerned and the SIB respectively.

Lonrho

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many unsolicited communications of a circular nature he has received from Lonrho plc in 1986,

1987 and 1988 to date; whether he has received any representations from hon. Members or others about these circulars; and if he will introduce regulations to prohibit expenditure on such circulars unless specifically provided for in the articles of association of any plc.

Mr. Maude: Records are not maintained which would enable identification of the numbers of such unsolicited communications. However, I have received representations both from hon. Members and from others about certain circular communications issued by Lonrho and relating to House of Fraser. I have no plans to introduce regulations relating to expenditure on such documents.

Research and Development

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish the amount of private sector non-defence research and development divided into terms of the major categories of energy, agriculture, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine, and so on.

Mr. Butcher: I regret that the information is not available.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will estimate the amount of research and development funding allocated over the last four years to international research and development projects and organisations; whether he will list what projects and organisations received these funds; and what proportion of these funds is allocated to defence projects.

Mr. Butcher: The only available information relates to budgeted estimates of Government expenditure on research and development (R and D) for international projects where there is a formal agreement between Governments on joint financing. The information is published annually in the section on "The International context for R and D in the United Kingdom" in "The Annual Review of Government Funded R and D," a copy of which is in the Library. It is given in the table.

Budgeted estimates of United Kingdom Government contribution to international projects

£ million

	Total	*Defence projects*	*As a percentage of total*
1986	281·1	20·6	7
1985	408·4	175·3	43
1984	367·4	156·7	43
1983	320·6	184·5	58

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will list what research and development co-operation is known by Her Majesty's Government to take place between the United Kingdom and *(a)* Greece, *(b)* Portugal, *(c)* Spain and *(d)* Turkey.

Mr. Butcher: The Government encourage United Kingdom industry and other organisations to collaborate where appropriate in research and development with their counterparts in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. Because such collaboration ranges from participation in, for example, the NATO science programme and EUREKA and EC R and D projects to informal contacts, the information required to compile a complete list is not readily available and could only be assembled at disproportionate time and cost.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what Government programmes are specifically intended to stimulate co-operation in research and development internationally and with respect to other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nations; and whether he will list the nations concerned.

Mr. Butcher: Government programmes in research and development are intended to achieve scientific and technological objectives and co-operation with partner nations often provides an effective means to achieve those objectives. A very large number of Government research programmes include elements of international co-operation, ranging from formal agreements to ad hoc arrangements between scientific groups. Any listing would be very extensive but, even so, probably incomplete.

The United Kingdom is a member of the following major international organisations which undertake collaborative research and development programmes:

	Membership
European Community (EC)	France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)	As EC except Ireland; plus United States of America, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Turkey
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE)	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Federal Republic of), Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, USSR, United Kingdom, United States of America, Yugoslavia
European Science Foundation (ESF)	As EC except Luxembourg; plus Austria, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Yugoslavia
Council of Europe	As EC plus Austria, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will estimate what proportion of non-defence research and development is spent on *(a)* pure research and *(b)* applied research.

Mr. Butcher The available information relates to Government funded research and development (R and D) for civil purposes. It is published in the section on "Government funded R and D expenditure" in the "Annual Review of Government funded R and D", a copy of which is in the Library. For 1986-87 basic research was 36 per cent. and applied research was 53 per cent. of total Government funded civil R and D.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish the amount of Government funded non-defence research and development divided into amounts allocated to the following major sectors of the community: energy, agriculture, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine, and any other categories.

Mr. Butcher: The available information relates to Government funded research and development by socio-economic objectives. It is published annually in the section on "The international content for R and D in the United Kingdom" in "The Annual Review of Government Funded R and D", a copy of which is in the Library. It is given in the table below:

Government funding of R and D in 1986 by socio economic objective

	£ million
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	198
Industrial development	444
Energy	188
Transport and Communications	16
Urban and rural planning	50
Environmental planning	49
Health	190
Social development and services	62
Earth and atmosphere	80
Advancement of knowledge	917
Civil space	124

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total spent on research and development, for the last four years; and what proportion this was of the gross national product.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is given in the following table. Data are not available for 1982 and 1984 as there were no surveys of industrial research and development for those years.

	Total expenditure on R and D £ billion	*Total as a percentage of gross domestic product*
1986	9·0	2·4
1985	8·1	2·3
1983	6·8	2·3
1981	6·1	2·4

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, of the total of research and development funding estimated to be spent over the last four years, what proportion is provided by Her Majesty's Government, what proportion by industry, what proportion by educational establishments, and what proportion by charities.

Mr. Butcher: Over the latest years 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1986 for which the information is available the Government funded 44·9 per cent. of total expenditure on research and development performed in the United Kingdom, industry 45·0 per cent., higher education 0·7 per cent. and non-profit making bodies 1·9 per cent. The balance of 7·5 per cent. was funded from overseas.

Signposters

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many bids have been received for signposters under the Department's enterprise initiative in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the north-west and *(c)* Bolton; and how many have been successful in each area.

Mr. Butcher: Around 140 bodies bid to become hosts for signposters under the business and education initiative, some bidding to provide a service in more than one LEA area. Of these, 30 were received from bodies intending to operate in the north-west and two applications related to the Bolton local education authority area. It is not possible to say how many bids will be successful as discussions with applicants are not yet complete but it is expected that there will be a host body operating in signposter services in nearly every LEA in the United Kingdom.

Airbuses

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent discussions he has had with British Aerospace plc about the extent of the losses made over the production of Airbuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have discussed on several occasions with the chairman and chief executive of British Aerospace the difficulties faced by the company in connection with their participation in the Airbus project. The details of our discussions must remain commercially confidential.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement showing the various amounts of grants, loans and other financial aids offered to British Aerospace plc in connection with the production of Airbuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No funding has been made available for Airbus production work. Launch aid funds development and design work only.

Film Industry

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many full-length feature films were made in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1986-87 and *(b)* 1987-88.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* There is no requirement for films made in the United Kingdom to be registered. This information is therefore not available.

Pit Bull Terriers

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to acquaint the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or such other bona fide animal welfare organisations which maintain an investigative role with relevant information in regard to the import or export of pit bull terriers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have been asked to reply.

Information required by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the Animal Health Act 1981 for the purposes of licensing the importation of animals or providing export certification is a matter of confidence between the Ministry and the importer or exporter. It would therefore not be proper to disclose such information to a third party such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals without the consent of the importer or the exporter.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Meals

1. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of children taking school meals in each education authority for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Statistics on the take-up of school meals in each of the local education authorities in England since 1979 are available in the annual school meals census, copies of which are available in the Library. Information was not collected in 1985 because of teachers' industrial action.

GCSE

16. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is in a position to assess the success of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is too early to make a final assessment. The interim report from Her Majesty's inspectorate published in March was encouraging. It showed that GCSE was already leading to improvements in teaching and learning. A full report will be published later in the year.

Teacher Shortages

17. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the areas of current teacher shortages by subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no straightforward measure of teacher shortages. The number of unfilled posts as a percentage of the total number by posts by subject is one measure. Figures for January 1988 suggests shortages by this measure in the following main subjects: business studies 2 per cent.; P.E. 0·9 per cent.; mathematics 0·8 per cent.; craft design and technology 0·8 per cent.; modern languages 0·8 per cent.; physics 0·7 per cent. A secondary staffing survey conducted in March of this year is expected to confirm that a significant amount of teaching in maths, physics and CDT is done by teachers whose main qualifications are not in these subjects.

Kingman Report

18. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received on the Kingman report in relation to the teaching of English.

Mrs. Rumbold: To date, my right hon. Friend has received a total of around 70 written representations on the teaching of English, following the publication of the Kingman report.

ILEA (Payments)

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he arrives at the charges for one Inner London education authority borough paying another borough to educate children, because of the lack of educational establishments.

Mr. Dunn: Pupils in London and elsewhere cross local authority boundaries to attend school and there are established procedures for recouping costs. Under existing legislation it is for authorities themselves to agree on rates of recoupment. If they fail to agree they may seek a direction from the Secretary of State. In practice, authorities have collectively agreed rates through the inter authority payments committee. The inner London councils will be able to participate in these arrangements when they become education authorities.

City Technology Colleges

20. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the proposed curriculum to be followed by city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education Reform Bill provides that a CTC should have a broad curriculum with an emphasis on science and technology. It is intended that all the core and foundation subjects of the national curriculum shall be taught to all pupils in years 1 to 5, and that the pupils' progress should be measured against the proposed national attainment targets using national arrangements assessment. All pupils will be prepared for GCSE qualifications and for other recognised examinations. In addition CTCs will comply with general statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education. A curriculum framework document for CTCs has been drafted, and will be published when it is finalised.

31. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement about the financing of the city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier this afternoon to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement about progress with regard to the city technology colleges.

39. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on progress towards the setting up of city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 20 June at column *389*. Since that date the CTC Trust has announced that Mr. Geoffrey Leigh, chairman of Allied London Properties, has made a personal donation towards the establishment of a CTC in Dartford.

ESCATA Video Material

21. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from education authorities on their use of ESCATA video material.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

Speech Therapy

22. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to discuss the provision of speech therapy for children with special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) on 21 June at column *523*.

32. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much he estimates the need for speech therapy was increased by the Education Act

1981; what representations he has received which suggest that existing provision is failing to meet the increased need; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I do not consider the need for speech therapy was increased by the Education Act 1981: but the representations I have received indicate that the procedures introduced by the Act have, in some areas, led to a more realistic assessment of the incidence of that need among schoolchildren. The provision of speech therapy is the responsibility of the district health authorities, and a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Services.

National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations

23. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the national parent-teachers association; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend last met the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations on 2 March 1987 to discuss schoolteachers' pay and conditions of employment.

National Curriculum

24. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now in a position to publish figures of the number and type of teachers required to deliver the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) on 21 June at column *523*.

35. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the progress of the working parties established in relation to the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received the final reports of the national curriculum science and mathematics working groups. He is considering them and will be letting the National Curriculum Council have his comments, along with the reports, as a basis for consultations. My right hon. Friend appointed working groups for English and for design and technology in April this year. The English working group has been asked to submit advice on attainment targets and programmes of study for the primary phase by 30 September 1988; and a final report covering all stages to age 16 by 30 April 1989. The design and technology group has been asked to submit interim advice by 31 October 1988 and a final report by April 30 1989. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has appointed a national curriculum Welsh working group which has been asked to submit interim advice by 30 September 1988 and a final report by 30 April 1989.

37. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received on the content of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 21 June at column *524*.

My right hon. Friend has recently received the reports of the maths and science working groups. He will shortly make proposals concerning attainment targets and programmes of study to the National Curriculum Council, which will consult widely before offering its advice.

Multi-racial Education

25. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review the way in which multi-racial education is being promoted in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 21 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) at column *528*.

Teachers (External Work)

26. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to formalise the current informal arrangements under which some teachers in scarcity subjects are able to refresh their knowledge by working with local firms.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is keen to encourage all teachers to gain up-to-date knowledge and experience of the world of business and industry. He commends those who have already done so, and those in business and education who are working to make this possible. He has no plans to prescribe formal arrangements. This objective can best be achieved through the development of contacts and arrangements between schools, business and industry at local level.

Primary School Teachers

27. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the expected number of vacancies for teachers in primary schools for September.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department does not collect projections of vacancies from local education authorities and schools who are themselves responsible for decisions on staffing levels. The education service in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Careers Teaching

28. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to raise the profile of careers teaching.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government attach high importance to good quality careers education and guidance. Under the joint DES—Department of Employment—Welsh Office initiative launched in April 1987, local education authorities are reviewing their policies and practice against the picture of desirable practice set out in the initiative booklet "Working Together for a Better Future". In parallel to this exercise, the Government are providing support to the in-service training of careers teachers as a national priority area under the local education authority training grants scheme.

Religious Education

29. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further plans he has or is

considering for the maintenance of religious education in the primary and secondary sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education Reform Bill contains a range of provisions relating to religious education in maintained schools. The Department will in due couse be issuing a circular about the implications of these provisions.

Teachers (Negotiating Rights)

30. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has recently discussed with the teachers' unions the restoration of teachers' negotiating rights.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend held brief discussions with the teacher unions this year about new machinery for the determination of teachers' pay and conditions, during consultation with them on the recommendations of the interim advisory committee. Further meetings are due to be held in the autumn.

School Closures

33. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is planning any alterations to the present procedures which must be followed before he exercises his powers to close a local authority maintained school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

School Governors

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if Her Majesty's Government will make money available to assist the training of school governors.

34. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the initiatives being taken to train new parent governors in schools.

36. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the availability of qualified school governors needed under the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend recently announced that he proposed to follow up the pilot project funded through education support grants (ESGs) in 10 local education authorities with support for nearly £5 million of expenditure on school governor training through the ESG mechanism in 1989-90; the intention is that all local education authorities should be able to seek support in carrying out this task. The Department is giving a grant to the National Association of Governors and Managers; it is supporting initiatives to provide information and new training materials relating to school management generally and to our proposals for financial delegation; and it is publicising the enhanced role which school governing bodies will have.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on his proposals to allow opting out for schools.

38. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received relating to the establishment of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about opting-out proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has now received well over 1,000 letters about his proposals for grant-maintained schools.

ILEA (Further Education)

40. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the maintenance of standards of further education in the area currently served by the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has received a number of representations expressing general concerns about the provision of further education in the area currently served by the Inner London educational authority. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will expect the inner London councils to address this issue as part of their development plans for the provision of an education service in their areas from 1 April 1990.

Nursery Education

41. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action his Department intends to take to ensure that current levels of provision for educational services for children under five years are maintained and improved.

47. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the availability and quality of nursery education.

Mr. Dunn: Provision of under-fives' education is at the discretion of LEAs and there are no plans to alter this. The Government have kept generously to their 1985 undertaking to maintain the level of resources in this area, actual expenditure having risen by over 10 per cent. in real terms since then. Current expenditure plans provide for participation rates for three and four-year-olds to remain constant up to 1992, despite the increase in age cohorts over that period.

School Violence

42. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities concerning violence in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: No representations have been received from local education authorities concerning violence in schools during the last 12 months.

Medical Research

43. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the secretary of the Medical Research Council to discuss priorities for medical research.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman and secretary of the Medical Research Council on 4 July to discuss the council's research programme. He hopes to meet the secretary of the council again in the near future.

Surplus Land

44. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the amount of surplus land held by local education authorities; and what proposals he has for the sale of such surpluses.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not hold information on surplus land held by local education authorities. Registers containing details of unused and underused land owned by public bodies are compiled and maintained by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is the Government's policy to bring as much unused and underused publicly owned land as possible back into use.

18-Plus Examinations

45. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals there are to develop examinations at 18-plus, in the light of the changes in examinations at 16-plus.

Mrs. Rumbold: The GCE examination boards have made the adjustments which they consider necessary to GCE advanced-level syllabuses to enable pupils to proceed to A-levels from GCSE without difficulty.

The Government have broadly welcomed the principles for A-level syllabuses and their assessment set out in chapter 2 of the report of the committee on A-levels, and look to the Secondary Examinations Council, and its proposed successor body, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, to reflect these principles in their day-to-day work of approving and scrutinising A-level syllabuses.

Under-Fives (Fees)

46. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek to amend section 61 of the Education Act 1944 so as to permit local education authorities to charge fees for the provision of education for children under the age of five years.

Mr. Dunn: No. The Government are firmly committed to preserving free admission and education during school hours at all maintained schools. Those provisions in the Education Reform Bill, currently before Parliament, which will repeal section 61 of the 1944 Act are intended to safeguard these fundamental features of our school system.

Education Reform Bill

48. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on his discussions with university vice-chancellors regarding the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Jackson: We have had useful discussions with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, as a result of which several constructive improvements have been proposed and made to the provisions in the Education Reform Bill.

Rural Primary Schools

49. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding primary schools in rural areas.

Mr. Dunn: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 21 June at column *522*.

University Grants Committee

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next hopes to meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee to discuss the future of the funding of university education.

50. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the chairman of the University Grants Committee; and if he will list the subjects they discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee frequently in the course of normal business to discuss a wide range of matters relating to university funding and subject provision.

Haberdashers' Aske's Schools

51. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of the governors of Haberdashers' Aske's schools in Deptford about his proposal to convert them to a city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: No, but my officials have written to him recently on technical matters relating to the provision of section 14 of the Education Act 1944.

Business Sponsorship

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied to date with the amount of corporate and business sponsorship of educational projects in primary and secondary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Several major companies are very active in this field, but there is always scope for further development. The Government are keen that more small and medium-sized firms should become involved and that links with primary schools, in particular, should be strengthened. We have today published a booklet—"Education and Industry: Partners for the Future"—which illustrates the variety of good practice in school-industry links. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Education Reform

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the arrangements for selecting potential members and chairmen to be offered appointment by him to bodies named in the Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley).

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the achievement of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mrs. Rumbold: During 1987-88 the Department purchased goods to the value of £3·8 million, of which some £1·3 million was spent with small firms. In the service area (minor works, cleaning, transportation, and so on) we estimate that 40 per cent. of our expenditure is with small firms. The Department has established a purchasing unit whose remit is to obtain value for money. The unit is aware of the importance attached by Government to helping small businesses and includes them in inquiries wherever appropriate.

Wave Research

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future role of the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences and other institutes controlled by the Natural Environment Research Council involved in wave research.

Mr. Jackson: The two Natural Environment Research Council institutes involved in wave research are the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences Deacon laboratory and the Proudman oceanographic laboratory. Both will continue to play a strategic role in maintaining Britain's place among world leaders in marine science. Science budget funded wave research at these laboratories will form part of the core research projects listed in the NERC strategy for marine sciences published last December. In addition they will continue wave research commissioned by Government Departments and other customers.

ENERGY

Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department currently has approximately 300 work stations, giving a ratio of 1 to 3·3 civil servants. I expect the number of work stations to continue to increase over the next five years, but much will depend on how my Department's business develops.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department's information technology (IT) steering committee consists of representatives of its central IT group (CITG), the main computer using divisions, the establishment and finance division including the internal audit branch, and a representative of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency. The chairman is the grade 5 officer with responsibility for the Department's administrative expenditure and the CITG. The committee reports to the Department's management board comprising the permanent under- secretary, the two deputy secretaries and the principal establishment and finance officer. Ministers do not attend meetings of the committee.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Parkinson: Thirty-three per cent. (five officers).

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy is he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Parkinson: The extent to which my Department's activities affect small businesses remains largely as stated in my reply to my hon. Friend on 14 July 1987 at columns *414-15*. My Department continues to take full account of small business needs in developing and implementing its policies. Particular developments have taken place in the following areas over the last year:

—British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has continued to help create jobs in coalfield areas, many of which are in small businesses. Funding available from the Government has risen to £45 million, and the company has attracted additional finance from other sources of over £228 million. New job opportunities created now total 30,275 in 2,138 individual projects.

—The Government are looking at ways to liberalise the restrictions applying to existing small, private, licensed mining operations.

—the Energy Efficiency Office has been involved in a number of new initiatives targeted specifically on small businesses. It has distributed a booklet, "Advice for Small Firms", through the Department of Employment's small firms advisory service (SFAS) and has helped to train SFAS counsellors to be aware of the advantages to small businesses in improving energy efficiency. It has also assisted in the launch of 13 energy action cities campaigns to raise the profile of energy efficiency in the local community, including small businesses; and run energy clinics in some regions at which small businesses are advised how best to solve their energy problems.

Electricity (Privatisation)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy that those consumers paying electricity charges be offered, in a paper sent to them together with their accounts, a priority opportunity to buy shares in their local electricity board on privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our aim will be to enable consumers to obtain shares in their local boards, but no decisions have been taken on priority applications.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Leonid Lubman

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has raised with the Soviet Foreign Minister the imprisonment since 1978 of Leonid Lubman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We regularly make representations to the Soviet authorities on behalf of prisoners of conscience such as Leonid Lubman. We raised his case at the official bilateral talks on human rights in Moscow on 23 June.

Exclusive Economic Zones

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his intentions with respect to the declaration of an exclusive economic zone around each of the dependent territories of *(a)* the Pitcairn Islands, *(b)* the British Indian Ocean Territories, *(c)* South Shetland, *(d)* South Sandwich, *(e)* South Orkney, *(f)* Bermuda, *(g)* Gibraltar, *(h)* Anguilla, *(i)* the British Virgin Islands, *(j)* the Cayman Islands, *(k)* Montserrat, *(l)* the Turks and Caicos Islands, *(m)* Ascension Islands, *(n)* St. Helena, *(o)* Tristan da Cunha, *(p)* the Falkland Islands and *(q)* South Georgia.

Mr. Mellor: Maritime zones are declared on a case-by case basis, taking into account all factors relevant to each case. We do not believe that there would be practical advantage in declaring EEZs around dependent territories, nor for that matter the United Kingdom, at present. Exclusive fisheries zones have already been declared around most territories listed while, in accordance with international law, exclusive rights over the continental shelf are inherent.

I am writing to the hon. Member giving details of the present position in regard to the different territories.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Mellor: Orders are placed with small businesses which are able to satisfy the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's value for money requirements. The value of such procurement in the last two years was:

	£ million
1986-87	6·695
1987-88	15·063

One third of Foreign and Commonwealth procurement is from the central agencies. No data are available on how much of this business is with small firms.

In the financial year 1987-88 diplomatic service posts assisted an estimated 75,300 British business visitors and handled over 65,000 market information inquiries—final figures are expected to be available shortly—compared with 76,942 and 65,473 respectively in 1986. Separate figures for assistance given to small businesses are not recorded but such help represents a significant proportion of the assistance given.

Falkland Islands

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there are any housing standards in the Falkland Islands for migrant workers with regard to the quality of lighting and the amount of external noise at the accommodation provided.

Mr. Mellor: In 1986 the Executive Council of the Falklands Islands agreed that the United Kingdom building regulations should be adopted as guidelines for housing standards by the colony's building committee. These cover external noise. The public works department uses British standards for lighting. No separate housing standards on the Falkland Islands apply specifically to migrant workers.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people are entitled to vote in St. Helena; and how many at present have registered to be able to do so.

Mr. Mellor: Of the 3,508 people entitled to vote in St. Helena, 1,712 have so far registered to do so.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he can make of the shortfall in the number of homes in St. Helena; and what plans there are for future house building.

Mr. Mellor: So far as we are aware there is no general homelessness in St. Helena. However, a housing policy for the island is being drafted in consultation with the St. Helena Government in order to identify the medium and longer term housing needs of St. Helena. An interim programme of housing assistance totalling £250,000 for this year is now being prepared under our aid programme and will be announced shortly.

Hong Kong (Rhino Horn)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what techniques are available to the Hong Kong authorities to determine whether a medicine pill contains rhino horn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are not aware of any technique which be used to determine conclusively the presence of rhino horn in medical preparations.

Hong Kong (Endangered Species)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many seizures have been made by the Hong Kong authorities in the first six months of 1988 of illegally imported endangered species.

Mr. Mellor: The Hong Kong authorities made 143 seizures of illegally imported endangered species in the first six months of 1988.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many restaurant inspections have been carried out so far in 1988 by the Hong Kong authorities, to ensure that no rare and endangered species of animals and plants are offered for sale as food.

Mr. David Mellor: The Hong Kong authorities carried out 206 such inspections in the first six months of this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any seizures of rare and endangered species of animals and plants have been made in restaurants by the Hong Kong authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No seizures of rare and endangered species of animals and plants were made in the course of restaurant inspections in the first six months of this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the illegal trade in rare and endangered species in Hong Kong.

Mr. David Mellor: We have received about 2,500 letters from members of the public about this matter since January this year.

China (Endangered Species)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of China regarding the enforcement of laws on trade in endangered species; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Officials have made clear our concern, and that of Members of this House, on this subject to the Chinese embassy in London. We are assured that the Chinese Government share this concern.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Women's Refuges

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the number of places per 10,000 women at women's refuges in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: On the basis of information available it is estimated that the number of places currently available in Northern Ireland, for women and their children, at women's refuges is 2·9 per 10,000 women aged 18 years and over in the population.

Health Services

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about co-operation on health services with the Irish Republic.

Mr. Needham: There has been regular contact and exchange of information between Ministers and officials of the Department of Health and Social Security Services in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health in Dublin as well as regular co-operation between the two health services, for example in the treatment of patients.

The respective Health Ministers have found the exchange of information about the way similar health problems in north and south are handled, extremely valuable and are committed to continuing the process of developing further avenues of co-operation in health matters.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the figures published recently by the Government statistical service in the 1988 edition of "Regional Trends" on the growth of gross domestic product per capita in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: GDP for Northern Ireland is measured by estimating the value of the income generated by economic activity. Income from employment, which normally accounts for over 70 per cent. of GDP, is calculated from data made available by Inland Revenue and DHSS (Great Britain). It has been established that, due to an error in the computer program used to assemble and extract the date, an increasing proportion of earners in Northern Ireland in the period 1983-86 were treated as "Region unknown". This has resulted in a cumulative underestimation of wages and salaries, and hence of gross domestic product, in each of the years 1983 to 1986. Preliminary investigations suggest that the underestimate of GDP for 1986 is of the order of 10 per cent.—15 per cent. In consequence it now appears that, whilst per capita GDP remains well below that of any other region, per capita growth in Northern Ireland may have been very close to the United Kingdom average rather than slipping well behind as previous data indicated. Revised figures are being produced for publication as quickly as possible and will be placed in the Library.

Belfast (Disadvantaged Areas)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to address the problems in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: Considerable progress has been made in tackling many of the social and economic problems in Belfast, particularly in improving housing conditions and reviving the city centre. However there remain a number of areas, involving both the Protestant and Catholic communities, which are characterised by very high levels of unemployment, low levels of skill, poor educational achievement and a depressing physical environment.

I intend now to enhance the programme of action for these areas. This will be aimed at stimulating greater economic activity, reinforcing local enterprise, improving the quality of the environment, and equipping the people of these areas to compete successfully for available employment. I have asked the Minister who is responsible for the environment in Northern Ireland, who has special responsibility for Belfast, to take this work forward in conjunction with public agencies, the private sector and the voluntary sector.

I shall be reviewing, in the context of the 1988 public expenditure survey, the overall level of resources which can be made available for this programme. I am already providing significant public investment, and I have allocated a further £10 million for expenditure on projects in the financial year ending 31 March 1989.

The success of this programme depends not only on the public sector or on public resources, but on the active co-operation of the private and voluntary sectors. Responsible local people and bodies can make a significant contribution, with the help of the public agencies, in improving social and economic conditions. Yet, however much all people of goodwill in the local communities, the churches, the public and voluntary bodies try to do to revive the areas of greatest deprivation, it is the blight of terrorism that undermines the spirit, destroys hope, drives out initiative, instils fear and turns away opportunities for investment. The Government can play their part supported by all those who wish to see better times for the people of Belfast but it is an end to terrorism that would do most to bring back confidence, jobs, self-esteem and opportunities.

I am today placing in the Library papers which provide further background to this initiative.

Education Reform

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about discussions with Church leaders based on the consultation document on the reform of education making special reference to the place of religious education in the proposed common curriculum.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, and I have met representatives of the four main Churches. Our discussions ranged across the proposals contained in the consultative document including the place of religious education in the curriculum. The Church representatives have been assured, as has the House, that no decisions have yet been taken on the way forward on any aspect of the education reform proposals, nor will they be until all representations have been fully considered.

Housing Executive

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many contracts for sums in excess of £100,000 were let by the Housing Executive in the

financial year 1982-83 for *(a)* erection of dwellings, and *(b)* other capital works; of these, how many in each category have not yet had a final certificate issued; and how many of such contracts in each category were referred to arbitration;

(2) how many contracts for sums in excess of £100,000 were let by the Housing Executive in the financial year 1981-82 for *(a)* erection of dwellings, and *(b)* other capital works; of these, how many in each category have not yet had a final certificate issued; and how many of such contracts in each category were referred to arbitration.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has informed me that information was not recorded in the form requested until 1986-87 and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by office for each complete month since the introduction of the social fund the numbers of people who have formally received money advice under the social fund.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 July 1988]:* Up to 31 May 1988, the latest date for which information is available, no applicant to the social fund has received formal money advice although the opportunity to receive such advice has been given in those cases where it was considered appropriate.

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest evidence he has as to medical and public opinion in Northern Ireland on the legalisation of abortion.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 July 1988]:* The policy of the British Medical Association which represents a large proportion of doctors in the Province is to support the extension of the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland. However reports in the professional journals indicate that proposals for such an extension would not command the support of a significant number of Northern Ireland doctors. Public opinion as reflected by the views of the main political parties and Churches has consistently been opposed to the extension of the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland.

WALES

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Torfaen, of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *520-1*, what proportions these proposals represent of the White Paper's total housing expenditure over the planning period to 1991; and whether the figure for new buildings in the answer contains any private sector funding.

Mr. Grist: The £457 million we expect to see spent on housing in the Valleys in the next three years represents total investment (both by the public and private sectors) and is not therefore directly comparable to the planning totals in the White Paper.

Football Supporters (Membership Cards)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy on membership cards for football supporters in Cardiff, Wrexham and Swansea; what consultations he has had with the Sports Council Wales and football clubs in Wales concerning membership cards for football supporters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I am gravely concerned at the problem of football hooliganism and I will continue to monitor carefully the situation in Wales.

The Government have announced their intention to bring forward proposals for legislation to give statutory backing to a national membership scheme for all clubs in the Football League, which include Cardiff, Wrexham and Swansea. A working party under the chairmanship of the Football Association, the Football League, the Government and the police is to be set up to look at the details.

I have also asked the Football Association for Wales for a report on the proposal which it outlined to me during a meeting with its president and secretary on 22 March 1988 for the introduction of a membership card system for all Welsh supporters. The Sports Council for Wales has not been specifically consulted, as this matter is primarily one for the football authorities, the Government and the police to address.

Imported Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a statutory code of practice on imported waste transit and disposal.

Mr. Grist: As indicated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 29 June, at columns *254-256*, a code of practice will be produced to give guidance on the steps required to discharge the statutory duty of care which is to be imposed on both producers and holders of waste including importers and holders of imported waste.

Homelessness

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate, county by county, of the number of homeless people in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Actual figures for cases of statutory homelessness are supplied quarterly to the Department by all Welsh local authorities. Figures for 1987, county by county, are as follows:—

	Number of cases presented	*Number of cases accepted*
Clwyd	1,190	840
Dyfed	596	532
Gwent	1,952	1,114
Gwynedd	435	227
Mid Glamorgan	1,693	1,008
Powys	146	120
South Glamorgan	1,339	696
West Glamorgan	1,072	757
Wales	8,423	5,294

The number of cases accepted as homeless in Wales in 1987 represents an 11 per cent. decrease over 1986.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further measures he proposes to tackle homelessness.

Mr. Grist: As I told the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), on 20 May at columns *608-609*, we are concerned to increase the supply of rented accommodation for those in greatest housing need through the specific proposals in the Housing Bill.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the Welsh water authority concerning the implications of foreign investment on the proposed privatisation measures; when he expects the Welsh water authority to be privatised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh water authority will be offered for sale to the public following enactment of the necessary legislation. The question of foreign investment in the water industry has been one of the issues covered in my discussions with the chairman of Welsh Water.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 13 July, which of the factors listed in his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, column *505*, led to the exclusion of Bedwas and Machen from the area defined in the Valleys initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker: It was felt that, on balance, Bedwas and Machen did not exhibit the economic, environmental and other characteristics associated with Valleys communities in sufficient degree to warrant their inclusion within the Valleys programme area.

Cardiff Bay (Barrage)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the nature of the representations he has received from the Commission of the European Community concerning the proposal to construct a barrage across Cardiff Bay; and what was his response to those representations.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is not the usual practice to disclose such representations or the responses.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that the proposal to construct a barrage at Cardiff Bay is subject to a comprehensive environmental assessment under the European Community's Directive 85/337/EEC; who he proposes to nominate as the competent authority; what the timetable will be to submit an assessment for consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The European Community's Directive 85/337/EEC does not apply to projects which are the subject of national legislation such as the Cardiff Bay barrage proposal, which is currently before Parliament in a Private Bill promoted by South Glamorgan county council. Nevertheless, the promoters have commissioned Liverpool university's environmental advisory unit to undertake an environmental impact assessment. That study is nearing completion and the report will be placed in the Library of the House when it becomes available.

Site Designations

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to announce the designation of an area either as a Ramsar site under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance or as a Special Protection Area under the European Community's directive on the conservation of wild birds, or both.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State for the Environment designates Ramsar sites and special protection areas in Wales in consultation with my right hon. Friend. I understand that a number of sites in Wales have been proposed and announcements will be made in due course.

Hospitals

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of general hospitals in each district health authority in Wales in April 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* There is no agreed definition of a general hospital. The table shows the number of acute hospitals with 150 beds or more and the number of acute hospitals with less than 150 beds in each district health authority as at 31 March.

Health Authority	*Number of acute hospitals with 150 beds or more*				*Number of acute hospitals with less than 150 beds*			
	1979	*1983*	*1987*	*1988*	*1979*	*1983*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	4	4	3	3	9	9	10	11
East Dyfed	3	3	2	2	3	3	4	4
Gwent	4	4	3	4	6	4	3	3
Gwynedd	3	3	2	2	7	7	8	8
Mid Glamorgan	5	5	5	5	10	12	12	12
Pembrokeshire	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Powys	—	—	—	—	6	7	7	7
South Glamorgan	5	5	4	4	1	1	2	2
West Glamorgan	3	3	3	3	4	5	4	4

EMPLOYMENT

Training for Enterprise Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what numbers of trainees completed the

training for enterprise programme in each standard region in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; how many of these trainees were employees of small firms; how many were in receipt of the enterprise allowance; and how many were on YTS, community programme and other Manpower Services Commission programmes.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of starts on the training for enterprise scheme.

Starts to the training for enterprise scheme

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
South East	1,669	7,189	9,918
London	1,105	7,432	12,988
South West	1,190	6,921	11,932
West Midlands	3,531	5,816	8,488
East Midlands	—	7,201	11,674
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,891	6,210	11,231
North West	5,019	12,263	16,350
Northern	1,890	3,173	7,636
Wales	848	3,851	6,816
Scotland	1,557	6,982	9,986
Great Britain Total	19,700	67,038	107,019

Notes:

(1) Training Commission regions have been used as figures are not recorded by standard region.

(2) Records of completions are not recorded: starts to the scheme have been given.

Information on how many trainees were employees of small firms, how many received the enterprise allowance, and how many trainees on YTS, community programme and other Training Commission programmes were involved in enterprise training, is not held.

Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Lee: There are 16,540 computer work stations in the employment department group; a ratio of one to every 3·5 civil servants. I would expect this ratio to improve over the next five years as the use of information technology throughout the group continues to expand.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Lee: The constituent parts of the employment department group with significant expenditure on information technology each have their own steering committee. The composition of each information technology committee is broadly similar being chaired at director, director general or chief executive level and comprising senior officials from information technology, financial resources, personnel and planning divisions. Major departmental users of computing and the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency ae also represented. Ministers would not normally attend meetings of these committees and none has done so in the past year. However, where appropriate the findings of these committees are referred to Ministers.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Lee: Fifteen staff in the Department of Employment group at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months. This amounts to almost half of all staff in those grades.

Training Programme (Disabled)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy that disabled people will be able to work part-time for the duration of their period in the Employment Training Programme.

Mr. Nicholls: There will be opportunities for part-time training on employment training for people whose disabilities restrict their ability to train full time.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the new employment training programme will *(a)* provide assistance to people who become disabled whilst in employment who may subsequently require retraining with their existing employer and *(b)* assist employers who wish to retain staff who become disabled.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training is designed to help longer-term unemployed people, including those with disabilities and is not open to those in employment. However, help continues to be available to employees, through the disablement advisory service and the Training Commission's employment rehabilitation service.

Disabled People's Employment Services

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultation is taking place with disability organisations concerning the review of disabled people's employment services announced on 18 March.

Mr. Lee: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Thursday 31 March, *Official Report* at column *430*.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the exact criteria for the review of disabled people's employment services announced on 18 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The purpose of the review is to examine the full range of services supported by my Department and the Training Commission to help people with disabilities, taking account of information and advice already available, and in particular that offered by the national advisory council on employment of disabled people, and the conclusions in the Public Accounts Committee's Report on employment assistance to disabled adults published on 14 April 1988.

Accidents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people died in accidents *(a)* at

work in Wales and *(b)* on building sites in Wales in each of the years since 1979; how many health and safety inspectors were based in Wales to the latest date and in 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of accidents at work and on building sites in Wales in 1979 and 1980 is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member with this information and place a copy of my letter in the Library. The remaining information is as follows:

1. Numbers of reported occupational injuries to employees and the self-employed in Wales resulting in death[1][2]

	Employees	*Self-employed*
1981	28	5
1982	34	11
1983	20	6
1984	28	8
[3]1985	27	11
[3][5]1986	6	2
[4]1986-87	30	10

2. Numbers of occupational injuries to employees and the self-employed on building sites resulting in death in Wales[1]

	Employees	*Self-employed*
1981	7	0
1982	5	5
1983	8	2
1984	7	2
1985	4	0
[5]1986	0	0
[4]1986-87	6	2

[1] The reporting period changed from a calendar to a financial year from 1 April 1986, under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences regulations.

[2] Injuries are reported to the relevant enforcing authority, either HSE or the local authority. For 1981-85, LA figures did not distinguish injuries to the self-employed, or to the public arising from work activity: these are included under "employees".

[3] Accidents reported to Mines and Quarries Inspectorate for the period 1 January 1985 to 31 March 1986 are all included under "1985".

[4] Period covered 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987.

[5] First quarter.

3. The number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors based in Wales in each year since 1979 are as follows (1 April figures)

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	[3]*1988*
Inspectors											
Factory	32	33	31	29	23	23	23	23	23	23·5	22
Agricultural	19	19	16	15	13	13	14	14	14	12	12
Specialist	18	19	15	14	12	11	13	12	12	11	12
Mines and Quarries[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	10	11	11	11
Industrial Air Pollution[1][2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	3	—	—	—

n/a = not available.

[1] Figures for the allocation of Mines and Quarries and Industrial Air Pollution inspectors by HSE area before April 1985 are not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

[2] The Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate transferred to the Department of the Environment on 1 April 1987.

[3] 1 July.

Bulk Permits

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many bulk permits giving exemptions from the provisions of the Employment Act 1944, in respect of disabled people have been issued in each year since 1958.

Mr. Lee: The table gives the available information about the number of employers issued with bulk permits (some of whom may have received more than one permit) during the years shown.

Year	*Number*[1]
1979	21,789
1980	21,660
1981	20,841
1982	19,572
1983	18,102
1984	18,300
1985	18,486
1986	18,683
1987	18,480

[1] Employers who were below quota on 1 June but who had been granted bulk permits during the previous 12 months.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for bulk permits giving exemptions from the provisions of the Employment Act 1944, in respect of disabled people have been refused in each year since 1958.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used to determine whether or not to grant a bulk permit giving exemption from the provisions of the Employment Act 1944, as they affect disabled people.

Mr. Lee: The criteria which determine whether a permit —of any kind—should be granted are set out in section 11(1) of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944. These relate to the nature of the work in question and the extent to which suitable registered disabled people are available. Bulk permits may be issued if, in the opinion of the disablement resettlement officer, registered disabled people who are suitable for the work in question are unlikely to become available for submission to the vacancies during the period covered by the bulk permit.

DEFENCE

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Sainsbury: To assist in obtaining better value for money, the Ministry of Defence has implemented a number of measures to broaden its competitive base. To encourage competition at both prime and sub-contract levels, opportunities for defence contracts have been advertised in the MOD *Contracts Bulletin* since 1986. To

encourage small firms in particular to compete for our business in November 1986 my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement launched a small firms initiative.

In 1986-87, some 4,000 small firms secured direct defence business in excess of £1,000 million. In the same period some 500 small firms sought advice from the newly formed small firms advice division. During 1987-88, a further 1,500 small firms approached the division for guidance. The division conducted 40 seminars throughout the country, at which some 2,000 small firms were represented, to explain MOD's procurement policies and to encourage the firms to compete for our business. Many more firms made contact at the 25 business exhibitions in which the division participated.

The division is also responsible for producing the booklet "Selling to the MOD" which offers useful guidance on MOD's procurement policies and procedures and also provides a comprehensive network of contact points. The third edition of the booklet was published in 1987 and a fourth will be published later this year.

A separate strand of the initiative, the small firms research initiative, is aimed at enabling innovative small firms to obtain a greater share of Defence research funding. In 1987-88 funding of about £1 million was made available; a similar sum is being made available for the current financial year.

The initiative is designed to produce long-term benefits, but the early results are already very encouraging. A recent survey of 850 small firms which had approached the small firms advice division indicated a high level of customer satisfaction. Moreover, some 10 per cent. of firms responding to the survey actually secured defence business. There has also been a 45 per cent. increase in the number of firms added to the defence contractors list, MOD's register of potential suppliers. Of over 700 new additions during 1987, over 300 were small firms. We shall continue to monitor the response of small firms to the initiative and the contribution towards better value for money.

Research and Development

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of money spent for research and development for defence projects over the last four years; what proportion of each amount is assigned to research; and what to development.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence's expenditure on research and development is laid out in detail in table 3.3 of V2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm 344-II). In the last four years the net outturn and the proportion of the total classified as research have been:

	£ million	*Per cent.*
1983-84	1,913	19
1984-85	2,106	19
1985-86	2,266	18
1986-87	2,186	19

HOME DEPARTMENT

British Commonwealth Citizens

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards helping citizens of the British Commonwealth who have lived in the United Kingdom for a number of years but who, due to age or illness wish to return to their homeland, with the cost of their return.

Mr. Renton: Financial assistance from public funds for people who wish to return permanently overseas is available in certain circumstances under a scheme operated under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971. The scheme, which is not confined to citizens of the Commonwealth, is administered on behalf of the Government by the International Social Service of Great Britain. Applications for assistance are considered only where the following conditions are satisfied:

—the applicant is not a British citizen;
—the applicant has been accepted for settlement in this country but now wishes to leave permanently;
—the applicant is of limited means and cannot finance his or her departure. In assessing a person's ability to pay their own fare, the first £3,000 of their realisable capital is disregarded.

In addition, section 29 requires that it must be in the interest of the people concerned to return overseas and that they wish to do so.

Assistance is limited to the payment of fares and incidental expenses incurred in leaving the United Kingdom, including the transport of a small amount of personal effects. Resettlement grants are not provided. Assistance towards the cost of travel for resettlement in Europe is also excluded from the scheme.

Police Checks (Employment)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, under the arrangements for police checks on those seeking work with substantial access to children, applicants will always be shown all information provided by the police which is different from that which they themselves have declared on their application form.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under paragraph 17 of the Home Office circular (86) 44 on the arrangements for the disclosure of police information about those seeking to work with children in various statutory bodies, all discrepancies between the information supplied by the police and that provided by the applicant must be discussed with the applicant and the applicant is to have the opportunity to see the information provided by the police. Similar procedures apply with those seeking to work with children in independent schools and the National Health Service, and would apply in the proposed scheme for the voluntary sector.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any intention of seeking any further exemptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to enable police checks to be carried out on those seeking to work with vulnerable groups other than children.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans at present to seek further exemptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to enable police checks to be carried out on those seeking to work with vulnerable groups other than children.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether an individual who is

denied employment on the basis of a police report, under the arrangements for police checks on those seeking work with substantial access to children, has any right of appeal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for prospective employers to decide appeal procedures in such cases, since they decide whether to offer employment in the light of the information provided by the police under these arrangements.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements will be made to ensure that information provided by the police to voluntary organisations, under the proposed arrangements for police checks on those applying to work with substantial access to children, is kept secure and confidential.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are seeking to set up a pilot scheme for the disclosure of police information to the voluntary sector about those seeking to work with children. Participating organisations will be required to make adequate arrangements to ensure the security and confidentiality of any information provided to them, and this aspect will be closely monitored by the project evaluation team.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what aspects of the proposed arrangements for conducting police checks on those seeking work with children in the voluntary sector, will be covered by the arrangements for monitoring the pilot scheme; and whether the confidentiality of the police information will be specifically monitored.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are discussing the detailed arrangements for a pilot scheme for the disclosure of police information, about those seeking to work with children, with the voluntary sector. The confidentiality of the information provided would be specifically monitored by the project evaluation team. Other aspects proposed for monitoring include:

— the scope of the arrangements
— the costs of the arrangements
— the time taken for processing applications
— how the arrangements could be extended to cover locally based voluntary organisations.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, under the existing arrangements for police checks on those seeking work with substantial access to children, local authorities are currently providing facilities to voluntary organisations in their area to obtain such checks on job applicants and volunteers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Local authorities are not entitled to seek the disclosure of police information about the staff or volunteers of voluntary organisations under these arrangements. Separate arrangements are being set up for voluntary organisations.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will place in the Library and send to the Data Protection Registrar any evidence placed before the committee reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act;

(2) when the committee reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act is due to report; which Departments are represented on the committee; and how the committee will collect evidence;

(3) whether he will invite a member of staff from the office of the Data Protection Registrar to join the committee reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act;

(4) whether he will extend the remit of the committee reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act to report on the implications for individual privacy that arise from *(a)* the exemption from the whol Act if personal data are used for national security purposes, *(b)* the lack of powers for the registrar in relation to any of the eight data protection principles if a disclosure is required by any enactment, *(c)* the exemption from the duty to obtain personal data fairly and lawfully if the data are required or obtained by any enactment and *(d)* the recent amendment to the Local Government Finance Bill which allows the Secretary of State for Social Services to break his duty of confidentiality.

Mr. Renton: The interdepartmental committee reviewing the implementation of the Data Protection Act is chaired by the Home Office and includes officials from the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Department of Employment. The Data Protection Registrar has been asked to act as consultant and adviser to the committee and will attend meetings as necessary. The evidence required by the committee, and the manner of its collection will be a matter for the committee, which is aware of the consultation exercise being undertaken by the Data Protection Registrar. The result of this exercise will be available to the committee. It is not intended that the evidence should be placed in the Library.

The committee is aware of the need to report to Ministers as soon as possible, but no target date has been set. The review committee will consider the implementation of all aspects of the Data Protection Act, within the remit of the terms of reference contained in my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 4 July, column 420.

Emergency Planning Officer (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what submission has been received for grant aid from the South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority in respect of the appointment of a brigade emergency planning staff officer in the South Yorkshire county fire service; and if he will list those fire brigades that have a brigade emergency planning staff officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No claim for grant aid has been received fromSouth Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority in respect of the appointment of a brigade emergency planning officer. Only three fire brigades in England and Wales have not yet made such an appointment—South Yorkshire FCDA, Derbyshire county council and South Glamorgan county council.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accesses there were to each index of the police national computer over the last year; whether he will include in these statistics an indication of the

number of access requests that could search more than one index; and what is the predicted use of each index when the new police national computer is installed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The total number of accesses to each of the indices of the police national computer in the year to 30 June 1988 was as follows:

Index	*Number of accesses*
1. Stolen and Suspect Vehicles 2. Vehicle Owners	19,133,179
3. Chassis/Engine Numbers	508,442
4. Fingerprints	202,692
5. Fingerprints—Scene of Crime	14,693
6. Criminal Names	0
7. Wanted/Missing Persons	1,854,126
8. Disqualified Drivers	838,789
9. Convictions	537,300
10. Major Convictions	77,660
11. Crime Pattern Analysis	304,850
There have also been the following joint accesses:	
To indices 6 and 9	1,271,769
To indices 6, 7 and 9	1,720,781
To indices 6, 7, 8 and 9	6,768,307
To indices 4, 6 and 9	536,444

The use of each index is not expected to change significantly as a result of the introduction of the replacement police national computer.

All accesses to the criminal names index are shown as joint accesses in the above table, as requests for criminal names information will in addition automatically generate information from the convictions application.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each category found in the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer over the last year; and whether he will include in these statistics an indication of the minimum and maximum size of each category in the index over the year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current number of cases and the maximum and minimum number of cases in the year to 30 June 1988 for each of the sub categories of the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer are as follows:

Sub Category	*Numbers of cases on 30 June 1988*	*Maximum in last 12 months*	*Minimum in last 12 months*
1. Lost or Stolen	378,745	378,745	358,603
2. Obtained by Deception	247	373	247
3. Found or apparently abandoned	25,325	29,351	25,325
4. Removed to police custody	16,225	18,460	15,198
5. Removed by police from one street to another	184	294	95
6. Suspected of being involved in a particular incident (e.g. crime)	1,094	1,483	1,094
7. Owned or used by police	3,608	5,371	3,528
8. Of interest to police (need not be crime related)	15,826	19,808	15,776
9. Seen or checked by police in noteworthy circumstances	7,339	8,796	7,338
10. Details not to be passed over open airwaves (e.g. vehicles used in observation duties)	5,286	5,286	4,669

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each category found in the wanted and missing person's index of the police national computer over the last year; and whether he will include in these statistics an indication of the minimum and maximum size of each category in the index over the year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current number of cases and the maximum and minimum number of cases in the year to 30 June 1988 for each of the sub categories of the wanted and missing persons index of the police national computer are as follows:

Sub category	*Numbers of cases on 30 June 1988*	*Maximum in last 12 months*	*Minimum in last 12 months*
1. Wanted	33,601	33,601	31,166
2. Failed to appear	25,958	25,958	21,598
3. Suspect	4,801	4,802	4,398
4. Impending prosecution	61	76	45
5. Deserters	1,900	2,112	1,845
6. Locate	33,284	36,989	33,284
7. Missing	2,175	2,332	1,999
8. Found	15	23	6
9. Absconders:			
—care	465	602	455
—hospital	56	59	34
—detention	3	8	2
—youth custody	105	114	84
—prison	559	559	487
—remand	6	13	5
—school	67	67	33
10. Recall			
—detention	0	0	0

Sub category	Numbers of cases on 30 June 1988	Maximum in last 12 months	Minimum in last 12 months
—youth custody	2	2	0
—prison	262	262	238

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each index of the police national computer over the last year; and whether he will include in these statistics an indication of the minimum and maximum size of each index.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current number of records and the maximum and minimum number of records in the year to 30 June 1988 for each substantive index of the police national computer are as follows:

Index	Numbers of records on 30 June 1988	Maximum in last 12 months	Minimum in last 12 months
1. Stolen and suspect vehicles	459,333	462,227	445,708
2. Vehicle owners	38,309,721	38,309,721	35,613,466
3. Chassis (engine numbers)	752,610	752,610	714,544
4. Fingerprints	3,870,485	3,870,485	3,757,955
5. Fingerprint scene of crime	7,297,687	7,297,687	6,955,054
6. Criminal names	5,286,429	5,286,429	5,168,573
7. Wanted/missing persons	106,687	106,687	100,137
8. Disqualified drivers	360,470	360,470	327,896
9. Convictions	2,479,488	2,479,488	1,942,025
10. Major investigations	299,429	299,429	248,435
11. Crime pattern analysis	14,537	14,537	13,896

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accesses there were to each category of the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer over the last year; what has been the percentage growth in use of these categories over the year; and what is the predicted use of each category when the new police national computer is installed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Though the index of stolen and suspect vehicles comprises records of vehicles in various categories, the records are not kept in these separate categories but are indexed by vehicle registration number. It is not therefore possible to give the information in the form requested, but in all there were 19,133,179 accesses to the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer in the year to 30 June 1988, a decrease of 1 per cent. over the previous year. The use of the index is not expected to change significantly as a result of the introduction of the replacement police national computer.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accesses there were to each category of the wanted and missing person's index of the police national computer over the last year; what has been the percentage growth in use of these categories over the year; and what is the predicted use of each category when the new police national computer is installed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Though the wanted and missing persons index of the police national computer comprises records of persons in various categories, the records are not kept in these separate categories, but are indexed by names. It is not therefore possible to give the information in the form requested, but in all there were 10,343,214 accesses to the wanted and missing persons index of the police national computer in the year to 30 June 1988, a decrease of 11 per cent. over the previous year. The use of the index is not expected to change significantly as a result of the introduction of the replacement police national computer.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of accesses made to the police national computer by each constabulary over the last year; and whether he will give the proportion of access requests made to the vehicle indexes of the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is collected on the basis of occasional monthly samples, and annual totals are not therefore available. The last sample was taken in February 1988. In that month, the number of transactions made to the police national computer by each constabulary, and the proportion of these transactions which were made to the vehicle indexes on the PNC were as follows:

Constabulary	[1]Number	[2]Proportion
Avon and Somerset	68,115	62·4
Bedfordshire	26,311	66·4
British Transport Police	10,693	32·0
Cambridgeshire	23,602	62·6
Central	3,527	59·1
Cheshire	29,736	56·3
City of London	7,882	66·9
Cleveland	12,033	51·7
Cumbria	441	34·0
Derbyshire	36,140	65·5
Devon and Cornwall	44,465	54·4
Dorset	24,664	57·8
Dumfries	2,490	46·3
Durham	30,684	55·6
Dyfed-Powys	13,185	44·9
Essex	77,689	61·2
Fife	9,980	56·0
Gloucestershire	20,640	64·6
Grampian	17,981	58·0
Greater Manchester	138,236	64·0
Gwent	14,171	60·9
Hampshire	60,528	55·0
Hertfordshire	26,687	50·8
Humberside	34,861	53·8
Isle of Man	1,083	31·7
Kent	97,629	60·3
Lancashire	76,722	57·4
Leicestershire	26,344	55·8
Lincolnshire	16,011	61·2
Lothian and Borders	30,910	64·8
Merseyside	49,829	87·3
Metropolitan	392,272	65·4
Norfolk	25,607	72·1

Constabulary	[1]Number	[2]Proportion
North Wales	18,884	55·5
North Yorkshire	39,560	62·2
Northamptonshire	21,737	72·2
Northern	7,440	63·3
Northumbria	62,444	64·9
Nottinghamshire	48,272	70·8
South Wales	55,859	68·3
South Yorkshire	46,723	67·1
Staffordshire	29,228	58·3
Strathclyde	86,377	36·7
Suffolk	21,749	61·9
Surrey	34,398	54·1
Sussex	65,737	48·7
Tayside	6,985	62·6
Thames Valley	73,135	56·8
Warwickshire	18,478	64·8
West Mercia	36,446	60·8
West Midlands	139,043	68·9
West Yorkshire	68,658	59·3
Wiltshire	25,046	68·4

[1]Transactions in February 1988.
[2]Transactions made to vehicle indexes.

Cellular Vans

Mr. William Shelton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made in the introduction of cellular vans to transport remand prisoners to the courts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The prison service recently concluded an investment appraisal of the proposal to provide a number of cellular vehicles for HMP Brixton to use in transporting prisoners to court. The findings of the study and its financial implications are currently under consideration.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* personal and *(b)* project licences have been refused under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 since the Act came into force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to disclose such information.

Police Manpower

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the rate of natural wastage of police manpower in London in the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 1,513 officers left the force through natural wastage during the year ending 12 July. This number comprises:

449 ordinary retirements
224 medical retirements
24 deaths
233 transfers to other forces
583 resignations

I support the Commissioner's efforts to reduce premature wastage.

AIDS

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce AIDS testing of the prison population.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy on blood testing of prisoners for HIV antibody follows the Government's policy for the general community. Routine testing is not carried out and there are no plans to introduce it.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what precautions are being taken in prisons to safeguard prisoners from infection by the AIDS virus.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our preventive measures include systematic medical inquiry and examination at the reception stage, counselling of individual prisoners, precautionary regime restrictions at the discretion of the medical officer for prisoners identified as HIV antibody positive, and a strong emphasis on educational initiatives directed to all prisoners. A purpose-designed video film for prisoners is at an advanced stage of preparation.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans to make it a criminal offence to infect someone with the AIDS virus either knowingly or negligently.

Mr. John Patten: I refer refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 22 April, column 591-92.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce AIIDS testing on immigrants arriving to stay in Britain for more than 12 months on *(a)* a voluntary basis and *(b)* on a compulsory basis.

Mr. Renton: We have no such plans at present. The Government do not believe that such measures would have any significant effect in reducing the spread of AIDS in this country. Nevertheless, they are keeping the position under review.

Summer Time

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on his consultation note "Summer Time" from individuals or organisations in (i) Doncaster, Central, (ii) Doncaster, North and (iii) Don Valley; and if he will accept representations received after 30 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no representations directly from these constituencies but they have been submitted to other Departments who have provided us with co-ordinated replies from bodies within their spheres of interest. Representations are still welcome.

Mentally Disturbed Persons

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to encourage the courts to use the existing provisions in the Mental Health Act 1983 to enable mentally disturbed persons to be taken into the health system rather than the penal system.

Mr. John Patten: "The Sentence of the Court", a handbook for the courts on the treatment of offenders, copies of which are in the Library, describes the courts' powers when dealing with mentally disordered offenders. We are considering whether further guidance to the courts, and other criminal justice services, would be helpful.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made towards obtaining a psychiatric profile of the prison population and to work up options for the development of arrangements for the care and management of mentally disturbed inmates, as recommended by the inter-departmental working group on mentally disturbed offenders.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Progress is as follows. On 31 October 1987 a contract was entered into with the institute of psychiatry, university of London, to produce over a three-year period a definitive statement of the dimensions of the problem of sentenced mentally disordered offenders in the prison system. The research team is on target with their schedule of visits to prison establishments.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has instructed the prison epartment to give mental disturbance equal recognition with other factors such as age, type of sentence, and security category in the routine allocation of persons given a custodial sentence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Behaviour and medical, including psychiatric, needs are given full weight along with the other factors mentioned in allocating sentenced prisoners to training establishments.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the proportion of the inmates of Her Majesty's prisons on remand who are mentally disturbed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At 30 September 1987 it was 1·73 per cent. This is calculated on the basis of the remand population of 10,837 on that date, and returns from prison medical officers which showed that there were then 188 unsentenced inmates considered to be suffering from mental disorder of a type or degree such that they would be detainable under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the improvements in the handling of cases of mentally disturbed prisoners by the prison department and the prison service, which were recommended in paragraph 2, sub-paragraphs (vi) to (xi) of the report of the interdepartmental working group on mentally disturbed offenders in the prison system in England and Wales, have now been implemented.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. Recommendations (vi) to (xi) refer to administrative procedures for the transfer of mentally disordered inmates to hospital. In sending copies of the report to all managing medical officers in prison service establishments the director of prison medical services drew attention to those in which they are able to make a contribution, particularly in the prompt initiation of transfer procedures when that course is clinically indicated. The Department is monitoring carefully its performance in handling transfer applications submitted by prison medical officers.

Psychiatric Treatment (Prisoners)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the psychiatric profile of the prison population which he proposes to obtain will show which prisoners had had psychiatric treatment as in-patients before they were sentenced.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. The extensive check list the research team are using covers the question of any psychiatric history with specific reference to whether this was as an in-patient.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months, and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office has maintained its deregulation initiative during 1987-88, some aspects of which are of particular importance to small businesses. The Licensing Act 1988 will enable some 100,000 pubs, clubs and bars to benefit from longer opening hours fom 11 am to 11 pm on weekdays. In addition pubs, bars and off-licences will be entitled to open for an extra hour on Sunday afternoons. The licensing system has been streamlined and legislative controls on vineyards have been lightened. I recently made regulations allowing bingo halls to open in the mornings.

Last year the Data Protection Registrar introduced a simplified registration form aimed at small business. It was drawn up after wide consultation with groups representing small businesses and, so far, over 14,000 applications have been made on it. On 4 July in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) I announced a review of the Data Protection Act which will include the registration requirements.

The Home Office, in partnership with other Government Departments, the private sector and local authorities, has helped to establish and fund a further enterprise agency in an inner city area with a high ethnic minority population in addition to the four similar agencies previously established. The performance of the first three agencies, which opened in 1986, continues to be independently evaluated, using performance indicators such as the number of businesses established and their survival rate. An interim report considered that there was ample demand for the agency's services and that, as far as could be judged at that stage, the agencies were fulfilling the expectations of their sponsors. A final report, which will provide more quantitative data, is due later this year.

The Home Office provides funding through section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for a number of local authority posts concerned with ethnic minority business development. There are presently about 80 such posts, of which 13 were approved in the year up to 30 June 1988. In addition, the Home Office continues to provide a grant for two business-development outreach workers from an existing enterprise agency. Routine monitoring arrangements cover all such posts.

In addition, my Department contributes indirectly on local small-business initiatives through its funding of the community projects foundation and of the local development agencies development fund. Projects that these groups support are often concerned with developing business skills in the community.

War Crimes

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will request his war crimes inquiry team, during its forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union, to seek any information regarding statements given by former SS General Wilhelm Mohnke during the period he was held captive in the Soviet Union following world war 2, about the allegations of war crimes made against him at that time.

Mr. John Patten: The inquiry is concerned with allegations against persons who are now British citizens or resident in the United Kingdom. The allegations involving Wilhelm Mohnke fall outside its terms of reference, and it would not therefore be appropriate for the inquiry team to raise the case during its visit to the Soviet Union.

Passports

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made towards improving the time taken to process passport applications at United Kingdom passport offices; what is the current processing time; what was the processing time in July 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Good progress is being made towards reducing the time taken to issue passports in response to non-urgent postal applications. The current processing times, compared with those for the corresponding week of 1987, are shown in the table below. Urgent applications are given priority wherever possible and are not normally subject to delay.

Passport Office	*Average time taken between receipt of application and dispatch of passport (working days)*	
	17 July 1988	*19 July 1987*
London	24	60
Glasgow	11	50
Peterborough	29	24
Newport	20	52
Liverpool	12	37
Belfast[1]	3	3

[1] The Belfast Office is by far the smallest.

The special measures which I announced on 31 March in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) at column 679 have helped to improve performance during the present period of peak demand. These measures will remain in force and, in addition, blocks of postal applications are being transferred on a regular basis from the hardest pressed offices to those where processing times are shorter.

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made with computerisation of the United Kingdom passport offices and the introduction of a new form of British passport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: On 24 July 1984 at columns 219-20 my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary, announced the Government's plans for computerisation of passport issuing and changes in the format of the British passport. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced on 11 February 1987 at columns 218-19 that these changes would take effect from this July.

The travelling public, including business travellers, will benefit substantially from these changes. As computerisation of passport offices progresses the issue of new passports will be much improved. As machine readable passports become more widely used throughout the world, this will become an advantage for holders of the new style British passports. Sharing a common format of passport with other European Countries will also help to simplify formalities at frontier controls throughout the European Community.

The passport office in Glasgow will be the first of the United Kingdom passport offices to be computerised. The equipment has been installed and the first of the new United Kingdom passports will be issued in mid-August after the system has been tested and staff have been trained in its use. Over a six month period starting this October, the computerised Glasgow office will take over the processing of postal applications currently handled by the London passport office. By the end of 1989, all six passport offices in the United Kingdom should be computerised and issuing United Kingdom passports in the new format.

The new passport has a machine-readable page designed to reduce delays at frontier controls. Passports which include the particulars of a wife or husband cannot be issued in machine-readable form and are being discontinued, although children can still be included. Accordingly, the redesigned and simplified passport application forms, which will replace existing stocks of forms at Post Offices throughout the United Kingdom at the end of this month, in preparation for the change to computerisation, will contain no provision for passports with the holder's spouse included. However, valid applications for these passports made on the old forms will be accepted for a short period after the new forms are introduced.

I have placed in the Library the latest pre-production samples of the new passport and of the similar form of passport that will be issued to those British nationals who do not have rights of free movement, employment and establishment within the European Community.

Lindholme Prison

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent disturbance at Her Majesty's prison, Lindholme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A disturbance took place at Her Majesty's prison, Lindholme on the night of 15 July. At approximately 11.20 pm prisoners smashed windows in C wing. Soon afterwards inmates in other wings joined in and groups of prisoners began roaming the prison causing damage and setting fire to buildings.

Staff were obliged to withdraw and contingency plans were activated and worked well. The police and fire services, off duty Lindholme staff, and support staff from other north region prisons attended the incident and the prison was brought under control by 3.30 am.

There was fire and smoke damage to a number of buildings including the living units and hospital. Fire had caused structural damage to a wall in the dining room complex. The extent of this is not yet known, but it is not thought to be in a dangerous condition and the building remains intact. The cost of repairs has been initially assessed as being in the region of £70,000. Work is already in hand to make good the damage.

No injuries to staff have been reported. One prisoner, who is thought to have been struck in the back by another prisoner was treated for minor injuries in an outside hospital and returned to the prison. Another is thought to have a fragment of glass in his right eye. Six prisoners escaped after breaking the security fence and two remain unlawfully at large. Forty-five prisoners were temporarily lodged in police custody and later taken to other prisons.

The prison was quickly returned to its normal routine. Normal visiting arrangements took place the next day. On the night of 17 July there were two further minor incidents in which clothing and blankets were set alight. The prison is now in a controlled and stable state with prisoners assisting to repair damage and cleaning up.

My right hon. Friend has instructed the deputy director general of the prison service, Mr. Gordon Lakes, CB, MC, to conduct an inquiry into the incident. The inquiry team began its work on 17 July. Mr. Lakes will inquire into the Lindholme disturbance taking into account his inquiry into the disturbance last month at Haverigg.

I visited Lindholme on the morning following the disturbance and spoke to staff and inmates. It was apparent to me that the trouble was caused by a small element and that most prisoners did not wish to be involved. I pay tribute to the prompt and efficient action taken by prison staff, the police and the fire services in dealing with this incident.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the procedure which the Forestry Commission will pursue in applying the European Community's environmental assessment directive to its own planting activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer The procedures to be adopted for new planting by the Forestry Commission will, in all important respects, be the the same as those laid down in the Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 in respect of new planting by the private sector.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Donald Thompson The great majority of the farming and fishing enterprises with which my Department is concerned qualify as small businesses. Over the past 12 months my Department has continued to provide these enterprises with assistance in numerous ways; for example, through the many services of ADAS, through grants and subsidies, through trading, through our policies for conserving fish stocks and regulating fishing and through our support for a number of different bodies concerned with such matters as marketing and promotion.

In the past as well as in the previous 12 months policies have been constantly reviewed, adapted and developed to meet changing circumstances and needs. In addition, my Department seeks to make a positive contribution to the Government's deregulatory strategy aimed at encouraging enterprise and removing unnecessary regulatory burdens on businesses.

In addition, as part of this Ministry's purchasing strategy, we are developing improved and closer relationships with small suppliers in order to stimulate competitiveness and innovation. Detailed guidance notes have now been issued to all purchasing staff to assist in achieving this aim and monitoring systems have been introduced which indicate that a significant proportion of the Ministry's purchasing expenditure is now being channelled through small firms.

EC Food Supplies

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will consider extending the distribution of free European Economic Community food supplies to pensioners.

Mr. Gummer: European Community legislation requires that the food be distributed under this scheme only to the most deprived persons in the Community. We have been allocated £10·4 million for this purpose and applications from organisations exceeded the allocation by about three times. We expect our allocation to be fully used. The Government have decided that those on income support or family credit, together with people of no fixed abode or in welfare hostels, meet this criterion. Pensioners in any of these categories are, of course, eligible.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give *(a)* the terms of reference of the working party on bovine spongiform encephalopathy and *(b)* the names and occupations of the members of the working party.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The terms of reference of the working party are to advise on the implications of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and matters relevant thereto. Sir Richard Southwood, Professor of Zoology at Oxford University, is chairing the working party.

The other members are Dr. W. B. Martin, ex-Director of the Animal Diseases Research Association, Moredun institute, Edinburgh, Professor M. A. Epstein, Nuffield department of clinical medicine, John Radcliffe hospital, university of Oxford, and Sir John Walton, President of the General Medical Council.

CAP (Discussion Paper)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take in the light of the discussion paper, "Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy: New Opportunities for Wildlife and the Environment", recently published by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* I welcome this discussion paper which is the latest in a series published by bodies interested in the welfare of the

countryside. I am pleased to note that in the foreword to the paper the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds recognises the important role of farmers as custodians of the countryside and the problems they face. I shall be studying the proposals in the paper and look forward to seeing the policy statement on agriculture which the society intends to issue next year in the light of comments on its discussion paper.

SCOTLAND

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cost to his Department of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Rifkind: The following information on spending on consultancy fees is readily available.

	[1]*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £
Management Consultants	47,512	491,864	569,038	198,338
Computer Consultants	124,487	83,493	238,365	386,438

[1] The 1984-85 figures relate only to contracts let during the last quarter of the year: comprehensive figures for the full year are not held centrally.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each management or computer consultancy contract extant in the Scottish Development Agency as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Rifkind: The following management and computer consultancy contracts were extant on 1 January 1987:

Firm and Subject of Assignment	
	Assignment
Management Consultants	
BP International Ltd.	Production of a Scottish Office Procurement Manual
Cooper and Lybrand Associates Ltd.	Study of investment function, Scottish Development Agency
Computer Consultants	
Ashford Associates Ltd.	Document indexing and retrieval
PA Computer and Telecommunications	Technical advice on computerisation of criminal and offence records

Privatisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* any bodies or organisations at present under his control and in the public sector which he is investigating with a view to privatisation.

Mr. Rifkind: The privatisation of the following bodies is in preparation:

South of Scotland Electricity Board
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board
Scottish Transport Group

Acid Rain

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are to introduce sulphur-scrubbing equipment in coal-fired power stations in Scotland, in order to alleviate the problem of acid rain.

Mr. Lang: Only about one third of electricity generated in Scotland is produced by coal-fired power stations. These stations already burn low sulphur coal and contribute only some 2 per cent. to United Kingdom emissions of sulphur dioxide. The deposition of acidity in Scotland is predominantly from sources outside Scotland. Accordingly, there are no plans at present to introduce sulphur-scrubbing equipment in any Scottish coal-fired power station.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what responsibility a privatised electricity industry in Scotland will have to alleviate the problems of acid rain by *(a)* the liming of land and *(b)* the introduction of sulphur-scrubbing equipment at coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Lang: The Government will ensure that the privatised electricity industry will carry out the work necessary to achieve reductions in the emission of pollutants from power stations required under air quality legislation. There are no proposals to introduce the liming of land in the United Kingdom.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will estimate the approximate expenditure per head for each of the local authority functions or responsibilities that is consistent with a standard level of service that arises from the average community charge to be paid by each community charge payer.

Mr. Lang: The calculation of the average community charge for any year will be a simple arithmetical exercise, and the resultant figure has no particular significance in relation to standards of service. The level of provision per head for each of the major local authority services in 1988-89 is as follows:

	Average (£) per head
Education	339·66
Social Work Services	76·67
Law, Order and Protective Services	86·38
Roads and Transport	61·77
Water, Sewerage and Environmental Services	48·04
Planning Services	6·01
Recreation	28·66
Miscellaneous	30·26
Central Administration	26·27

Notes.

1. Registrar General's estimates of population as at 30 June 1987 have been used.
2. In 1988-89 there is also a margin of £40 million (£7·82 per head) which has not been allocated to individual services.

Mr. Cohen To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will describe the performance criteria for each of the major local authority functions or responsibilities that allowed him to arrive at a standard level of service that arises from the average community charge to be paid by each community charge payer.

Mr. Lang: The calculation of the average community charge for any year will be a simple arithmetical exercise, and the resultant figure has no particular significance in relation to standards of service. I intend however to distribute revenue support grant in such a way as to equalise for differences in expenditure need so that if two councils with the same responsibilities both spend at assessed need, they will have the same community charge. The process of needs assessment is a complex one which is kept under continual review, in full consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if prisoners on remand who are subsequently convicted and who have their convictions backdated to the start of their period of remand, will have the full amount of the poll tax paid by them while on remand reimbursed by local authorities.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* Provisions inserted into the Loal Government finance Bill at Report Stage in the House of Lords will amend the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987 to provide that remand prisoners, as well as convicted prisoners, will be exempt from liability to pay the personal community charge.

Schools (Overcrowding)

Mr. Galbraith To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has had concerning overcrowding in schools due to placement requests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since the beginning of this year I have received six representations concerning overcrowding in schools due to placement requests.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider giving additional powers to parents within a catchment area to refuse placement requests which lead to overcrowding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The power to deal with placing requests resides with education authorities. I refer the hon. Member to my reply today to his further question on this subject.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to prevent overcrowding in schools due to placement requests for pupils outside the schools' catchment area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The law provides that a placing request may be refused if granting it would be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of the pupils in the school concerned.

Schools (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of placement requests for each school in Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy to provide resources to cover any shortfall revealed in the allocation so far made for the cost of the nurses' pay award; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much he has allocated to each health board to fund the nurses' recent award in cash terms and as a percentage increase of the nursing salary budget;

(3) on what basis he has allocated money to each health board to fund the nurses' pay award.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The allocations totalling £83·4 million made to health boards are expected to meet fully the cost of the review body pay awards in Scotland. The allocations to individual health boards were given in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 5 July, col. *522*. Since the allocations have not been separated into pay increases for nurses and for other professionals, it would not be meaningful to express them as percentages of the pay bill for nurses. The SHARE formula was used for the allocation.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the advice he has given to health boards as to how nurse regrading should be carried out in order to keep costs within the cash allocated.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such advice has been issued. The guidance which has been issued to health boards is consistent with the grading criteria and definitions drawn up by the management and staff sides of the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of voluntary, private and local authority residential care homes for elderly people in Scotland; and, in each case, what is the total number of places available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Residential homes for the elderly in Scotland
Places provided at 31 March 1987

	Number of homes	*Number of places*
Local authority	275	9,993
Voluntary	137	4,473
Private	134	2,274
Total	546	16,740

Rates

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average level of rates in Scottish local authorities for the current year; and what were the comparable figures in real terms *(a)* five years ago and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out below.

Average domestic rate bill in 1988-89 prices

	£
1988-89	494
1983-84	389
1978-79	283

Note. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1988-89 prices.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals against the refusal of planning permission by local authorities were made to him in the last 10 years for which information is available; how many of these were determined by written submissions; how many were determined by public inquiry; and how many were successful in either category.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Planning appeals determined under Section 33 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972

Year	Total	Determined on basis of written submissions		Determined after public inquiry	
		Number	Number sustained	Number	Number sustained
1978	314	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1979	319	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1980	320	199	42	121	33
1981	415	249	62	166	50
1982	409	254	87	155	49
1983	445	287	89	158	55
1984	396	273	99	123	50
1985	508	392	123	116	43
1986	542	420	140	122	53
[1]1987	589	494	181	95	42

[1] Provisional.
n.a. Not available.
(These figures exlude a small number of appeals which were dismissed for procedural reasons at an early stage in the process.)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many planning appeals have been determined by him or his predecessors and how many by delegated powers in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Planning appeals determined under Section 33 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972

Year	Decided by Secretary of State	Decided by Reporters under delegated powers
1978	214	100
1979	146	173
1980	74	246
1981	46	369
1982	33	376
1983	23	422
1984	20	376
1985	70	438
1986	43	499
[1]1987	34	555

[1] Provisional.
Note. These figures exclude a small number of appeals which were dismissed for procedural reasons at an early stage in the process.

Language Disorders

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the number of specialist teachers for children with language disorders, expressed in absolute terms and in pupil-to-teacher ratios, in each regional and island authority;

(2) if he will give the number of specialist teaching units at primary and secondary level for children with language disorders in each regional and island authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on specialist teachers and specialist teaching units for children with language disorders is not held centrally.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research is being done within his Department on the likely impact of a uniform business rate in Great Britain.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* My Department will be monitoring the effects of introducing uniform business rates south of the border, and will be considering the implications of this for Scotland.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will update the information on net capital allocation figures for non-housing revenue account and housing revenue account for Scotland for each year since 1978-79, given in the answer of 26 October 1987, *Official Report*, columns 91 and 92; if he will reprice the figures for inflation; and if he will give the gross percentage change over the previous year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 July 1988]:* The information requested is contained in the following tables. This relates only to the years since 1982-83 since that is when the net allocation system was introduced.

Scotland Non-HRA Capital Allocations

Year	Net £ million	Per cent. change	Net 1988-89 constant prices £ million
1982-83	86·133	—	113·071
1983-84	76·432	−11·3	95·829
1984-85	148·699	+93·9	178·549
1985-86	99·321	−33·2	112·537
1986-87	111·508	+12·3	122·352
1987-88	146·000	+30·9	152·570
1988-89	133·793	−8·4	133·793

Note: Special arrangements applied to 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent subject to certain conditions.

Scotland HRA capital allocations

Year	Net £ million	Per cent. change	Net 1988-89 constant prices £ million
1982-83	180·266	—	236·644
1983-84	177·625	−1·5	222·702
1984-85	112·482	−36·7	135·062
1985-86	160·227	+42·4	181·548
1986-87	204·859	+27·9	224·781
1987-88	259·382	+26·6	271·054
1988-89	197·767	−23·8	197·767

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS Staff (Wages)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about National Health Service employees' wages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received about 500 letters since the beginning of April about the pay of groups covered by Whitley councils; one third of these have been about the pay of medical laboratory scientific officers.

NHS (Complaints)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether health authorities will be responsible for dealing with complaints about services which they have contracted out, including complaints about services provided to National Health Service patients in non-National Health Service hospitals used on an agency basis.

Mrs. Currie: Where a complaint is made by a National Health Service patient the appropriate district health authority has a duty to investigate that complaint irrespective of the location where such treatment is provided.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards hospitals accepting and responding to complaints from people who are not patients at the hospital, including people who are on waiting lists, in the same manner as they deal with complaints from patients.

Mrs. Currie: The Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985 is concerned only with procedures for complaints about treatment received as an in-patient or an out-patient. However, we expect any other complaint directed to a health authority to be dealt with in accordance with the principles of circular HC(88)37, which was issued to all health authorities in June.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why circular HC(88)37 says that a complaint may be made on behalf of a patient only if the patient is unable to make a complaint, and not merely if he chooses to exercise that option; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The procedures are intended to enable individual patients to bring to the attention of health authorities aspects of their care about which they are unhappy. It is in keeping with this approach for complaints normally to be made by the individual concerned. However, help from others in drawing up their complaint is not precluded.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why circular HC(88)37 says that a complaint must be made with the consent of a capable patient concerned, irrespective of the validity of the complaint; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: It would be quite appropriate for a complaint about an individual's treatment to be made without their knowledge or consent.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether regional health authorities are intended to monitor complaints which they receive, on clinical matters or otherwise, in a similar manner to that specified for district health authorities; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) if he will issue directions to regional health authorities on managing their services in the same way as in the directions issued in annex A of HC(88)37, to district and special health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans to make further directions. We expect regional health authorities to follow the principles of HC(88)37 in dealing with complaints concerning their activities even though the services that they provide are not covered by the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has recently held with the medical defence societies regarding the investigation of complaints; and what undertakings they have given him on this matter.

Mrs. Currie: The content of circular HC(88)37 was fully discussed with representatives of the medical profession. The medical defence societies responded to the consultation exercise in October 1986. The complaints procedure set out therein is statutory, as required under the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on permitting a person who wishes to complain out of time to appeal to the health authority against a decision by the designated officer not to exercise a discretion to investigate his complaint; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: It is open to a complainant to appeal to a district health authority against a decision made by a designated officer. The exercise of this discretion is also a matter which can be investigated by the Health Service Commissioner.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State of Social Services what is his policy on all reports concerning the monitoring of complaints being made available to appropriate community health councils.

Mrs. Currie: Where a community health council assists an individual with his complaint, the council should be advised of the outcome.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the extent to which health authorities should normally receive reports about monitoring of complaints in the public part of their meetings, and reserve for private consideration only material which might identify an individual patient or innocent member of staff.

Mrs. Currie: In our view only information of a personal nature concerning specific complaints need be excluded from the public part of an authority meeting.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reissue circular HC(88)37 to include provision for a complainant to draw to the attention of a health authority shortcomings in the latter detailing the results of an investigation, and for the authority to investigate them further.

Mrs. Currie: The report of the designated officer represents a formal response on behalf of the health authority. However it is always open to a complainant to take the matter up with the chairman of the authority or to seek an independent investigation by the Health Service Commissioner, if they remain dissatisfied.

Hospital Responsibility

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representation he has had over the wording of the directives contained in annex A of HC(88)37 with regard to hospital responsibility for a hospital which is divided between more than one unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No representations have been received to date over the wording of the directions issued with circular HC(88)37. Our inquiries prior to the issue of the circular in June confirmed that the proposed procedures were in line with current practice in many health authorities. Regional health authorities have been asked to confirm by 26 August that the procedures, which are required to be in place by 29 July, have been implemented.

Physiotherapy

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average total cost of physiotherapy treatment per session in teaching and non-teaching hospitals, in London and outside London, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information on costs of physiotherapy treatment per session is not collected centrally.

For analyses of the average total cost per in-patient day or out-patient attendance across treatment and other departments—including physiotherapy and remedial gymnastics—by type of hospital in England as a whole and in Greater London, I refer my hon. Friend to tables included in the Department's annual publication "Health Services Costing Returns", the latest being for 1986-87, copies of which are in the Library.

Consultant Posts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultant posts in the northern region there are now; and how many there were in 1985.

Mr. Newton: The number of hospital medical and dental consultant posts (including vacancies) in the northern region as at 30 September 1985 was 921. The number of posts as at 30 September 1986, the most recent date for which figures are available centrally, was 951. Figures quoted have been rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent. They include senior hospital medical and dental officers with allowance, as well as permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultant vacancies are currently unfilled in the northern region; and how many of these have been unfilled for more than 12 months.

Mr. Newton: The number of unfilled consultant vacancies in the northern region as at 30 September 1986, the most recent date for which figures are held centrally, was 33, of which nine had been unfilled for 12 months or more. Figures quoted have been rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent, and include vacancies where an appointment has been made but the holder has not taken up duty.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many junior hospital doctors in the northern region currently work in excess of 42 hours per week.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available centrally in the form requested. The average number of contracted hours of junior staff in the northern region was 85·8 hours per week as at 30 September 1986.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the membership of the working party to report to the Chief Medical Officer on the increase in infant mortality in 1986; and if he will publish the report when it is completed.

Mrs. Currie: The external experts consulted by the Chief Medical Officer were:

Experts	
Professor Peter Pharoah	Department of Community Health University of Liverpool
Professor David Barker	Director MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit Southampton General Hospital
The late Dr. Michael Alderson	MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit Southampton General Hospital
Dr. Robert Sunderland	Consultant Paediatrician Springfield Centre Child Health Community Health Services Birmingham
Miss Alison Macfarlane	National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit Radcliffe Infirmary Oxford

Copies of the group's report have been placed in the Library.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement of progress on research into motor neurone disease and of support for the work of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Mrs. Currie: The Medical Research Council is the main Government body for biomedical and clinical research in this country and receives its grant aid from the Department of Education and Science. In the financial year 1986-87 the Medical Research Council's expenditure on research relating to motor neurone disease was approximately £280,000. I understand that the council is also supporting a considerable amount of basic and epidemiological research which may be of relevance to motor neurone disease.

I am aware of the work done by the Motor Neurone Disease Association to fund research into the cause and cure for this disease, and to provide care and support for sufferers and their families. The Department awarded the

association a three year grant of £10,000 per annum from 1985-86 to 1987-88 to enable it to expand and develop its paitent care service. A further application for funding is currently under consideration.

Population Census (White Paper)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the White Paper on the 1991 census of population will be published.

Mr. Moore: The Government's proposals for a census in Great Britain on 21 April 1991 are published today in the White Paper, Cm. 430 which I have presented to Parliament in conjunction with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Government believe that the topics to be included in the census should be those most needed by central and local government, businesses and the professions. It also considers it essential that the census should be generally acceptable to the public and should not be an unreasonable burden on them. The proposals are based on these principles.

The proposed content is broadly similar to that of the successful 1981 census but with four additional questions. They are on central heating, long-term illness, hours worked and the term-time address of students. These will not add greatly to the time taken to complete the form and will provide important information. Other new features compared with 1981 include making a detailed count of dwellings, entering the postcode of each household address into the computer and asking people in housholds who were absent from their usual address on census night to complete a form from that address on a voluntary basis when they return. These changes will improve census coverage and make the results more useful.

A final census test will be held in April 1989. The main aim of the test will be to make sure that the procedures for delivery and collection of the forms will be effective. It will also be used to make a final assessment of the reaction of the public to the proposed questions and the effectiveness of publicity about the census. The areas to be included are Duns, North Berwick and parts of Edinburgh, Birmingham, Scarborough and the London boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth.

In its reply (Cm. 9238) to the Home Affairs Committee report on ethnic and racial questions in the census, the Government recognised that the committee had made a good case in principle for the inclusion of a question on ethnic group. Subsequent consultations with Government Departments and local and health authorities have confirmed the need for the kind of information such a question would provide for local areas. To do this, a question must be formulated in an understandable and acceptable way. OPCS has, through a series of tests and discussions organised with the help of the Commission for Racial Equality, developed a form of question that it believes to be the most likely to meet these criteria. The question is set out in the White Paper. The Government propose to include this question in the census test in April 1989 and to study the public response before deciding whether the question should be included in the final plans for the 1991 census.

The Census Act 1920 lays down strict safeguards of census confidentiality. The Government will not use the information gathered in the 1991 census about identified individuals for administrative purposes and will ensure that no organisation or person outside the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the General Register Office for Scotland has access to census information about identified individuals.

The British Computer Society has accepted an invitation to review the data protection, confidentiality and security arrangements for the 1991 census and the Data Protection Registrar has expressed support for this independent review. The findings will be published before the census.

The Government intend that, as in previous censuses, results from the 1991 census should wherever practicable be made available in a convenient form to meet users' needs, with a commitment where necessary by users to meet the costs. The particular priority will be to make key results for all local authorities available by May 1992 so they can be used in the revenue support calculations that year. Priority will also be given to results for health authorities.

After evaluation of the April 1989 test results, the Government will prepare a draft Order in Council and will lay it before Parliament for approval in accordance with the Census Act 1920.

Community Service

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to "Independent Living in the 1990s—The Consumer's View" published by Community Service Volunteers after consultation with other voluntary organisations about the review of community care by Sir Roy Griffiths; if there is any action he is taking or has already taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that "Independent Living in the 1990s—The Consumer's View" was taken into account as part of the evidence submitted to Sir Roy Griffiths during his review of community care.

Health Authorities (Secure Provision)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of places in secure provision available in each district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of mental illness and mental handicap beds in secure accommodation in district health authorities at the end of 1986 are given in the table.

Latest available information relating to permanent regional secure units was provided in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) on 12 April at columns *111-12*.

District Health Authorities listed by Regional Health Authority
Number of beds in secure accommodation

	Mental illness	*Mental handicap*
Northern RHA	141	60
East Cumbria	44	0
Durham	17	16
North West Durham	24	0
Northumberland	13	44
Gateshead	2	0
Newcastle	41	0
Yorkshire RHA	76	25
East Yorkshire	28	0
Wakefield	48	25

	Mental illness	Mental handicap
Trent RHA	36	3
Leicestershire	22	3
Doncaster	4	0
Rotherham	10	0
East Anglian RHA	34	49
Norwich	34	49
North West Thames RHA	149	45
South Bedfordshire	32	0
East Hertfordshire	26	0
North West Hertfordshire	0	20
South West Hertfordshire	0	25
Barnet	1	0
Ealing	54	0
Brent	18	0
Riverside	18	0
North East Thames RHA	89	0
Southend	42	0
Hampstead	10	0
Waltham Forest	37	0
South East Thames RHA	45	25
Eastbourne	15	0
Dartford and Gravesham	0	25
Maidstone	15	0
Bexley	15	0
South West Thames RHA	158	131
West Surrey and North East Hants.	14	0
Mid Surrey	44	36
East Surrey	18	20
Chichester	28	0
Mid Downs	16	0
Croydon	0	36
Kingston and Esher	18	0
Wandsworth	20	0
Merton and Sutton	0	39
Wessex RHA	43	130
East Dorset	4	0
West Dorset	0	19
East Hampshire	0	60
Southampton and South West Hants.	28	44
Salisbury	10	0
Swindon	0	7
Bath District	1	0
Oxford RHA	10	40
West Berkshire	0	40
Northampton	10	0
South Western RHA	46	0
Exeter	45	0
North Devon	1	0
West Midlands RHA	94	33
Bromsgrove and Redditch	11	0
Mid Staffordshire	18	0
North Staffordshire	20	0
South East Staffordshire	18	0
North Warwickshire	0	8
South Warwickshire	15	0
North Birmingham	12	0
Walsall	0	25
Mersey RHA	128	31
Crewe	2	-0
Macclesfield	15	8
Warrington	65	0
St. Helens and Knowsley	46	0
Southport and Formby	0	23
North Western RHA	114	213
Lancaster	20	112
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	0	44
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	0	57
North Manchester	28	0
Salford	66	0

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Moore: Over the past 12 months my Department has continued to identify ways to help small businesses. Specific measures which have been introduced include:

(i) In February 1988 a free advice line was set up to answer inquiries from business on the operation of National Insurance, statutory sick and maternity pay. This new service has been especially well received by small businesses with around 80 per cent. of calls coming from small firms.

(ii) Together with Inland Revenue we have produced a leaflet 'Employed or Self-employed' designed to be of help to people who may be unsure of their status for tax and National Insurance purposes. The new leaflet was issued in April. Further improvements in the guidance material issued to new employers are also being made.

(iii) From april 1988 a new improved system, family credit, has replaced family income supplement and will substantially increase help available for working families on low incomes. It is anticipated that many more self-employed people are likely to qualify under the new scheme.

(iv) Changes introduced in April have made it much easier for employers, particularly small employers, to set up their own company pension schemes. The conditions for contracting-out of the state scheme were simplified in November 1986 but in addition from 6 April 1988 employers were able to operate a new kind of occupational pension—a contracted-out money purchase scheme (COMPS). This has the advantage particularly for small employers of not imposing an open ended commitment. From July personal pension schemes were introduced which need not involve employers at all. A major national advertising campaign, part of which was specifically targetted at the small employer has been launched to tell business of these changes.

In addition we are taking positive steps to increase purchases from small firms and have set up a departmental purchasing and supply directorate, part of whose remit is to act as a focal point for small firms. The DTI publication, "Selling to the Public Sector" gives details of the contact point. Regional buying staff are making contact with local business or development associations. Training courses for purchasing staff point out the importance of small firms in increasing the supplier base and assisting the quest for value for money.

This represents a significant package of new measures to assist small businesses. My Department attaches particular importance to action in this area and continues to explore further ways to help small firms.

Consultants (Wakefield)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary for Social Services if he will instruct the Wakefield district health authority to supply the hon. Member for Wakefield with the names of those consultants whose opperating sessions were cancelled during the period 1 Aprl to 30 June 1986

Mrs. Currie: No.

NHS Contracts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many of the private companies specifically created to tender for National Health Service contracts no longer tender for such contracts.

Mrs. Currie: I am aware of no such companies.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those companies which have more than 20 per cent. of the National Health Service catering contracts;

(2) if he will list those companies which have more than 20 per cent. of the Nationl Health Service laundry contracts;

(3) if he will list those companies which have more than 20 per cent. of the National Health Service cleaning contracts.

Mrs. Currie: No company has more than 20 per cent. of NHS contracts for catering, laundry and domestic cleaning contracts. Most contracts were won in-house.

Foster Carers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the average weekly allowance paid by local authorities to long-term foster carers, for each year since 1979;

(2) what was the average weekly allowance paid by local authorities to short-term foster carers, for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the average weekly allowance paid by local authorities to foster parents is not available centrally, nor is information that distinguishes the average weekly cost of boarding out children placed with short-term foster parents from the average weekly cost of boarding out children placed with long-term foster parents.

Details of the average weekly cost per child in care boarded by local authorities in England, based on net current expenditure are given in the table.

Year	*Revalued average cost per child per week*[1] *£p*	*Average cost per child per week* *£p*
1978-79	16·79	33·23
1979-80	19·86	33·33
1980-81	24·36	33·99
1981-82	29·83	37·04
1982-83	35·45	41·08
1983-84	40·15	44·13
1984-85	44·72	47·24
[2]1985-86	50·22	50·22

[1] Revalued to 1985-86 prices using Personal Social Services pay and prices indicator.
[2] Provisional.

Family Practitioners

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to require family practitioner committees to collate the extent to which family practitioners advise patients to seek private consultation and treatment because of the length of time they would otherwise have to wait for a National Health Service consultation or National Health Service hospital treatment.

Mr. Newton: No.

Child Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take following the publication of the European Economic Community reports entitled "Caring for Children: Services and Policies for Childcare" and "Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom", and "Childcare and Equality of Opportunity: Consolidated Report to the European Commission" copies of which have been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 12 July at column *150*.

Cook-chill Catering

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will act to prevent the Wakefield district health authority and the Yorkshire regional health authority diverting financial resources from patient care to fund the introduction of a cook-chill system of catering.

Mrs. Currie: The catering system is part of patient care. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Yorkshire regional health authority and Wakefield health authority, as appropriate, for further details.

Disabled People (Legislation)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the reasons for the delay in implementing section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 originally intended to be brought into force in December 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Problems with coverage and timetables have delayed the planned production towards the end of this year of a report under section 11 of the Act based on new data collection systems for health and social services. We expect to produce a comprehensive report next year.

The most recent data, based on the old system of collection, on in-patient treatment of mentally ill and mentally handicapped people are already available in the Library—"Mental Handicap Hospitals and Units in England", bulletin 2/3/88 and "Mental Illness Hospitals and Units in England", bulletin 2/2/88.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what discussions he has had with voluntary organisations concerning implementation of section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with voluntary organisations concerning implementation of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions he has had with voluntary organisations concerning regulations to be made under of sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My predecessor met representatives of a number of voluntary organisations last year to discuss the implementation of various sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, and there has been subsequent correspondence. Implementation of each section of the Act can take place only as the necessary resources are identified and made available, and we shall have full discussions at the appropriate time about implementation of each of the remaining sections. We value the contributions of the voluntary organisations to this process and we are always happy to consider any views they may have on the implementation of any section of the Act.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that the money allocated to local authorities in the current year for implementation of sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is being spent on this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: It is for local authorities to ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties under sections 5 and 6 of the Act. The local authorities agreed this when they accepted the amount fed into the personal social services calculations for the additional costs of these sections. We are considering ways of monitoring the impact of the 1986 Act, however, and see the exercise that the social services inspectorate is planning as one of the ways of enabling this to be done.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list *(a)* the number of cases of toxic shock syndrome diagnosed in Britain for each of the last five years and *(b)* the number of deaths from toxic shock syndrome for each of the last five years;

(2) what proportion of the total number of cases of toxic shock syndrome over the last five years occurred in menstruating women using tampons.

Mrs. Currie: The information available centrally is that in the years 1982 to 1986 inclusive, for Great Britain, there has been one death identified with mention of toxic shock syndrome on the death certificate, that of a female in 1983.

Childhood Cancer

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recommendations he has received from the chief medical officer in the light of the report commissioned by East Yorkshire health authority on the incidence of childhood cancer on north Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This detailed report has been referred for expert advice before the chief medical officer makes any recommendations to Ministers. In the meantime, I note that the authors record a higher than expected, but small, number of tumours of the central nervous system, but not of leukaemia, which appear to be geographically based. They recommend further studies.

Charitable and Voluntary Payments

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how occasional charitable or voluntary payments are treated for income support and housing benefit purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The first £250 of such payments received in a 52-week period is treated as capital; and any excess is treated as income spread over the number of weeks remaining in that period.

Our monitoring of the operation of the scheme suggests this provision is proving difficult for claimants to understand and for staff to operate. In particular, it is causing administrative inconvenience for some charities. Therefore I propose to amend the regulations as soon as practicable to allow such payments to be treated solely as capital, so bringing the provision into line with the rules for family credit. We shall shortly consult the local authorities on the proposed change for housing benefit.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish the guidance given by the attendance allowance board to the doctors who, on its behalf, assess whether claimants to attendance allowance qualify for an award.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to announce that the attendance allowance board "Handbook for Delegated Medical Practitioners" has now been published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office [ISBN O 11 321146 5], price £6·40. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Resource Allocation Working Party

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received the report of the working party on the resources allocation working party; if he will publish the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: *[Pursuant to his reply, 19 May 1988 c. 559]:* I am today publishing the NHS management board's final report on its review of the resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula, which is used to calculate funding targets for regional health authorities in England. Copies of the report are available in the Vote Office.

The NHS management board was asked to explore the scope for improving the way in which the national RAWP formula measures relative need for health care across the country. The board's interim report, published in December 1986, considered each element of the formula, identified aspects where there was scope for improvement, and recommended a programme of analysis and research. That programme is now complete, and its results are set out in the final report. I am grateful to the management board for this comprehensive study.

The review of the RAWP formula was already close to completion when the Government began their wide-ranging review of the NHS. The Government will consider this report within the context of the wider review of the NHS.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 July 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Electoral Registration

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister what are her proposals for preserving or extending the level of electoral registration.

The Prime Minister: The Government will continue the current efforts, including the annual publicity campaign, to encourage those entitled to do so to register for the vote. Research sponsored by the Home Office has identified a number of ways in which the level of registration could be improved; some of these have been put into effect and others are under active consideration. In particular, electoral registration officers are being encouraged to make more widespread use of personal, door-to-door canvassing.

We intend to introduce, in this Parliament, legislation to fulfill our commitment to enable more British citizens living abroad to register for the vote.

European Commission (Nominations)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what criteria she uses when deciding which persons to nominate as United Kingdom members of the European Commission; and, in particular, how far previous ministerial experience is taken into account.

The Prime Minister: The same criteria which have been applied in the past, namely ability and experience. Most but not all previous United Kingdom Commissioners have had ministerial experience.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Empty Government Properties

101. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any new proposals to use empty Government-owned residential properties.

Mr. Major: No. It remains Government policy for dwellings that are identified as being surplus to operational requirements to be sold as quickly as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Alison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would have been the yield in a full year, under the tax regime applying in the year 1987-88, if the top tax rate of 60 per cent. had been raised to 100 per cent., on the assumption that those with incomes liable to taxation at 60 per cent. had taken no precautionary or offsetting steps to mitigate the extra impost.

Mr. Lawson: On the stated assumptions, the yield for a full year at 1987-88 income levels of raising the top rate of income tax from 60 per cent. to 100 per cent. is estimated at about £2 billion.

The calculation is based on a projection to 1987-88 income levels of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and the figure is therefore provisional. No account is taken of any behavioural changes that might result from such a measure, which would of course turn the notional additional yield into an actual reduction in yield.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the real exchange rate against the deutschmark since *(a)* the fourth quarter of 1986 and *(b)* the fourth quarter of 1976.

Mr. Lilley: A choice of price indices for constructing real exchange rates is available in several international publications, including *International Financial Statistics* (IMF) and *Main Economic Indicators* (OECD). Nominal exchange rates are published daily in the national press.

Staff Training

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the staff in his Departments at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Brooke: In the 12 months to 30 June 1988, five people at grade 3 have attended courses or training exclusively on information technology management or awareness. Others have attended courses where these elements were part of the programme.

EC (Payment)

Mr. Sackville: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the early payment of non-value added tax own resources to the European Communities in July.

Mr. Brooke: The European Commission estimates that its spending obligations during July will exceed the resources available for that month, leading to cash flow difficulties. In order to help ease these, and in accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77, the Commission has requested member states to advance into July their payments of non-VAT own resources which would otherwise have been made in August. The Government are satisfied that the request complies with article 10(2).

The gross amount of the advance is £137 million. However, no payment will actually be made, today 20 July, in respect of the advance as two adjustments to the gross figure will be necessary:

(i) As I informed my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 29 March at column *397* in accordance with conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 11-13 February 1988 member states are entitled to deduct at source 10 per cent. of non-VAT own resources to cover collection costs. This replaces the previous arrangements whereby 10 per cent. of the amounts in question was refunded to member states;

(ii) an amount equivalent to the balance of the advance will be recovered from the outstanding amount of the Commission's borrowing under article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77.

The article 10(2) facility does not affect the total amount which the Community is authorised to spend during the year. The payment of levies and duties on 20 July will be

reduced accordingly so that the Commission's request does not, therefore, involve any net addition to public expenditure.

Customs Clearance Depots

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish any comparable figures available to him on the number of inland Customs clearance depots in each of the member countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 12 July 1988]*: I am not aware of any comparable figures for the number of inland Customs clearance depots in the member states of the European Communities.

VAT (Grave Headstones)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review his policy concerning the imposition of value added tax on headstones for graves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 July 1988]*: This aspect of VAT has been reviewed on a number of occasions. My right hon. Friend has no plans for changes in this policy.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the estimated revenue in real terms from value added tax on headstones of graves in the United Kingdom for each of the years from 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many headstones for graves had value added tax levied in each of the years from 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 July 1988]*: There are no official figures available either of the numbers of gravestones sold each year or of the yield in value added tax from their sale.

VAT (Self-Builders)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of value added tax refund claims under Customs and Excise notice 719, refund of value added tax to self-builders, processed during the fiscal years 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 July 1988]*: The number of do-it-yourself housebuilders claims processed in the fiscal years 1986-87 and 1987-88 was 8,950 and 9,254 respectively.

Payroll-giving Scheme

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was raised for charity through the payroll-giving scheme during the year up to April 1988; and what is the estimated total for 1988-1989.

Mr. Brook *[holding answer 18 July 1988]*: It is estimated that about £1 million was raised through the payroll-giving scheme during 1987-88, the first year of the scheme's operation. Donations in 1988-89 are expected to be considerably higher as the number of employers participating in the scheme continues to increase, but it is not possible to provide a reliable forecast at this stage.

TRANSPORT

National Maintenance Intervention Level

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring is carried out on the national maintenance intervention level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department prescribes standards and procedures for the maintenance of trunk roads, and determines priorities and funding. It entrusts its agents (principally local highway authorities) with the tasks of administering its requirements for monitoring road condition, identifying needs, letting contracts and supervising contractors. A technical audit system is being introduced to monitor routine maintenance work and improve efficiency.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received his consultant's further report on surface access to Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The report on the evaluation of consultation responses to the Heathrow surface access study is being published today by my consultants, Howard Humphreys and Partners. They prepared the report in association with the MVA Consultancy and Kennedy Henderson Limited.

The report analyses more than 100 comments made on the main study, which was published by the consultants in June 1987. The report finds virtually unanimous support for rail-based options, especially those involving a direct service between the airport and Paddington station.

The consultants examined five specific schemes proposed in response to the main study: for a direct rail link, put forward by BAA plc in partnership with British Rail; for improvements to the existing Underground connection, submitted by London Underground Limited; and for a number of people-mover options proposed by three private sector groups. The report concludes that, while several of the schemes could be viable, the option proposed by BAA and BR is the one most likely to meet objectives for a financially viable scheme, attractive to providers of private capital, increasing consumer choice, benefiting the maximum number of people and attracting passengers off the road.

The BAA/BR project would cost about £190 million and would be financed largely by the private sector. A new branch would be built off BR's western region main line into the airport with stations under the terminal buildings. Fast direct trains would operate between the airport and Paddington, providing a regular service modelled on the successful Gatwick Express. The journey time—including access to the passenger concourses—could be as little as 17 minutes to terminal one. The first train would run in 1993.

Special facilities at Paddington would be part of the scheme. BR has commissioned a study into pedestrian and vehicular movements within the station and on the approaches to it. I understand that discussions have already been held with Westminster city council, and that it will be consulted as the study progresses.

In the light of the consultants' report, I am giving my approval in principle to BR's participation in the joint

venture and inviting it and BAA to work out detailed proposals. I shall want to see the maximum contribution from the private sector and a fully commercial return from British Rail. I understand that the promoters intend to deposit a private Bill in Parliament in November.

I wecome not only this exciting initiative, but the other imaginative proposals that were developed in response to the study. They serve to demonstrate the private sector's potential to solve transport problems and its strong interest in playing a part in future transport infrastructure projects. I congratulate the organisations involved on all their hard work and originality. The BAA and BR still have many matters of detail to resolve, and Parliament will be asked to consider the proposals once their Bill has been deposited. But we now have the prospect that Heathrow —the world's busiest international airport—will have passenger transport connections to central London fit for the 21st century. I am delighted to see the continuing involvement of the private sector in the country's transport infrastructure, following the example set by the Channel tunnel. I look forward to many more similar schemes.

I am placing copies of the consultants' report in the Library of the House. Copies are also being sent to those more closely involved. Further copies are available direct from the consultants.

In addition, I share the concern of the relevant local authorities, BAA and the road transport associations that some complementary improvements should be made to the road system around Heathrow. I am therefore commissioning two further studies.

First, I have appointed Howard Humphreys and Partners to develop for my consideration a consistent strategy for management of the motorway and trunk road network within the A4-M4 corridor. I want them to give particular attention to junction improvements, traffic management proposals such as those recommended in their Heathrow surface access study report, and variable signing to give travellers better information on road conditions.

My overall objective here is to improve the reliability of journey times from London to Heathrow. There will of course be co-ordination with the west London and south circular assessment studies that are already in progress.

Second, and following consultation with the local authorities concerned, I am now commissioning a review of access to Heathrow from the surrounding area and of orbital movement in the south-west quadrant of London within the M25 between the A23 and A40 (Hasquad). This part of London suffers from heavy traffic congestion.

The first stage of the Hasquad study will be to review the traffic related problems in the quadrant to the same time scale as the M25 review that I announced in April. On the basis of the results of the first stages of the Hasquad and M25 reviews, we shall ask the consultants to search for solutions on the M25 itself and on the departmental and local authority highway networks in a wider area either side of it.

This is an important package of initiatives to improve both public transport and road access to Heathrow. Taken together they should do much to reduce the access problems identified in the Eyre report, bringing valuable benefits to business and tourism, and to the economy as a whole.

Acle New Road, Norfolk (Dualling)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the case for dualling the A47 Acle new road between Great Yarmouth and Acle.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Norfolk county council, as the Department's agent, has carried out an assessment of the justification for dualling the A47 Acle new road. I have also seen the case for this improvement prepared by Great Yarmouth borough council. We shall consider the merits of this case along with the many competing claims at the next review of the trunk road programme.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to require new cars to be capable of using unleaded petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Interested parties are being consulted today on draft regulations which will require new vehicles to be capable of running on unleaded petrol. The proposals pick up the earliest dates permitted in community directive 88/76/EEC, which are:

Vehicle Size	*New Type Approvals*	*All New Registrations*
Large (>2000cc)	1 October 1988	1 October 1990
Medium (1400-2000cc)	1 October 1989	1 October 1990
Small (<1400cc)	1 October 1989	1 October 1990

The directive requires us to make special arrangements for the small number of vehicles that would need major engineering change to comply. The draft regulations allow for this.

Catalyst-equipped cars will be required to have narrow fuel filler inlets so that only the smaller nozzles fitted to unleaded petrol pumps can be used. All other vehicles will have the alternative of being marked to show that they can run on unleaded petrol.

We are also taking the opportunity to tidy up the gaseous emission regulations by eliminating the obsolete option of compliance with directive 78/665/EEC (or EEC regulation 15.03) from 1 October 1990. The draft regulations also formally recognise the emission limits in directive 88/76/EEC.

Roads

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report on progress on national road scheme completions since publication of the White Paper entitled "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" (Cm. 125).

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Twenty-one national road schemes have been completed ahead of the original forecast completion date since the publication of "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" in April 1987.

Thirty-nine schemes have been completed in total. These are:

	Title	Completion date Forecast	Actual
M63	Stretford-Eccles Improvement Stage 3	August 1988	December 1987
A1	Baldersby Junction Improvement	October 1987	May 1987
A1	Clifton-Stannington Bridge GSJ	November 1987	October 1987
A2	Rochester Way Relief Road	April 1988	March 1988
A10	Buntingford Bypass	September 1987	June 1987
A10	Melbourn Bypass	January 1989	July 1988
A11	Wymondham-Cringleford	December 1987	November 1987
A12	Martlesham Bypass	March 1988	November 1987
A20	Sidcup Bypass	February 1988	November 1987
A30	Blackwater Bypass	May 1989	June 1988
A30	Exeter-Okehampton Stage 3	August 1987	July 1987
A30	Okehampton Bypass	October 1988	July 1988
A43	Brackley Bypass	January 1988	August 1987
A43	Towcester Bypass	June 1988	February 1988
A47	Wardley Hill Improvement	August 1988	October 1987
A52	Barthomley Link-M6	December 1987	July 1987
A64	Copmanthorpe GSJ	October 1987	July 1987
A64	Seamer-Crossgates Bypass	May 1988	February 1988
A406	South Woodford-Barking Relief Road	July 1988	December 1987
A419	Blunsdon-Cricklade Dualling	July 1988	June 1988
A422	Stratford Northern Bypass	September 1987	June 1987
M20	Tutt Hill Bridge Works	November 1987	November 1987
A19	Riccall and Barlby Bypass	November 1987	November 1987
A35	Bridport Link Road	July 1988	July 1988
A47	Postwick-Blofield Dualling	October 1987	October 1987
A69	Eighton Lodge Junction Improvement	December 1987	December 1987
A69	Hexham-Corbridge Additional Works	December 1987	December 1987
A303	Furze Hedge Improvement	July 1987	July 1987
A303	South Petherton-Broadway, Ilminster Bypass	July 1988	July 1988
A2	Barham Crossroads GSJ	April 1987	June 1987
A6	Chapel-en-le-Frith Bypass	November 1986	August 1987
A21	Pembury Bypass	April 1988	May 1988
A38	Belvedere Cross-Haldon Hill GSJ	March 1987	May 1987
A38	Hilliards Cross GSJ	September 1987	December 1987
A39	Bideford Bypass	April 1987	May 1987
A47	Peterborough Longthorpe GSJ	July 1987	November 1987
A435	Evesham Bypass	June 1987	July 1987
A595	Thursby Bypass	July 1987	August 1987
A616	Stocksbridge-M1	April 1988	May 1988

The following 21 schemes are expected to be completed in 1988-89:

	Scheme
M5	Widening Warndon-Rashwood
M62	Eastbound Climbing Lane J21-22
M62	Westbound Climbing Lane J24-25
M63	Stretford-Eccles Improvement Stages 1 and 2
A1	Wetherby Bypass
A17	New Washway Road
A27	Fontwell Bypass
A27	Havant-Chichester Bypass
A34	Hanford GSJ
A34	Whitway Diversion
A35	Dorchester Bypass
A36	Warminster Bypass
A38	Saltash Bypass
A46	Coventry Eastern Bypass
A49	Leominster Bypass
A65	Settle and Giggleswick Bypass
A69	Horsley-Corbridge Improvement
A303	Thruxton-Amesbury
A629	Kildwick-Beechcliffe
A650	Victoria Park-Crossflatts
	North Devon Link Road Stage 2A

A27

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing of 24 June, *Official Report*, column 771, what steps he has taken to ascertain the views of those who would be affected by the road flyover at the Offington roundabout proposed by the consultants appointed to consider the future route of the A27, as to whether the public can express a considered view of the various alternatives until a scale model of the proposed flyover is made available; and if he will now provide an artist's impression of what the roundabout depicted on the front of the summary of the consultants' proposals would look like if their recommendations were accepted, together with a detailed elevation and other diagrams showing the kind of structure which his Department would normally build in a similar situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 4 July 1988]*: The Department sent copies of the consultant's brochure to residents whose property could be required if the consultants' recommended route were built. The consultants sent about 80,000 letters to homes in the study area.

The information on display at the public exhibitions and in the consultants' report and brochure should be sufficient to enable members of the public to form a view on the recommendations, and to comment during the current consultation, which has been extended to 15 October, before we take a decision on whether to accept the consultants' findings.

The appearance of the flyover would depend on factors such as the precise alignment of the road and roundabout, the number and position of the supporting piers, any noise

barriers, the construction materials, and so on, details of which are not known at this early stage. Any pictorial illustration produced at this stage could be misleading.

With this qualification, we are arranging for the preparation of an artist's impression of what a flyover at Offington roundabout might look like. Arrangements for its display locally will be announced as soon as possible.

Motorways (Traffic Flows)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the latest available 24-hour daily traffic flow for the following sections of motorway (i) M3 junctions 4 to 5, (ii) M25 junctions 3 to 4, (iii) M42 junctions 10 to 11, (iv) M11 junctions 8 to 10, (v) M23 junctions 10 to 11, (vi) M62 junctions 7/8 to 9, (vii) M61 junctions 6 to 7/8, (viii) M61 junctions 18 to 19, (ix) A1(M) junctions 31 to 32, (x) M2 junctions 4 to 5, (xi) M54 junctions 4 to 7 and (xii) M56 junctions 12 to 15.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated average daily flows (24 hours) for all motor vehicles are given in the table.

Motorway	*Junction*	*Average 24 hour flow for all motor vehicles (1987)*
M3	4 to 5	49,000
M25	3 to 4	55,000
M11	8 to 9	37,000
	9 to 10	21,000
M23	10 to 11	33,200
M62	7/8 to 9	43,500
M61	6 to 7/8	39,500
M2	4 to 5	26,000
M54	4 to 5	n/a
	5 to 6	18,800
	6 to 7	19,100
M56	12 to 14	55,000
	14 to 15	50,000
M42	10 to 11	n/a
M62	18 to 19	102,800

n/a = not available.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Freshwater Biological Association

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the proposal to close the Freshwater Biological Association station at East Stoke in Dorset; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has received two representations about the proposal to close the Freshwater Biological Association station at East Stoke. The Natural Environment Research Council is considering improvements to its Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Furzebrook, to accommodate staff from the Freshwater Biological Association. This would allow the sale of the association's site at East Stoke. I understand that staff support amalgamation with Furzebrook, and that NERC would retain essential freshwater research facilities at East Stoke.

School Milk

Mr. Ground: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local education authorities in England have *(a)* ceased and *(b)* continued to provide milk in schools since 1 April 1988.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available at present. It will be collected in the October 1988 schools meals census, the results of which will be published in the spring of 1989.

Mr. Ground: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he gives to school governors or head teachers on the possibility of procuring school milk from European Community sources where a local education authority does not make arrangements to provide such milk.

Mr. Dunn: This is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I understand that information on the operation of the European Community milk subsidy scheme is circulated annually to LEAs by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce. It is for each authority to draw the scheme to the attention of the schools in its area.

Education (Inner London)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will amend the draft guidance on the transfer of responsibility for education in inner London to provide for cross-borough planning for educational provision for *(a)* pupils with physical disabilities, *(b)* delicate pupils, *(c)* pupils with hearing impairments, *(d)* pupils with visual impairments and *(e)* autistic pupils;

(2) what advice he has given the inner London boroughs subsequent to the publication of the draft guidance on the transfer of responsibility for education in inner London on the provision for pupils and students with special educational needs.

Mr. Dunn: The draft guidance was published as a basis for consultation with the inner London boroughs, with ILEA and with others involved in the education service in inner London. The Department has received a number of comments on the draft, some of which relate to provision for those with special educational needs. These will be taken into account in the final version of the guidance which my right hon. Friend will publish soon after the Education Reform Bill receives Royal Assent. In the interim, the Department has been in discussion with all the inner London boroughs on a range of educational issues, and has set up a working party to discuss the future of residential special schools outside the inner-London area.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of the Inner London education authority's centre for motor and associated communication handicaps—CENMACH—following the proposed abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that the centre is based at the Charlton Park special school in Greenwich but offers a service to physically handicapped children generally in ILEA. My right hon. Friend has indicated in the draft guidance on the transfer of responsibility for education in inner London that he would expect each inner London borough council to maintain any ILEA special school which is within its area. The development plans which boroughs have been requested to provide should state clearly the borough councils' intention with respect to any maintained special school in their area which services more than a local need.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library the text of the speech given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) to the conference on learning options held on 29 June and hosted by the Prince of Wales' advisory committee on disability; what further consideration he has given to the desirability of making regional arrangements in inner London for the purpose of providing special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I have arranged for a copy of the text of the speech to be placed in the Library of the House. The draft guidance on the transfer of responsibility for education in inner London makes clear the Government's view that where co-operative arrangements are considered by boroughs to be appropriate, they are likely to be most effective if they operate on a voluntary basis. Whether such arrangements are required in relation to particular aspects of provision is a matter on which discussions are continuing with the boroughs and ILEA.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the future of special education in inner London; what reply he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has received over 3,600 letters about our proposals to transfer responsibility for education in inner London to the inner London councils, since my right hon. Friend's announcement earlier this year. Some 300 of these made particular reference to special education, and covered a broad range of points, including the future of individual schools. Replies sought to explain the Government's view of the future arrangements for special education in inner London, as set out in the Department's draft guidance to councils.

Scottish Universities

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of Scottish domiciled students entering Scottish universities in each of the past five years came from *(a)* state schools and *(b)* fee-paying schools.

Mr. Robert Jackson *[holding answer 5 May 1988]:* The table shows the proportions of Scottish-domiciled entrants to Scottish universities in 1982-86 from different categories of educational institution:

Type of institution previously attended	*1982* *Per cent.*	*1983* *Per cent.*	*1984* *Per cent.*	*1985* *Per cent.*	*1986* *Per cent.*
Independent school	4·6	5·1	5·2	5·6	6·1
Maintained school[1]	81·1	80·2	81·4	80·6	78·0
Further education	11·1	9·9	10·6	11·7	11·6
Unknown	3·2	4·8	2·8	2·1	4·3

[1] Includes grant-aided schools and a small number of Scottish domiciled students attending maintained schools in England.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total amount spent on overseas aid in 1978-79 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1988 prices; what is the estimated figure for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The public expenditure allocation for overseas aid (net aid programme) in 1978-79 was £715 million, or £1,533 million at 1988-89 prices. The comparable planning figure for 1988-89 is £1,307 million.

Since 1982-83 the aid budget has been maintained in real terms. It is now growing. The planning figure for 1988-89 is over £90 million more than we spent in 1987-88. The programme is planned to rise by a further £68 million in 1989-90 and £45 million in 1990-91.

Technical Co-operation Officers

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many technical co-operation officers are employed by the Overseas Development Administration; how many of them are engaged on contracts of up to six, 12 and 24 months, respectively; how many new technical co-operation officer appointments have been made in each of the last three years; and what is the current average time taken in recruiting and placing in post technical co-operation officers.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 31 December 1987 532 technical co-operation officers were employed by the Overseas Development Administration in posts overseas. Of these, 22 were engaged on contracts of up to six months, 17 on contracts of between six and 12 months, 115 on contracts of between 12 and 24 months and 378 were on contracts of 24 months or more.

356 TCOs were recruited in 1985; 469 in 1986; and 452 in 1987. The majority of these were recruited for short-term assignments, although the number of short-term TCOs in post at any one time is small.

Of the long-term appointments most are selected, accepted by the recipient Government and in post within about six months of the request to recruit being received by the ODA. But many recruitment requirements, both long and short term, are identified well in advance, so that our aim is to fill posts on time rather than to achieve any average period from request to placement.

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total cost to his Department of employing technical co-operation officers in each of the last three financial years, including all ancillary costs of recruitment, travelling, housing and administration and any host country costs; and what are the equivalent total costs for consultancy contracts.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost of technical co-operation officers (including travel and housing but excluding recruitment, administration and training) in each of the last three financial years was as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	27·723
1985-86	30·185
1986-87	30·587

(figures for 1987-88 are not yet available).

In addition aid programme funds are used for certain recruitment expenses (including advertising) and for briefing and training. Figures for the last three financial years are as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	1·396
1985-86	1·517
1986-87	1·663

However, these figures include some expenditure on other staff which cannot readily be disaggregated.

Expenditure on consultants was as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	29·289
1985-86	30·175
1986-87	33·861

None of these figures includes expenditure met from FCO (including ODA) running costs.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the balance of trade in manufactured goods between the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany for each year since 1970 expressed in 1987 prices.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade in manufactured goods between countries is not available in terms of constant prices. The information is therefore not available.

British Telecom

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will invite the Director General of the Office of Telecommunications to review the activities and performance of British Telecom's international products and overseas division as part of its revision of British Telecom's price control formula, in view of the implications of the operating losses of this division for United Kingdom consumers of British Telecom's services;

(2) if he will invite the Director General of the Office of Telecommunications to seek from British Telecom, as part of its revision of British Telecom's price control formula, a published breakdown of the activities and financial results of its international products and overseas division.

Mr. Butcher: No. It is for the director general to determine how he excercises his functions under the Telecommunications Act 1984. His statement of 7 July explained the factors he had taken into account in reaching his view on BT's future price control formula.

The BT report and accounts for 1988 include information on the results and activities of these two divisions. The Director General of Telecommunications has powers to require BT to provide him with such further information as he may require.

Financial Services Act

Sir William Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to extend the Financial Services Act to cover deposit-based pensions, and in particular to ensure that these products are subject to those rules which apply to personal pensions sold under the Financial Services Act, under the headings: best advice, know your customer, suitability and disclosure.

Mr. Maude: I do not at present plan to do so.

Used Vehicles (Roadworthiness)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to empower trading standards officers to inspect used vehicles for sale on garage forecourts for roadworthiness; and what further steps he plans to take to deter the practice of clocking by used car dealers.

Mr. Atkins: Following a meeting which took place in December 1987 when my hon. Friends the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport met a delegation led by the Director General of Fair Trading, the director general set up a working party to examine these and other matters in greater detail. I understand that the director general's working party is aiming to produce a report on its findings in the autumn. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport and I will study the working party's report when it is available.

Balance of Trade (EFTA)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom balance of trade in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* generally, for European Free Trade Association countries, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the table.

United Kingdom balance of trade with EFTA
Overseas trade statistics basis—£ billion

	Total visible trade	*Manufactures*[1]
1979	−1·8	−1·4
1980	−0·9	−0·5
1981	−1·6	−0·9
1982	−1·9	−1·3
1983	−3·1	−1·8
1984	−4·3	−2·3
1985	−4·7	−2·4
1986	−5·1	−3·0
1987	−5·3	−3·1

Notes
[1] Standard International Trade Classification (Rev2) Sections 5 to 8.
EFTA—present membership throughout.
Sources United Kingdom overseas trade statistics
Monthly review of external trade statistics.

Export Unit Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the International Monetary Fund trade-weighted relative export unit values for United Kingdom prices as of percentage of German

prices compared with the same percentage figure in the Department of Trade and Industry figures for the last four available quarters and for *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1981 and *(c)* 1976.

Mr. Alan Clark: The export-weighted relative export unit value indices published in the Department's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" are compiled by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The comparison between these and the total-trade weighted relative export unit value indices compiled and published by the IMF is as follows:

Relative Export Unit Value Indices for Manufacturing[1]

1980 = 100

	Export Weighted			*Total Trade Weighted*		
	United Kingdom	*F R Germany*	*Ratio of UK to F R Germany per cent.*	*United Kingdom*	*F R Germany*	*Ratio of UK to F R Germany per cent.*
1976	74·8	103·2	72·4	75·0	103·4	72·5
1981	98·2	90·0	109·1	98·8	90·7	108·9
1985	89·2	86·0	103·7	90·3	87·3	103·4
1987 Q1	86·0	100·7	85·4	86·8	101·3	85·7
1987 Q2	90·4	98·7	91·6	91·3	99·3	91·9
1987 Q3	90·3	97·9	92·2	91·2	98·8	92·3
1987 Q4	92·9	98·7	94·1	93·8	99·4	94·4

[1] Each country compared with a weighted average of sixteen other OECD countries.
Source: International Monetary Fund.

Import Unit Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the increase or decrease of import unit values for finished manufactures and export unit values for British manufacturers for each quarter since 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Finished Manufactures

Unit value index 1980 = 100

	Imports		*Exports*	
	Index	*Per cent. change on pervious quarter*	*Index*	*Per cent. change on previous quarter*
1982 Q4	118·2	—	119·5	—
1983 Q1	124·7	5·5	123·7	3·5
Q2	127·0	1·8	126·1	1·9
Q3	126·2	−0·6	128·3	1·7
Q4	127·6	1·1	128·7	0·3
1984 Q1	131·9	3·4	132·4	2·9
Q2	135·1	2·4	134·8	1·8
Q3	136·8	1·3	138·6	2·8
Q4	142·4	4·1	140·9	1·7
1985 Q1	148·0	3·9	144·4	2·5
Q2	146·5	−1·0	146·4	1·4
Q3	142·8	−2·5	146·7	0·2
Q4	141·7	−0·8	147·2	0·3
1986 Q1	146·7	3·5	149·2	1·4
Q2	146·8	0·1	151·5	1·5
Q3	150·1	2·2	153·8	1·5
Q4	157·9	5·2	156·3	1·6
1987 Q1	161·5	2·3	158·6	1·5
Q2	155·7	−3·6	161·1	1·6
Q3	156·2	0·3	161·8	0·4
Q4	157·1	0·6	163·6	1·1
1988 Q1	157·6	0·3	165·8	1·3

Source: DTI
Notes:
1. Imports cif
2. Exports fob

Trade Deficit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the United Kingdom deficit on trade in manufacturing for 1988 with *(a)* West Germany and *(b)* the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department does not make such estimates. In the first five months of this year, there were crude deficits of £3·4 billion and £5·4 billion with the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Community, respectively.

Hearing Aid Council (Disciplinary Committee)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many cases the disciplinary committee of the Hearing Aid Council has heard in each year since its establishment;

(2) on how many occasions the disciplinary committee of the Hearing Aid Council has met in each year since its establishment;

(3) how many hearing aid dispensers, or firms employing hearing aid dispensers, have been struck off the register for each year since its establishment.

Mr. Butcher: The Hearing Aid Council is an independent statutory body and is not required to account to my Department for the exercise of its statutory functions. However I understand that the information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

Hearing aid council disciplinary committee

Year	*Number of cases*	*Number of meetings*	*Numbers struck off register*
1968	—	—	—
1969	—	—	—
1970	—	—	—
1971	—	—	—
1972	5	2	2
1973	2	1	1
1974	3	2	2
1975	1	1	1
1976	1	1	1
1977	—	—	—
1978	—	—	—
1979	—	—	—
1980	—	—	—
1981	—	—	—
1982	1	1	—
1983	1	1	—
1984	2	1	—
1985	1	1	—
1986	—	—	—
1987	—	—	—
1988 (to date)	—	—	—
Total	17	11	7

Mobile Telephones

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what estimate he has of the implications of the use of ETACS frequencies for mobile telephones for the compatibility of United Kingdom systems with other European Community systems after 1991; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to seek powers to enable him to restrict the number of new mobile telephone users until system capacity has been improved; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has received any reports from Oftel on mobile telephone systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The proposed pan-European digital cellular radio system will begin operation in frequencies which are being reserved throughout Europe for the purpose. The use of ETACS frequencies for present analogue systems in the United Kingdom has enabled us to meet demand by the two United Kingdom operators for more capacity without prejudicing the frequencies being reserved for the common European system.

Because the operators compete on quality of service among other things, and the forces of competition have proved more than adequate in stimulating them to provide capacity. The United Kingdom has consequently more capacity, by a large margin, than any other European country. I have received no recent advice from Oftel specifically relating to mobile cellular telephone system.

Rover Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from British Aerospace in connection with the proposed takeover of Rover on the extent to which they will be permitted to merge the assets and liabilities of Rover Group with the contractual obligations connected with the supply by British Aerospace of Westland Black Hawk helicopters to Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Citizens' Band Radio

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further steps he is taking to reduce interference problems caused by non-approved citizens' band radio apparatus.

Mr. Butcher: I have tabled an order under section 7 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1967 banning the import, sale, manufacture or possession of 27 MHz citizens' band apparatus which cannot legally be used, and also updated regulations requiring that 934 MHz CB equipment conforms to the appropriate specifications. The widespread sale of unapproved apparatus has led to interference to authorised radio services including, most seriously, to emergency services. The introduction of these measures will ensure that unapproved equipment is removed from the market and that the range of approved equipment covers the new CEPT CB radio service, in harmony with the rest of Europe.

Voluntary Restraint

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, Official Report, column *478*, what was the outcome of discussions between the footwear industry and their Republic of Korea counterparts on reviewing the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been informed that the outcome of the discussions between the United Kingdom footwear industry and their Republic of Korea counterparts was the termination of their inter-industry agreement.

Airbuses

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assurance the new financial controller of the Airbus project has received on the extent to which he will be advised of the nature and extent of the financial aid given by the three other nations participating in the project; and if it is his intention that this information will be published in any form.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The financial controller of Airbus Industrie has yet to be appointed. I do not envisage that the financial controller would be involved in the aid offered by Governments to the industrial partners in Airbus Industrie.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will invite Commissioner Sutherland to

inquire into the aid given by member states to the production of the Airbus project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* No. Aid offered to the Airbus partners by the Governments of France, West Germany and Spain is a matter for those Governments.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the credit terms, and payments arrangements for the Airbus project with general agreement on tariffs and trade obligations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* Assistance provided by the Government to British Aerospace plc in connection with its participation in Airbus programmes is fully consistent with the Government's obligations arising under the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Vanguard System

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many hours of consulting work were provided for the United Kingdom economy as a result of the Vanguard system.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* During the early part of the Vanguard awareness programme, free advice on the use of value added and data services was offered to firms in the United Kingdom. Between October 1986 and May 1987, some 900 firms were given 7,440 hours of consultancy services. Advice on the use of financial and information systems, which includes value added and data services, is now available to small and medium sized firms under the enterprise initiative.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all those cases of suspected fraud currently under consideration by the serious fraud office.

The Solicitor-General: Sixteen separate cases involving a total of 40 defendants are being prosecuted by the serious fraud office and are currently before the courts.

There are a number of other cases in which warrants for arrest or extradition have been issued, but not served; or which are still under investigation and in which no proceedings have been instituted. It would not be appropriate to identify such cases, as to do so might either attract adverse publicity to persons whom future inquiries may exonerate; or frustrate inquiries before suspected wrongdoers are apprehended.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish a table of the number of appeals to the immigration appeal tribunal allowed and dismissed in 1987 and in the first quarter of 1988.

The Attorney-General: The figures requested are shown in the table.

Period	*Appeals allowed*	*Appeals dismissed*
1987	171	319
First Quarter 1988	46	78

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish a table showing the number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed and dismissed in 1987 and in the first quarter of 1988, broken down according to the nationality of the appellant and the type of decision appealed against.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities record the nationality of appellants to the adjudicators in only five categories: appellants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, EEC countries, and all other countries. They record 15 categories of appeal type. The figures sought, broken down in these categories, are shown in the tables.

Appellants from INDIA

Appeal Categories	*1987 Number allowed*	*1987 Number dismissed*	*1st quarter 1988 Number allowed*	*1st quarter 1988 Number dismissed*
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	3	15	—	2
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	3	45	1	4
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	—	—	1	—
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes (Not Husbands or Wives or Fiances or Fiancees)	23	45	3	20
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment Business or Independent Means (Not Husbands, Wives, Fiances or Fiancees)	2	12	—	3
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by Wives and Children, other dependent relatives and returning residents.	23	99	4	21
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	4	4	—	1
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	33	92	8	15
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	90	202	18	24
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S.14(2)).	2	4	—	1
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	31	173	8	47
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	5	22	1	9
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	—	2	—	—

Appeal Categories	1987 Number allowed	1987 Number dismissed	1st quarter 1988 Number allowed	1st quarter 1988 Number dismissed
14. Giving of Removal Directions	1	3	—	—
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	1	—	—
Total	220	719	44	147

Appellants from PAKISTAN

Appeal Categories	1987 Number allowed	1987 Number dismissed	1st quarter 1988 Number allowed	1st quarter 1988 Number dismissed
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	—	11	—	5
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	7	46	3	5
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	—	—	1	—
4 Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes (Not Husbands or Wives or Fiances or Fiancees)	36	93	31	70
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment Business or Independent Means (Not Husbands, Wives, Fiances or Fiancees)	—	3	—	1
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by Wives and Children, other dependent relatives and returning residents.	148	299	16	32
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	3	8	—	1
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	47	51	20	35
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	181	203	41	59
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S. 14(2)).	1	4	—	—
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	19	137	4	36
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	6	19	—	11
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	—	2	—	—
14. Giving of Removal Directions	—	5	—	1
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	2	—	—
Total	448	883	116	256

Appellants from BANGLADESH

Appeal Categories	1987 Number allowed	1987 Number dismissed	1st quarter 1988 Number allowed	1st quarter 1988 Number dismissed
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	12	44	3	10
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	4	52	2	5
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	5	19	6	2
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes (Not Husbands or Wives or Fiances or Fiancees)	29	123	8	40
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment Business or Independent Means (Not Husbands, Wives, Fiances or Fiancees)	—	10	—	2
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by Wives and Children, other dependent relatives and returning residents	607	1,204	81	176
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	1	—	—	1
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	14	16	2	7
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	3	3	—	—
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S. 14(2)).	—	—	—	1
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	6	71	—	19
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	1	7	—	3
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	—	—	—	—
14. Giving of Removal Directions	—	—	—	—
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	—	—	—
Total	682	1,549	102	266

Appellants from EEC

Appeal Categories	*1987 Number allowed*	*1987 Number dismissed*	*1st quarter 1988 Number allowed*	*1st quarter 1988 Number dismissed*
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	—	3	—	—
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	3	32	—	3
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	—	—	—	—
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes (Not Husbands or Wives or Fiances or Fiancees)	—	2	—	—
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment Business or Independent Means (Not Husbands, Wives, Fiances or Fiancees)	—	2	—	—
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by Wives and Children, other dependent relatives and returning residents.	—	—	—	—
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	—	—	—	—
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	—	1	—	—
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	—	—	—	—
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S. 14(2)).	—	2	—	—
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	—	22	—	—
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	—	2	—	—
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	—	1	—	—
14. Giving of Removal Directions	—	1	—	—
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	3	—	—
Total	3	71	—	3

Appellants from ALL OTHER COUNTRIES

Appeal Categories	*1987 Number allowed*	*1987 Number dismissed*	*1st quarter 1988 Number allowed*	*1st quarter 1988 Number dismissed*
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	14	51	4	28
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	48	510	9	163
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	4	20	1	5
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes (Not Husbands or Wives or Fiances or Fiancees)	281	763	54	202
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment Business or Independent Means (Not Husbands, Wives, Fiances or Fiancees)	7	26	—	7
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by Wives and Children, other dependent relatives and returning residents.	56	226	10	49
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	7	25	—	1
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	12	11	4	5
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	5	16	2	3
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S. 14(2)).	20	37	—	23
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	143	1,131	42	291
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	27	149	12	86
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	3	25	1	5
14. Giving of Removal Directions	2	39	—	10
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	18	—	2
Total	629	3,047	139	880

EMPLOYMENT

Taxi Drivers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which local authorities have been approached by his Department with the request to provide their lists of taxi driver licences.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Centre for the Unemployed, Torquay

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the Manpower Services Commission's decision to withdraw financial support for the centre for the unemployed at Factory row, Castle Circus, Torquay.

Mr. Nicholls: No final decision about the future funding of this project has been made. Negotiations to enable smaller community programme sponsors to

sub-contract with employment training managers to offer project-based training places will take place once the award of contracts to training managers has been agreed.

Repetitive Strain Injury

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the results of the study into repetitive strain injury at the university of Birmingham and the Institute of Occupational Health in Edinburgh.

Mr. Nicholls: The findings of the study at the university of Birmingham are due to be reported in about a year's time and those of the study at the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Edinburgh should be reported later this year.

MSC Initial Training Scheme

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what exemption criteria exist for entry into the Manpower Services Commission initial training scheme for young people on day care programmes which are a condition of a supervision order, ordered by the courts as an alternative to a custodial sentence.

Mr. Cope: All young people under the age of 18 are covered by the Government's guarantee of a place on the youth training schme if they want one. This includes those who are subject to a supervision order, provided that the conditions of such an order do not prevent them from taking up a YTS place. The Training Commission's planned initial training scheme will be part of YTS and as such participation will be voluntary. However it will be limited to young people who show a clear need for special preparatory training and assessment prior to going onto a full YTS programme.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* all the exempted categories of persons in the Manpower Services Commission initial training scheme.

Mr. Cope: The Training Commission is planning to introdue an initial training scheme within the youth training scheme. Initial training is not intended to be a facility open to all young people generally, but to provide short duration training and assessment for those who are eligible for YTS but who need help to overcome particular difficulties or problems before they go onto the full scheme.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the estimated number of unemployed adults aged (i) 16 years, (ii) 17 years and (iii) 18 years *(a)* in total, *(b)* by unemployment benefit office and *(c)* by administrative region.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants, in the United Kingdom and for each of the standard regions, in the requested age groups on the latest available date, 14 April 1988. The information is not available for unemployment benefit offices except at disproportionate cost.

Unemployed claimants—14 April 1988

	16 years and under	*17 years*	*18 years*
South East	4,266	11,130	15,348
Greater London	2,024	5,753	8,262
East Anglia	725	1,585	2,089
South West	1,485	3,627	4,862
West Midlands	3,602	7,555	10,129
East Midlands	2,027	4,393	5,651
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,729	8,283	10,476
North West	5,086	10,318	13,845
Northern	3,097	5,173	7,029
Wales	2,581	4,054	5,417
Scotland	7,288	10,949	13,193
Northern Ireland	1,383	2,676	4,512
United Kingdom	36,269	69,743	92,551

Career Development Loans

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to make career development loans available nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: From today career development loans are available throughout Great Britain. We have piloted career development loans from April 1986 in four areas. Evaluation has shown that they are a very useful addition to the training infrastructure of the country. During the pilot a total of almost £1·4 million pounds has been lent to more than 650 people to undertake a wide range of vocational training. Career development loans will continue to be run in partnership with the three banks which participated in the pilot, Barclays, the Clydesdale and the Co-operative. Anyone aged 18 or over who lives or intends to train in Great Britain will be able to apply. The Government provide an incentive to borrowers by paying the interest on the loan during the period of training and for up to three months afterwards and guarantee a proportion of the loans to make it easier for the banks to consider lending for vocational training. The costs of the expanded scheme will be met from within the existing resources of the Department.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Copyright

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will place in the Library copies of European Commission Document Com (88) 172 (final) (Green Paper on Copyright).

Mr. Wakeham: I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster arranged for two copies of that document to be placed in the Library earlier this week.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Subsidised Milk

Mr. Ground: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which local education authorities in England have bought subsidised milk under the European Community subsidy scheme since April 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Claims for school milk subsidy in respect of milk supplied during April 1988 may be received up to 31 October 1988. To date the following local education authorities in England have submitted claims in respect of milk purchased under the European Community subsidy scheme since 1 April:

Avon	Leicestershire
Berkshire	Manchester
Bolton	Oldham
Bury Metropolitan	St. Helens
Cheshire	Solihull
Cleveland	Staffordshire
Doncaster	East Sussex
Gateshead	West Sussex
Havering	South Tyneside
Kent	Wolverhampton
Leeds	North Yorkshire

Agriculture Council

Mr. Cran: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council in Brussels on 18 and 19 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 20 June, final agreement on the Community's farm support prices and related measures for 1988-89 could not be reached because of last-minute objections raised by the Greek Minister. Although it was thought that further discussion on 23-24 June, which led to proposals voted on at the Fisheries Council meeting on those days, had overcome the difficulty, this subsequently proved not to be the case due to a disagreement about the interpretation of the relevant text.

I am glad to say that at this week's meeting of the Council of Ministers, at which I represented the Government, the Greek problem was resolved in a way which was satisfactory to the United Kingdom and fully met our objectives. The decisions on prices and other measures will therefore now come into effect as described in my reply of 27 June to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

The Council also reached agreement, subject to receiving the opinion of the European Parliament, on contributions from the Community budget on two disaster aid packages, first towards the cost of assistance to olive producers in Greece who were affected by unusually severe frosts last March and second towards the cost of making good damage from last year's flooding in parts of Spain.

WALES

M4

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the latest available traffic flow figures for each link of the M4 motorway in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Traffic flows have been recorded for a 12-hour period between 7 am and 7 pm on a weekday and the latest available figures for each section of the M4 motorway are as follows:

M4 Sections	*Traffic flows and dates recorded*	
Jn. 22 Newhouse—Jn. 23 Magor	35,300	June 1988
Jn. 23 Magor—Jn. 24 Coldra	[1]25,800	September 1982
Jn. 24 Coldra—Jn. 25 Caerleon	43,900	September 1986
Jn. 25 Caerleon—Jn. 26 Malpas	60,800	June 1986
Jn. 26 Malpas—Jn. 27 High Cross	42,600	June 1984
Jn. 27 High Cross—Jn. 28 Tredegar Park	45,000	May 1985
Jn. 28 Tredegar Park—Jn. 29 Castleton	53,100	September 1987
Jn. 29 Castleton—Jn. 32 Coryton	27,700	September 1987
Jn. 32 Coryton—Jn. 33 Capel Llaniltern	32,500	September 1985
Jn. 33 Capel Llaniltern—Jn. 34 Miskin	39,700	September 1987
Jn. 34 Miskin—Jn. 35 Pencoed	30,500	September 1986
Jn. 35 Pencoed—Jn. 36 Sarn	21,200	October 1984
Jn. 36 Sarn—Jn. 37 Pyle	24,100	October 1987
Jn. 37 Pyle—Jn. 38 Margam	28,700	May 1988
Jn. 38 Margam—Jn. 39 Groes	24,400	May 1988
Jn. 39 Groes—Jn. 40 Taibach	27,400	November 1987
Jn. 40 Taibach—Jn. 41 Pentyla	28,200	November 1987
Jn. 41 Pentyla—Jn. 41A Baglan	34,500	January 1988
Jn. 44 Lonlas—Jn. 45 Ynysforgan	23,700	June 1988
Jn. 45 Ynysforgan—Jn. 46 Llangyfelach	21,200	October 1987
Jn. 46 Llangyfelach—Jn. 47 Penllergaer	18,500	April 1985
Jn. 47 Penllergaer—Jn. 48 Hendy	23,600	May 1988
Jn. 48 Hendy—Jn. 49 Pont Abraham	15,400	October 1986

[1] Note Next Count due August 1988 Autumn.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are currently 277 computer work stations in my Department and a further 30 machines which are used only for word processing, but which could be converted into work stations. The ratio of work stations to civil servants is 1:8. In five years' time I expect the ratio to be in the order of 1:3.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's strategic IT committee is chaired by the principal establishments officer and has eight other members repreenting (at senior level) major users, IT specialists and the Central Computer and Telecomunications Agency. Neither I nor my ministerial colleagues attend its meetings.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses of training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Walker: Five out of the 14 officers at these grades have attended a senior management tutorial on information technology in the last 12 months.

Farming

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify the number of farmers engaged in *(a)* lamb, *(b)* beef and *(c)* cereal production in Wales during each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available in exactly the form requested but the numbers of holdings engaged in the three enterprises are given in the table:

Number of main holdings with:

	Sheep and Lambs	*Beef Breeding Cows*[1]	*Cereals*
1979	16,865	13,301	7,383
1980	16,181	12,543	7,211
1981	16,190	12,139	6,750
1982	16,304	11,839	6,432
1983	16,452	11,303	5,758
1984	16,563	11,483	5,653
1985	16,770	11,903	5,664
1986	16,938	10,907	5,396
1987	17,180	11,166	5,228

[1]Excludes store cattle.
Source: June Agricultural Census

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Geraint Howells To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the present state of the Welsh plant breeding station, Crogerddan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh plant breeding station is part of the Agricultural and Food Research Council's institute for grassland and animal production and as such is the responsibility of that research council. The Government are considering overall the research and development programmes of the agricultural departments to establish those areas of research which should more appropriately be funded by industry. No decisions have yet been taken and it is too early to say what the effects will be on individual establishments.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hearing therapists are currently employed by the National Health Service in Wales; and how many were employed in each year since 1980.

Mr. Grist: There are currently three hearing therapists employed in the National Health Service in Wales with a further two due to complete their training shortly. Information for earlier years is not held centrally.

Gravel Extraction (Llay)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet residents and councillors from the Llay area concerned at proposals to extract gravel from the Coed Mawr and Balderwood quarries and about the impact on the local environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No. This is a matter for the mineral planning authority, Clwyd county council.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will give the number of psychiatric hospitals in each area for each year since 1974 to April 1988; and what is the number of beds in each hospital.

Mr. Grist: The table shows the hospitals classified as psychiatric (mental illness and mental handicap) with the number of staffed beds allocated as at 31 March each year. It should be noted however, that other non-psychiatric hospitals have psychiatric beds.

DHA/Hospital	*Type*[1]	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd																
Broughton	M.H.	55	55	55	55	55	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	34	28
Coed Du	M.H.	55	55	55	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	41	34
Gwynfa	M.I.	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	20	20	18	18	18
North Wales	M.I.	780	732	730	677	652	648	603	603	602	615	611	578	541	507	487
Pool Park	M.I.		80	80	80	80	80	80	84	80	80	80	69	62	54	54
East Dyfed																
Allt-y-Mynydd	M.H.	62	60	60	60	60	60	60	56	47	46	46	46	46	—[2]	—[2]
Cartrefle Unit	M.H.	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	—[3]	8	8
St. Davids	M.I.	836	783	783	783	730	730	730	685	685	586	552	506	487	444	439
Gwent																
Llanfrechfa Grange	M.H.	536	522	454	454	442	420	430	413	408	408	408	408	380	380	378
Pen-y-Fal	M.I.	850	850	822	799	797	797	797	797	598	560	521	497	497	490	490
St. Cadoc's	M.I.	439	439	411	402	400	400	400	400	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
Gwynedd																
Bryn-y-Neuadd	M.H.	330	330	330	330	330	310	310	310	290	291	291	291	315	315	315
Garth Angharad	M.H.	59	59	59	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	11	11	11	10
Llwyn View	M.H.	68	50	50	50	50	46	46	46	46	46	46	31	31	31	24
Mid Glamorgan																
Glanrhyd	M.I.	448	448	448	448	416	370	351	344	344	344	330	337	304	273	260
Hensol	M.H.	566	566	530	530	530	530	530	530	481	471	471	471	430	419	399
Parc	M.I.	940	900	900	893	845	785	747	747	707	707	707	667	627	545	510
Pen-y-Fai	M.I.	178	178	178	178	161	150	149	149	149	149	149	140	102	110	99
The Rest	M.H.	47	47	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]	—[4]
Powys																
Brynhyfryd	M.H.	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	102	97	90	70	70	70	70	70	70	70

DHA/Hospital	*Type*[1]	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Llys Maldwyn	M.H.	97	93	88	85	83	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	70
Mid Wales	M.I.	422	422	422	422	422	422	422	422	422	422	350	350	320	320	320
South Glamorgan																
Ely	M.H.	509	490	470	456	441	434	430	434	432	427	428	411	410	396	384
Royal Hamadryad	M.I.	16	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	51	51	51	51
Whitchurch	M.I.	505	476	454	440	476	481	466	445	467	467	467	483	483	450	450
West Glamorgan																
Cefn Coed	M.I.	478	478	410	416	393	393	379	379	366	366	366	335	360	348	332
Drymma	M.H.	64	64	64	64	62	68	68	68	68	60	60	60	16	—[6]	—[6]
Garngoch	M.I.	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	—[5]	39	39	39	39
Llwyneryr	M.H.	27	43	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	56	56	56

[1] Abbreviations: M.H. denotes mental handicap hospital, MI denotes mental illness hospital.
[2] Closed 6 December 1986.
[3] Opened 16 December 1986.
[4] Closed 28 January 1976.
[5] Not classified as psychiatric.
[6] Closed 10 May 1986.
Note: There are no psychiatric hospitals in Pembrokeshire.

In-patients

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of in-patients in each area authority, for each year since 1974 until the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the Welsh Office publication "Bed Use Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Acute Hospital Beds

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the average daily occupancy of acute hospital beds in Wales, by area and age groups *(a)* 0-four years, *(b)* five to 14 years, *(c)* 15 to 44 years, *(d)* 45 to 64 years, *(e)* 65 to 74 years, and *(f)* 75 years plus, for each year since 1974 to the last year for which the figures are available.

Mr. Grist: Information in the form requested is not available. However, figures for the occupancy of in-patient beds, analysed by district health authority and by specialty are published in annual volumes of "Bed Use Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Welsh Language

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his reply of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 351, he will now make a statement in relation to the further discussion he had with the working group he established to advise him on issues relating to the Welsh language.

Mr. Peter Walker: The working group of eight eminent Welsh speakers which I established to advise me on matters relating to the Welsh language recommended the establishment of a special body to co-ordinate activity, offer advice, consider the best ways of marketing the language and to begin work on reviewing existing legislation with a direct bearing on the Welsh language.

I have discussed this with the working group and have decided to accept its proposal. I shall therefore set up a Welsh Language Board—Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg.

This will have the positive and practical task of:

Developing voluntary codes of practice on the use of Welsh in the public and private sectors;

Advising on the use of Welsh in public administration;

Investigating complaints, and discussing such complaints with the parties involved and advising on practical solutions where possible;

Reviewing and reporting on grant supported activity;

Liaising with statutory and non-statutory bodies on language issues;

Advising the Secretary of State for Wales on matters relating to the Welsh language and considering specific issues referred to it by the Secretary of State.

The board will be set up in the very near future and I am delighted to say that Mr. John Elfed Jones has accepted my invitation to be its chairman. His fellow advisers were united in recommending that he should be the first chairman. I was delighted to agree with their recommendation because he is a man who is known in the Principality for getting things done. The board will work through a limited number of specialist sub-committees concentrating on defined areas and issues initially related to:-

the promotion of the Welsh language;

the use of the Welsh language by local authorities and public bodies;

the use of the Welsh language in the private sector;

proposals for legislation.

The board's secretariat will be provided initially by staff seconded from the Welsh Office. Administrative costs will be met by the Welsh Office and the funding of any projects which the board itself might wish to undertake additional to those which I presently support will be considered on their merits.

There is, I believe, a great deal that this board can do to secure a fine future for the Welsh language. What is achieved will depend largely on the effort which the board and its sub-committees put into the task—and the co-operation of the people of Wales. I am grateful to the group for its work and am pleased that I have its unanimous support for this proposal.

Hospital Staff (Gwent)

Sir John Stradling Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of staff at each hospital in the Gwent health authority at the latest date available, together with the same figures for five and 10 years ago, respectively.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* The information requested is not available prior to 1980, but

the following table gives the whole-time equivalent staff in post by category of staff and in total at September 1980, 1982 and 1987.

Hospital[1]	Ancillary			Administrative and Clerical			Maintenance			Nursing and Midwifery[2]		
	1980	1982	1987	1980	1982	1987	1980	1982	1987	1980	1982	1987
Abertillery	25·9	25·6	23·4	1·5	2·1	1·5	—	—	—	59·4	59·0	58·8
Allt-yr-yn	22·2	19·4	11·8	0·7	1·0	2·2	—	—	—	50·2	54·0	80·0
Blaenavon	9·0	8·5	5·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	16·7	15·7	15·1
Blaina	19·2	21·4	20·1	1·0	1·0	3·2	—	—	—	33·9	53·9	51·8
Cefn Mably[4]	38·3	34·7	—	4·0	3·0	—	8·0	5·0	—	64·5	64·5	—
County	104·2	104·2	69·1	19·6	22·9	22·9	16·0	17·0	21·0	210·4	210·5	216·7
Ebbw Vale	28·9	27·8	25·7	3·7	3·7	2·3	—	—	—	59·2	59·6	59·5
Llanfrechfa Grange	137·3	121·3	90·1	13·0	13·8	19·2	13·0	17·0	31·0	200·3	195·7	221·6
Monmouth	9·4	9·6	7·0	0·6	0·6	0·6	—	—	—	21·4	21·9	21·2
Mount Pleasant	75·8	78·2	39·6	11·0	8·5	8·0	10·0	8·0	7·0	148·2	151·6	130·0
Nevill Hall	294·7	273·8	205·2	85·4	88·7	131·4	46·0	46·0	46·0	381·5	422·8	444·9
Oakdale	8·3	7·0	7·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·9	13·6	14·2
Pen-y-Fal	164·3	161·1	128·3	25·3	25·7	30·5	34·0	33·0	30·0	327·8	342·1	384·4
Pontypool	46·5	46·1	30·8	12·2	10·4	11·0	1·0	1·0	—	58·4	77·4	80·0
Royal Gwent	497·6	475·4	355·3	149·1	151·1	212·5	28·0	28·0	34·0	664·6	716·1	722·8
St. Cadoc's	104·2	107·0	96·2	20·0	21·2	37·5	11·0	15·0	17·0	239·7	243·8	274·6
St. Lawrence	108·7	101·6	68·0	18·6	21·5	24·0	7·0	7·0	11·0	165·8	171·8	169·0
St. Woolos	200·8	206·0	195·5	37·5	41·4	71·1	31·0	31·0	32·0	184·6	213·4	388·9
Snatchwood[5]	11·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15·7	—	—
Tredegar	23·0	20·1	20·8	1·9	2·0	3·0	—	—	—	45·5	43·9	42·6

	Professional and technical			Works staff			Total[3]		
	1980	1982	1987	1980	1982	1987	1980	1982	1987
Abertillery	4·4	3·0	3·0	—	—	—	91·2	89·7	86·7
Allt-yr-yn	3·4	3·5	3·0	—	—	1·0	76·5	77·9	98·0
Blaenavon	—	—	—	—	—	—	25·7	24·2	20·5
Blaina	—	1·0	1·3	—	—	—	54·1	77·3	76·4
Cefn Mably[4]	—	—	—	—	—	—	114·8	107·2	—
County	12·1	15·1	20·8	2·0	1·0	2·0	364·3	370·7	352·5
Ebbw Vale	8·6	7·4	6·2	—	—	—	100·4	98·5	93·7
Llanfrechfa Grange	23·0	28·5	28·0	2·0	2·0	6·0	388·6	378·3	395·9
Monmouth	3·2	0·8	1·3	—	—	—	34·6	32·9	30·0
Mount Pleasant	4·0	5·9	8·9	—	—	—	248·9	252·2	193·5
Nevill Hall	102·4	107·0	131·9	3·0	3·0	6·0	913·0	941·3	965·4
Oakdale	—	—	0·4	—	—	—	21·2	20·6	22·4
Pen-y-Fal	27·0	28·3	38·5	2·0	2·0	3·0	580·4	592·2	614·7
Pontypool	10·7	9·4	10·0	—	—	—	128·8	144·3	131·8
Royal Gwent	88·2	105·1	138·1	3·0	5·0	8·0	1,430·5	1,480·7	1,470·7
St. Cadoc's	20·2	23·1	24·7	2·0	2·0	3·0	397·1	412·1	453·0
St. Lawrence	27·6	30·5	37·6	—	1·0	1·0	327·7	333·4	310·6
St. Woolos	28·3	29·2	66·9	3·0	4·0	—	485·2	525·0	754·4
Snatchwood[5]	—	—	—	—	—	—	27·1	—	—
Tredegar	4·1	4·3	4·2	—	—	—	74·5	70·3	70·6

[1] Because figures are based on NHS pay records, they reflect staff paid at each hospital. It is not possible to make adjustments for staff who, whilst being paid at one hospital, spend part of their working time at other(s).

[2] Learners are excluded because they are mostly paid (ie recorded) at one central point in the district health authority and it is not possible to break down their numbers by hospital.

[3] Medical and dental staff are excluded for the same reason as given in note [2].

[4] Closed 18 April 1983.

[5] Closed 9 November 1980.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to create an equal opportunities commission for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: No. In a statement to the House on 15 July 1987, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State indicated that after considering the responses to the consultative paper on equality of opportunity in employment in Northern Ireland, he had decided to concentrate legislative and other action on the vital religious issue and that equality of opportunity in relation to sex and disability should continue to be addressed in the same way as in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Criminal Law Reform

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals for the reform of the general criminal law in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: A proposal for a draft Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order has been published today by the Northern Ireland Office.

The order introduces a number of significant reforms to the general criminal law in Northern Ireland, (as distinct

from the emergency law) which are broadly in line with those which have already been adopted in England and Wales by way of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The order provides the police with a range of new powers governing stop and search; entry, search and seizure; and arrest. But it carefully regulates these powers to ensure that they are used sparingly, responsibly and fairly.

The order balances the broadening of police powers by providing a comprehensive series of new safeguards to persons suspected of crime. In addition, it provides for the issue of codes of practice, replacing the judges' rules, and which will supplement the protection afforded to suspects, and clarify the duties and responsibilities of the police.

Furthermore, the order introduces measures to reform the law on evidence; provides for arrangements to be made to obtain the public's views on policing; and gives the Secretary of State power to set up an inquiry into any matter affecting policing in Northern Ireland.

Copies of the proposal for a draft order and the explanatory document have been placed in the Vote Office.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passports

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average time taken for the issue of a full British passport.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I give to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on 19 July.

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to pay interest to a constituent of the right hon. Member for Worthing, who applied for a passport on 28 January, has yet not received any acknowledgement or a passport, but whose cheque paying for it was cashed on 25 February.

Mr. Renton: No. If my right hon. Friend will let me know his constituent's full name, date of birth and the office to which the application was submitted, urgent inquiries will be made to establish why he has not had any response to his passport application.

Offences Against Children

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research or statistical evidence is available on involvement of voluntary workers in offences committed against children.

Mr. John Patten: The Department is currently collecting from police forces, statistical data on the relationship between victim and offender in offences against children which result in a court appearance.

Police Checks (Employment)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, under the arrangements for police checks on those seeking work with substantial access to children, the police will be expected to notify the employer that the individual was known to be homosexual, if the individual has no convictions, cautions or bindovers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under paragraph 7 of Home Office circular 45/1986, information other than convictions, cautions and bindovers may only be released on the authority of an officer at assistant chief constable level or above. I understand that information that a person was known to be a homosexual would not on its own justify disclosure under the arrangements for police checks on those seeking to work with children.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes there are in each South Yorkshire police division; and by what percentage the crime rate has fallen or risen since these schemes began.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the chief constable of South Yorkshire that the first neighbourhood watch schems in his police force area was established in June 1984 and that by the end of June 1988 the total number of schemes had increased to 718. The following table shows the number of schemes in each police division:

Division	*Number of neighbourhood watch schemes*
Doncaster	152
Barnsley	76
Rotherham	63
West Bar	44
South Sheffield	241
North Sheffield	142
	718

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is considering asking the insurance companies to offer special rates to neighbourhood watch scheme members.

Mr. John Patten: A number of insurance companies already offer discounts or other incentives to policyholders who belong to neighbourhood watch schemes and—or take certain security precautions. We welcome such initiatives; and we take the opportunity of regular contacts with the Association of British Insurers to encourage further moves of this kind.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of proven claims of racial discrimination and what percentage this was of the number of cases investigated, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: Redress for racial discrimination in employment may be sought through industrial tribunals; and in relation to other matters through the courts. It is for the aggrieved individual to initiate action. This may be done with the help of solicitors, trade unions, the Commission for Racial Equality or in other ways. Allegations may well be settled without recourse to a tribunal or court. There is therefore no comprehensive measure of claims of racial discrimination.

Statistics on applications for assistance from individual complainants about racial discrimination received and

considered by the Commission for Racial Equality are given in the commission's annual reports, copies of which are available from the Library.

There are no centrally collected statistics of court cases involving claims of racial discrimination. Statistics available under a new system introduced from 1 April 1985 show that the following applications were registered with industrial tribunals:

	1985-86	*1986-87*
(a) Number of applications	649	672
(b) Number of ACAS conciliated settlements	96	95
(c) Withdrawals (not via ACAS)	245	256
(d) Number reaching a hearing	308	321
(e) Number successful after a hearing	60	40
(f) (e) as percentage of (d)	19·5 per cent.	12·5 percent.

ACAS officers have a duty to consider whether they can help parties reach a settlement without the need for a hearing. The figures for applications withdrawn without a hearing will also include some cases where a settlement was reached other than with the help of ACAS.

Mr. J. Bas

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. J. Bas of 20 Waverley gardens, Etchingham, Rugeley, is likely to have his application for naturalisation as a British citizen processed, reference No. B 424936.

Mr. Renton: The application has been approved, and Mr. Bas was invited to take the oath of allegiance in January 1988. There may have been some confusion over his address and he will now be invited to take the oath again.

Merseyside (Crime Statistics)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what have been the levels of crime and the clear-up rates on Merseyside over the last four years;

(2) if he will make a statement on the way which crime statistics are collected on Merseyside.

Mr. John Patten: Figures on notifiable offences recorded by the police in Merseyside are published annually in chapter 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"—in table 2.4 of the issue for 1986, Cm. 233, which is the most recent. The figure for 1987 was published in "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 6/88" and will be included in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987" later this year: copies of these publications are available in the Library. The clear-up rate for Merseyside was 41 per cent. in 1984, 35 per cent. in 1985, 37 per cent. in 1986 and 43 per cent. in 1987. The clear-up rate for 1986 was also published in Cm. 233 and for later years will be published in subseequent issues.

All police forces in England and Wales provide the Home Office with statistics on notifiable offences recorded by the police according to a common set of reporting and counting rules. Offences may be cleared up in several ways, for example by charge/summons, by caution, being taken into consideration by the court and other methods including visits to convicted prisoners. Figures for each category vary between forces according to local circumstances and practices.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much he has allocated for victim support schemes in the current year.

Mr. John Patten: £2·55 million in the financial year 1988-89.

Prisons

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the proposed height limit in the proposed prison department design brief for inner multi-storey prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no intention to provide a design brief specifically for inner city multi-storey prisons. The prison department design briefs which are being developed will provide a basis for building prisons of all kinds on the assumption that individual units of living accommodation should not exceed two storeys. Whether or not such units may be "stacked" to create high-rise buildings will depend in each case on factors such as cost effectiveness and operational viability, taking account of location and possible planning difficulties. These factors will also be taken into account in assessing any proposals for urban remand centres likely to be made in response to the recent approach to the private sector by the prisons building board.

Keith Bennett

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester as to what further steps the police are taking to locate the remains of Keith Bennett, murdered by Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, and as to which officer is now in charge of the inquiries; what further consideration he has given to the request from the chief constable of Greater Manchester for the use of hypnosis in seeking to establish the general area of Keith Bennett's burial; what representations he has received from the relatives of Keith Bennett; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Greater Manchester police that all the available evidence about the location of Keith Bennett's grave has been thoroughly investigated and that the police do not intend to take any further action unless new information is received. Should the chief constable consider further inquiries justified in the future, it would be for him to decide which of his officers should supervise them.

In response to a request from the chief constable of the Greater Manchester police and representations from Mrs. Johnson, Keith Bennett's mother, my right hon. Friend has given very careful and serious consideration to a request from Miss Hindley that she should be hypnotised. She hoped that in that way she might be able to remember more precise details of the place where Keith's body is buried. Its general area is already known. We have been most anxious that every practicable effort should be made to find Keith's body so that it may be given a proper burial. That is why my right hon. Friend twice authorised visits to the moor by both Myra Hindley and Ian Brady. But on the basis of the information available we have not

been persuaded that hypnotising Myra Hindley is likely to produce information which would be of material assistance in identifying more accurately the location of Keith's grave. Quite independently of this case, we are about to issue a circular to the police warning against the use of hypnosis in criminal investigations.

We have received two letters from Mrs. Johnson, and letters from Mrs. M. Prescott, Keith's sister, and Mr. A. Bennett, Keith's brother.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance on grounds of special hardship on *(a)* all grounds and *(b)* grounds connected with an asylum application were (i) received and (ii) granted, by country, during 1987 and the first quarter of 1988.

Mr. Renton: The number of entry clearance applications where special hardship is a consideration is not separately identifiable in the returns sent by entry clearance posts to the Home Office.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance as working holidaymakers have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused in (i) India, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Australia and (iv) Canada.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not available centrally.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the maximum, minimum and average times taken between the deferral of a decision on a settlement application and the interviewing of the sponsor in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children were waiting in each queue at each post in the Indian sub-continent on 31 March.

Mr. Renton: Information on the total numbers in each queue is given in the table; separate information on men, women and children is not available centrally.

Applicants in the Indian sub-continent on 31 March 1988 awaiting their first interview for entry to the United Kingdom
Number of persons

Post	Category[1] Queue 1	Queue 2	Queue 3	Queue 4	Queue 5
Dhaka	280	1,600	190	2,300	—
New Delhi[2]	—	310	360	90	140
Bombay[2]	650[3]		620	40	160
Calcutta	—	—	—	—	—
Madras[2]	—	10	—	—	+
Islamabad	1,200	1,200	2,200	870	—
Karachi[2]	20	180	90	+	160
Total Indian sub-continent	5,400		3,500	3,300	460

+ = 5 or fewer.
[1] Queue 1: Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years old, and special compassionate cases (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 2: Spouses, and children under 18 years old (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 3: Fiance(e)s, and other applicants (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 4: Re-applicants for settlement.
Queue 5: Other applicants (not for settlement).
[2] Estimated numbers.
[3] Mainly Queue 2.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were waiting for special quota vouchers in (i) India and (ii) East Africa in *(a)* May 1987 and *(b)* December 1987; when those issued with vouchers on those dates had applied; how many vouchers were issued in *(y)* India and *(z)* East Africa in (1) 1987 and (2) the first quarter of 1988; when those applying now can expect to receive vouchers; and how many applicants there were for vouchers in (i) India and (ii) East Africa in (A) 1987 and (B) the first half of 1988.

Mr. Renton: The information which is currently available centrally is given in the tables:

Table 1 Persons applying for a special voucher for entry to the United Kingdom
Number of persons

Country	Applications newly received[1] 1987	1988 1st quarter	Vouchers issued 1987	1988 1st quarter	Applications awaiting decision at end of month May 1987	December 1987
India	390	110	600	200	2,300	2,100
Kenya	410	110	250	70	490	510
Tanzania	50	20	60	10	190	170
Malawi	120	20	60	20	40	60
Zambia	160	30	90	50	20	40
Elsewhere	40	20	10	[2]	[2]	[2]
Total	1,170	310	1,070	350	3,100	2,900

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] 5 or fewer.

Table 2 Waiting times for persons applying for a special voucher

Months

Country	Waiting time to main interview for Persons interviewed at end of month		Persons applying at end of month[1]
	May 1987	December 1987	March 1988
India[2]	94	84	less than 36
Kenya	1½	1½	2½
Tanzania	1	1	1
Malawi	1½	2	2
Zambia	1	1	1

[1] Data relate to expected waiting times.
[2] Data relate to non-priority applicants. Priority applicants (ie widows with a child in the United Kingdom, heads of household aged 65 or over, and special compassionate cases) are interviewed within three months.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for settlement by wives and children in (i) Dhaka and (ii) Islamabad were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused, *(d)* deferred at first interview, *(e)* lapsed and *(f)* outstanding and awaiting first interview, for each quarter since the beginning of 1987.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is given in the table.

Wives and children applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

Post	Newly received	Applications Granted[2]	Refused initially	Referred or deferred[3]	Withdrawn or lapsed	Awaiting first interview at end of period
Dhaka						
1987 1st quarter	2,050	1,690	300	1,230	550	4,300
2nd quarter	1,860	1,170	370	880	510	4,300
3rd quarter	1,570	870	290	900	360	4,300
4th quarter	1,360	920	240	910	320	4,100
Year	6,840	4,660	1,200	3,910	1,740	4,100
1988 1st quarter	1,640	1,490	440	920	410	3,700
Islamabad						
1987 1st quarter	1,080	980	140	110	250	1,700
2nd quarter	1,080	820	100	80	130	1,900
3rd quarter	950	730	80	110	110	1,800
4th quarter	1,290	720	60	90	220	2,200
Year	4,410	3,260	390	390	700	2,200
1988 1st quarter	1,250	900	80	800	210	2,100

[1] Including persons considered for a certificate of entitlement to, or confirmation of, the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Referred to Home Office for decision or deferred for further inquiries.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance as *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées in each British post in all countries apart from those of the Indian sub-continent were (i) granted and (ii) refused, for each quarter since January 1987; how many such applications in each category, at each post and in each quarter were refused (1) wholly and (2) partly because of the primary purpose rule; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were (A) wholly and (B) partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Renton: The only information requested which is available centrally is that on applications granted and refused in Hong Kong, and is given in the table:

Applications in Hong Kong for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications Granted[1]	Refused initially
Wives		
1987 1st quarter	40	–
2nd quarter	40	–
3rd quarter	50	+
4th quarter	60	+
Year	180	+
1988 1st quarter	50	+
Husbands, fiancés[2]		
1987 1st quarter	10	–
2nd quarter	10	+
3rd quarter	10	+
4th quarter	20	–
Year	50	+

	Applications Granted[1]	Refused initially
1988 1st quarter	20	–
Fiancées		
1987 1st quarter	+	–
2nd quarter	+	+
3rd quarter	10	–
4th quarter	10	–
Year	30	+
1988 1st quarter	10	–

+ Five or fewer.
– Nil.
[1] Granted initially or on appeal.
[2] Data for husbands and fiancés separately are not available.

Polygamous Wives

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of potential polygamous wives were referred to him for a decision during 1987-88; and what on average was the length of time taken for a decision to be passed to the overseas post.

Mr. Renton: From 1 January 1987 to date, 152 applications for polygamous wives were referred to me or my predecessor for decision. The other information is not available.

Registration and Naturalisation

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time taken to process applications for *(a)* registration and *(b)* naturalisation; and how long those applying in both of those categories in December 1987 may expect to wait.

Mr. Renton: The average time taken to complete applications for citizenship granted in June 1988 was 11 months for registration and 18 months for naturalisation.

Good progress continues to be made in reducing delays since the measures which I announced on 19 April in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) at column *410*.

All citizenship applications received before 31 December 1987 were acknowledged and passports and other documents returned to applicants by the end of April 1988. All immigration correspondence is now opened on the day of receipt and all nationality applications within a few days.

At the end of March the Department had some 268,000 outstanding citizenship applications including over 80,000 naturalisation applications and over 187,000 for registration as British citizens. Since the end of March, nearly 20,000 cases have been completed.

Our progress will accelerate when we open our new nationality office in India buildings, Liverpool where the local passport office is also situated; 130 staff are being recruited to man the office, which is due to open, after staff training, on 5 September. By about the end of the year, this will increase our nationality caseworking staff by over 80 per cent. and initially the whole of this additional capacity will be devoted to processing registration applications.

A substantial proportion of the applications for registration will be decided by April 1989 and the remainder during the following year.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his best estimate as to how many applications for *(a)* adult registration with entitlement, *(b)* naturalisation and *(c)* registration of minors his Department (i) will receive and (ii) expects to grant, in 1988-89.

Mr. Renton: Our rough estimate, which is subject to error, is that in financial year 1988-89 we will receive the following applications:

	Number
Registration of adults	3,000
Registration of minors	12,000
Naturalisation	31,000

We estimate that in the financial year 1988-89 we will grant 60,000 registrations of all kinds, and 33,000 naturalisations. Full output from the Liverpool nationality office will be achieved towards the end of 1988. Its main effects will be felt in 1989-90, when we hope it will grant registration applications in excess of 7,000 each month.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship under section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981 have been *(a)* made, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused; and how many of those granted have been on the grounds of service in the armed forces.

Mr. Renton: The information covering the period January 1983 to June 1988 is as follows:

	Servicemen	Others	Total
Received	47	498	545
Granted	46	7	53
Refused	—	485	485
Withdrawn	1	—	1
Still under consideration	—	6	6

Note: The numbers in the first column are former service men in Hong Kong as described in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on 23 April 1986 at columns *147-48*.

Arranged Marriages

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters of representation he received during *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1988 to the latest convenient date, from or on behalf of women who expressed reluctance to undergo a marriage with a man from abroad; and how many of these in each year referred to men from the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Renton: The information is not available as requested.

Sheep Dipping

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify the number of farmers prosecuted for failing to dip their sheep in each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available from the records held centrally.

Section 11 Funding

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe his Department's procedures for dealing with *(a)* bids by local authorities for section 11 funding with respect to education and *(b)* claims by local authorities for approved section 11 expenditure with respect to education, stating the average time taken by these procedures in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* Applications from local authorities for section 11 grant are considered by officials to establish whether they meet the criteria set out in Home Office circular 72/1986. Particular attention is paid to whether the proposed posts address clearly identified special needs of communities of Commonwealth origin; the specification of duties; consultation with relevant communities; and whether the authority has devised satisfactory objectives, performance indicators and monitoring arrangements so that effectiveness in meeting special needs can be assessed. Where specialist education advice is required, the views of the Department of Education and Science will be sought. Where necessary local authorities are asked for further information. All recommedations for approval of new applications are considered by Ministers.

In respect of all applications decided during the first six months of 1988, the average period between receipt of the application and notification of the decision has been between six and seven months. Separate information on the average time taken to decide education applications is not readily available.

Claims for grant for approved posts are submitted by authorities between July and September each year. The claim form gives the actual expenditure in the preceding financial year, and estimates for the following two years. The claims are checked against lists of approved posts. Grant is paid in quarterly instalments during the year to which it relates. Adjustments are made in the final quarter in the light of the latest estimate, and further adjustments may be made after the actual expenditure figure is received. All claims submitted in 1987 were cleared by the end of May 1988; the average time taken to clear each claim is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what delays have occurred in his Department's consideration of *(a)* recent bids for section 11 funding with respect to education and *(b)* recent claims for such approved expenditure by Oxfordshire county council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* There has been correspondence since June 1987 about Oxfordshire county council's applications in respect of approximately 70 education posts. A continuing misunderstanding about whether most of these were in respect of new posts or unnecessary applications by Oxfordshire county council in respect of posts already approved has now been discovered, and officials will be meeting the council to clear up any remaining problems.

The grant claim sent in by Oxfordshire in October 1987 was dealt with in May 1988. The authority was told that a recovery of grant paid in respect of 1986-87 and 1987-88 was required. The authority has now been informed that the demand for grant repayment was based on a misunderstanding by them of the 1986 guidance on section 11 procedures. A problem of this kind has never happened before with any other local authority: officials are taking action to prevent a recurrence.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish a table showing the number and approximate value of *(a)* outstanding bids by local authorities for section 11 funding with respect to education and *(b)* outstanding claims for approved section 11 expenditure with respect to education, stating the age of the oldest bid and the oldest claim; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a list showing the name of each local authority for which a bid for section 11 funding with respect to education is currently outstanding, stating the number of staff posts involved and the period of time covered by the relevant bid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* Bids for section 11 funding for education currently under consideration are of two types: applications for continued funding of existing posts arising from a review initiated in 1983, and applications for new posts under the current arrangements introduced in 1986.

At 30 June 1988 applications from the following education authorities were outstanding. Grant to most posts in education is not time limited, so the applications do not cover particular periods:

Authority	*Number of posts*
Review applications (4 authorities)	
Inner London Education Authority	348
Haringey	122
Brent	53
Rochdale	6
	529
Applications under 1986 circular (34 authorities)	
Bedfordshire	11
Birmingham	7
Bolton	3
Bradford	6
Cambridgeshire	58
Cleveland	3
Coventry	2
Dudley	11
Hertfordshire	4
Hounslow	13
ILEA	34
Kent	31
Kirklees	4·5
Leeds	29
Leicester	133
Merton	1
Newham	126
Northamptonshire	15·5
Nottinghamshire	4
Oldham	2
Oxfordshire	9
Redbridge	4
Rochdale	1
Rotherham	11
Sheffield	51
South Glamorgan	10·5
Staffordshire	46·5
Stockport	2
Sutton	2
Tameside	12

Authority	Number of posts
Wakefield	2
Waltham Forest	6
Wiltshire	4
Wolverhampton	7
	666

In addition, Oxfordshire had submitted review applications for some 70 posts, but it has now been established that these posts were not subject to review.

Information on the value of outstanding bids by authority is not easily available and the cost of extracting it from all relevant sources would be disproportionate. Our estimate of the total potential amount of grant involved in the above applications is approximately £10 million.

The oldest of the education applications under the 1986 circular was submitted in February 1987; this is a large application which has required advice from the Department of Education and Science and further information from the local authority concerned.

There are no outstanding claims for grant in respect of approved posts.

Gaelic and Welsh

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the average audience figures achieved for the Gaelic programmes "Prosbaig" "Dotaman" and "Crann Tara" for *(a)* Gaelic speakers, and *(b)* all viewers.

Mr. Renton *[pursuant to his reply, 14 June 1988, c. 97]:* The BBC and Grampian Television have produced the following information for all viewers; there are no separate figures available for Gaelic speakers.

Average Audience Figures January-May 1988

Gaelic television programmes	All viewers
Prosbaig—BBC1 (Current affairs programme)	100,000
Dotaman—BBC1 (Programme for pre-school children)	100,000
Crann Tara—Grampian Television (News magazine programme)	[1]26,000

[1] Grampian Television's transmission area covers the north of Scotland only.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the average audience figures achieved for the three most popular Welsh language programmes on S4C amongst *(a)* Welsh speakers, and *(b)* all viewers.

Mr. Renton *[pursuant to his reply 14 June 1988, c. 97]:* The following information has been provided by S4C. The figures supplied are average audience figures for all viewers; separate figures for Welsh speakers are available only for a limited range of programmes. Several single event programmes, as opposed to regularly broadcast programmes, achieved viewing figures considerably higher than those given here. We understand that an average of 366,000 Welsh speaking viewers watched S4C at some point each week during the period January-May 1988.

Average audience figures January-May 1988

Welsh language television programmes	All viewers	Welsh speakers
Dechrau Canu, Dechrau Canmol (Hymn-singing programme)	84,300	71,700
Pobol Y Cwm (Drama series about life in a Welsh Valley)	70,300	—
Hel Straeon (Magazine programme focusing on local news)	68,600	—

SCOTLAND

Caledonian MacBrayne

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the consultants Pieda were appointed to consider the future of Caledonian MacBrayne; and when they are expected to report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Pieda was appointed in May 1988 to advise the Secretary of State on possible future arrangements for Caledonian MacBrayne in the light of the decision to privatise the Scottish Bus Group. Its report has now been received.

Skiing

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to announce support for skiing developments.

Mr. Lang: The Secretary of State is not at present considering any proposals. Government financial support for viable skiing developments is provided by the appropriate agencies, which can, within the limitations of delegated authorities, determine levels of assistance.

Mountain Areas (Erosion)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to prevent erosion in popular mountain areas; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Erosion in mountain areas, including the most popular, is caused to a very large extent by natural forces. The Countryside Commission for Scotland devotes considerable attention to ways of minimising erosion caused by human pressure on popular mountain areas. The commission is, for example, consulted about all significant planning applications, including proposals for hill tracks, in national scenic areas. In addition it has *(a)* spent approximately £120,000 to date on the upland footpath project; *(b)* published advice on the better construction of hill tracks; *(c)* commissioned research into methods of restoring vegetation on high ground; and *(d)* produced, jointly with Highland regional council, a manual of good practice in managing and developing ski-fields. The commission also has plans to study the present arrangements for managing the balance between recreation and countryside conservation, with particular reference to the Cairngorms. We shall consider carefully any recommendations rising from this exercise.

Aberdeen (Rates)

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the yield of domestic rates, commercial and industrial rates in cash terms, and the proportion of expenditure this represents for Aberdeen city district council in each of the years 1978-79 up to and including 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table.

Aberdeen

	(1) Domestic Rate Income	*(2) Commercial Rate Income*	*(3) Industrial Rate Income*	*(4) Cols. 1+2+3 Rate Income as a percentage of Expenditure*
1978-79	2·2	2·5	0·7	41·7
1979-80	2·8	3·1	0·8	44·9
1980-81	3·6	4·2	1·0	44·0
1981-82	5·5	7·2	1·5	58·6
1982-83	6·5	8·9	1·7	63·8
1983-84	6·7	9·7	1·7	58·1
1984-85	6·5	9·4	1·7	51·9
1985-86	8·4	11·9	1·9	70·0
1986-87	8·7	12·5	2·1	72·3
1987-88	8·1	11·6	2·1	61·7

Note:
Rate income is also received for public utilities and miscellaneous subjects.

Court of Session

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to initiate a review of the procedures of the Court of Session.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate, who has ministerial responsibility for procedures in civil court proceedings, does not propose to initiate such a review. A working group set up by the Lord President is presently reviewing the rules of the Court of Session in order to recommend such changes in the rules as may be necessary to simplify procedures. A working party, chaired by Lord Jauncey, is reviewing procedures in patent litigation. Recommendations for the better use of in-court judicial time allocated to civil business were made by the review body on the use of judicial time in the superior courts in Scotland, chaired by Lord Maxwell, which reported in 1986. These recommendations are now being implemented.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to increase the number of judges on the bench of the Court of Session; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The number of judges of the Court of Session has been increased from 21 in 1983 to 24 at present. Section 22 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985 provides for the appointment of retired judges to act as temporary judges and this provision is used as required.

Staff Training

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Rifkind: Since June 1987 one grade 1 and eight grade 3 officers in my Department have attended—in Edinburgh—tutorials on information technology.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the number of hearing therapists employed in Scotland for each of the list five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No hearing therapists have been employed in Scotland to date.

Prisoners (Observation)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the terms of reference of the review into procedures relating to prisoners requiring individual observation as recommended by the sheriff following a fatal accident inquiry in October 1987; when the review will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The sheriff's determination was received in February 1988. No terms of reference as such have been promulgated, but changes in the methods of recording observation requirements have been introduced. Other issues which the sheriff's determination highlighted are still being considered. I shall write to the hon. Member when this has been concluded.

Scottish Film Council

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the representations he has received on his consultative paper on the future constitution of the Scottish Film Council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am in touch with the Scottish Film Council about its constitution but not on the basis of a consultative paper. I hope to publish a policy review of the council shortly.

Hospital Building

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the location and cost of each major hospital building project completed since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows.

All projects completed since 1979

	Total Cost £m
Argyll and Clyde	
Johnstone Hospital, Johnstone	0·5
Dunoon & District General Hospital, Dunoon	1·0
Merchiston Hospital Phase I, Linwood	6·6
Merchiston Hospital Phase II, Linwood	0·6
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley	56·5
Ayreshire & Arran	
Crosshouse Hospital, Crosshouse	26·0
Biggart Hospital, Prestwick	1·2
Borders	
Hay Lodge, Peebles	2·4
Borders General, Huntlyburn	32·2
Dumfries & Galloway	
Annan Hospital (geriatric), Annan	1·1
Fife	
Glenrothes Hospital, Glenrothes	1·8
Whyteman's Brae, Kirkcaldy	5·6
West Fife District General Hospital, Dunfermline	10·5
Forth Valley	
Royal Scottish National Hospital, Larbert	2·5
Sauchie Hospital, Alloa	1·2
Falkirk Royal Infirmary, Falkirk	8·5
Grampian	
Woodend Geriatric Hospital, Aberdeen	0·5
Inverurie Hospital, Inverurie	0·5
Spynie Hospital, Elgin	0·4
Ugie Hospital, Peterhead	0·7
Woodend Hospital—Glenburn Wing, Aberdeen	0·7
Woodlands Hospital, Cults	0·3
Greater Glasgow	
Blawarthill Hospital, Glasgow	0·3
Canniesburn Hospital, Glasgow	0·4
Gartloch Hospital, Glasgow	0·4
Gartnavel Hospital, Glasgow	0·7
Mearnskirk Hospital, Glasgow	0·4
Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow	0·7
Belvidere Hospital Phase I, Glasgow	0·4
Woodilee Hospital Phase I, Glasgow	0·7
Glasgow Royal Infirmary Phase I, Glasgow	55·3
Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow	1·6
Gartloch Hospital, Glasgow	2·2
Leverndale Phase I(a), Glasgow	4·5
Lennox Castle, Glasgow	2·6
Lennox Castle (2 intensive care units), Glasgow	0·7
Highland	
Lochaber Hospital, Fort William	0·9
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness	29·4
Caithness Hospital Phase II, Wick	9·1
Lanarkshire	
Kirklands Hospital Phase I, Bothwell	2·4
Kirklands Hospital Phase I(a), Bothwell	2·3
Kirklands Residential, Bothwell	1·0
Lothian	
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary Phase I, Edinburgh	15·0
Royal Edinburgh Phase I, Edinburgh	2·3
Astley Ainslie Hospital, Edinburgh	2·0
Herdmanflat Hospital, Haddington	2·7
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	7·0
Shetland	
Montfield Hospital, Lerwick	2·6
Tayside	
Irvine Memorial Hospital, Pitlochry	0·2
Murray Royal Hospital, Perth	1·2
Perth Royal Infirmary, Perth	1·4
Royal Liff Hospital, Dundee	1·0
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital, Blairgowrie	0·7
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital, Aberfeldy	0·8
Total	314·2

Farmers (Statistics)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify the number of farmers engaged in *(a)* lamb, *(b)* beef and *(c)* cereal production in Scotland during each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of separate agricultural units in Scotland engaged in lamb, beef and cereal production, as recorded at the June agricultural census each year, is set out in the table.

	Lamb	*Beef*	*Cereals*
1979	14,706	20,817	19,267
1980	14,846	20,461	19,057
1981	14,755	19,720	18,146
1982	14,450	19,347	17,713
1983	14,606	19,062	17,186
1984	14,744	18,835	17,109
1985	14,872	18,479	16,789
1986	15,151	18,069	16,078
[1,2]1986	12,707	16,859	15,282
[2]1987	12,810	16,432	14,870

[1] Reduced.
[2] From the June 1987 census onwards coverage was reduced by 6,000 very small scale holdings. The second set of June 1986 figures provides the bridging comparison.

School Leavers

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of summer school leavers in each region in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The most recent available information relates to session 1986-87 and is given in the table.

Region/Islands area	*Number of summer term leavers 1987*
Borders	1,200
Central	3,400
Dumfries and Galloway	1,710
Fife	4,130
Grampian	5,690
Highland	2,610
Lothian	8,450
Strathclyde	28,240
Tayside	4,910
Orkney	250
Shetland	310
Western Isles	480
Scotland	61,370

Hunterston A Power Station

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will update to 31 March the information on thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by the Hunterston A station given in the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 23 July 1987, *Official Report*, column *368*.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that during the financial year 1987-88 the thermal output of Hunterston A was 8,865,350·4 MWh (thermal) and 72·69 tonnes of fuel were discharged.

Acute Hospital Beds

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average daily occupancy of acute hospital beds in Scotland, by area and age groups *(a)* 0 to four years, *(b)* five to 14 years, *(c)* 15 to 44 years, *(d)* 45 to 64 years, *(e)* 65 to 74 years and, *(f)* 75-plus years for each year since 1974 to the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average daily occupancy of beds in acute hospital specialties in Scotland is not available by age of patients.

Hospital In-patients

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of hospital in-patients in each area authority for each year since 1974 until the last year for which the figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information for each health board in Scotland is given in the table.

NHS Hospitals in Scotland—inpatient discharges[1] by health board, year ending 30 September

	Scotland	*Argyll and Clyde*	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*	*Greater Glasgow*	*Highland*	*Lanarkshire*	*Lothian*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Tayside*	*Western Isles*
1974[2]	717,964	52,404	44,742	7,374	17,812	31,999	29,816	61,553	198,776	26,805	55,041	122,838	1,416	1,723	63,042	2,623
1975[2]	697,410	51,610	42,708	7,261	17,065	32,453	29,359	60,429	189,624	27,189	51,837	119,419	1,574	1,685	62,630	2,567
1976	742,459	54,084	43,133	7,557	18,206	34,438	30,420	64,811	203,460	29,057	54,858	128,745	1,587	1,776	67,701	2,626
1977	736,283	53,779	41,957	7,634	17,810	33,750	32,128	66,858	198,183	29,216	54,684	127,407	1,515	2,035	66,806	2,521
1978	748,689	52,985	43,699	8,052	18,159	35,440	32,718	68,017	195,883	29,567	61,199	128,087	1,462	2,214	68,530	2,677
1979	735,218	52,855	44,520	7,846	17,827	33,999	32,093	66,798	192,839	29,348	63,070	119,922	1,448	1,934	67,872	2,847
1980	774,038	54,320	46,532	7,907	17,962	35,613	32,967	71,011	203,846	29,886	66,399	131,536	1,600	2,074	69,619	2,766
1981	792,406	54,921	48,844	8,674	18,305	37,101	33,748	72,209	209,209	31,036	68,858	133,487	1,676	2,127	69,344	2,867
1982	763,708	51,607	46,771	8,945	18,380	37,031	32,488	69,474	194,031	30,355	66,477	133,822	1,646	2,221	67,796	2,664
1983	790,989	54,675	49,170	9,276	19,874	36,195	33,428	72,899	200,904	30,698	72,317	134,072	1,599	2,093	70,949	2,840
1984	814,644	55,937	51,453	9,626	20,615	37,996	34,482	77,688	209,039	31,055	73,489	134,480	1,692	1,980	72,243	2,869
1985	830,610	57,482	52,278	10,396	21,409	38,852	35,061	79,256	211,741	31,358	72,544	137,071	1,650	2,017	76,465	3,030
1986	842,421	60,298	53,714	11,560	22,147	40,415	35,815	82,989	212,224	32,460	72,091	135,584	1,671	2,008	76,372	3,073
1987	852,433	59,563	54,098	11,711	22,927	41,633	36,158	85,034	211,824	34,172	72,945	137,670	1,849	2,021	77,714	3,114

[1] Excluding discharges from Staff Wards.
[2] Figures for 1974 and 1975 exclude transfers between specialties.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of psychiatric hospitals in each area, for each year since 1974 to April 1988, and the number of beds in each hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 13 July at column *209* for the information requested for the year ending 30 September 1987, the latest year for which the information is available. Information for earlier years can be obtained from the annual volumes of "Scottish Hospital Costs".

Scottish Development Department

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons are currently employed in the reporters branch of the Scottish Development Department; and if he will give the comparable figure for the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The Scottish Office inquiry reporters unit currently has a staff of 27, comprising 12 reporters and 15 support staff. There are no vacancies. In addition, there is a panel of 15 part-time fee-paid reporters who can be called upon to assist in a limited range of casework. The staff-in-post figures at 1 July in each of the last 10 years are as follows:

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Chief Reporter	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Deputy Chief Reporter	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Principal Reporter	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Reporter	4	6	5	5	5	6	5	7	7	7	8
Grade 7				1							
SEO	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
HEO	1	1	1							1	1
EO	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	4	4
AO	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	6
AA	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
PS							1	1	1	1	1
Total	18	20	19	19	18	21	22	23	25	25	27

ENERGY

Toronto Conference

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many officials from his Department attended the Toronto conference on the changing atmosphere in June.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom delegation to the Toronto conference on the changing atmosphere was led by the chief scientist of the Department of the Environment and included a representative from my Department.

Gas

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the price regulation arrangements in the gas industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since the privatisation of British Gas this is a matter for the Director General of Gas Supply.

Power Stations (Recommissioning)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to make a satement concerning the recommissioning of redundant power stations in England and Wales.

Mr. Parkinson: The recommissioning of power stations in England and Wales is a commercial matter for the operator concerned.

North Sea Installations

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy with what frequency each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea is required to be inspected by his Department's inspectors.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department's safety directorate carries out over 200 inspections each year. The frequency of inspection varies depending on the circumstances of the individual installation. But in general our inspectors would visit each installation at least once a year. In addition, the certifying authorities are required to carry out an annual survey of all offshore installations.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the dates of inspection by his Department's inspectors of each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea since his Department assumed responsibility.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of serious injuries and fatalities for each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 14 July 1988 at columns *368-69*.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the certifying authorities approved by his Department to certify the safety of oil and gas installations in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea; and which of the approved certifying authorities inspected the Piper Alpha platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A list of certifying authorities approved by my Department is set out in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 14 July 1988 at column *367*. "Lloyd's Register of Shipping" is the certifying authority for Piper Alpha.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the annual fee paid to the certifying authorities by each operator in respect of each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea in respect of safety inspections.

Mr. Peter Morrison: All fees chargeable by certifying authorities are based on a formula set out in schedule 3 to the Offshore Installations [Construction and Survey] Regulations 1974: SI 1974/289.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what notification is required by his Department of a commercial relationship existing between companies operating oil and gas installations in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea and a certifying authority;

(2) if he will list those cases where his Department has been notified of a commercial relationship existing between a company operating an oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea and a certifying authority.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The terms and conditions of the appointment of certifying authorities prohibit them and any other organisation or company in which they have any representation or interest, financial or otherwise, from entering into a commercial relationship with companies operating oil and gas installations they survey.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many inspectors are directly employed by each of the certifying authorities approved by his Department for the purpose of certifying oil and gas installations in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The certifying authorities employ surveyors of many disciplines and they estimate that, in aggregate, 250 man years annually are devoted to offshore installations.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the qualifications required of inspectors employed by the certifying authorities approved by his Department for the purpose of certifying oil and gas installations in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The certifying authorities are required to appoint competent surveyors whose suitability is judged by the authorities themselves and is measured by academic attainment and technical experience. The authorities are required to maintain a list of appointees.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the number of oil and gas installations in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea for which each inspector employed by a certifying authority is responsible.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The allocation of duties for surveyors is a matter for the certifying authorities.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) with what frequency each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea is inspected by a certifying authority approved by his Department;

(2) if he will list the dates of inspection by the appropriate certifying authority of each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea since his Department assumed responsibility.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Every offshore installation must be surveyed by a certifying authority at least annually. A list of all the dates of inspection of every oil and gas installation on the UKCS can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on what dates since coming into operation the Piper Alpha platform has been inspected by his Department's inspectors; and what was the nature, form and duration of each inspection.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the reports of each of his Department's inspections of the Piper Alpha platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall make available to Lord Cullen any document which he needs to complete his inquiry. The Government intend that the public inquiry will be as full and far-reaching as necessary.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the annual fee paid by operators in respect of his Department's inspection of each oil and gas installation in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department does not impose a fee for inspections of offshore installations.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what investigations his Department or its agents carried out into an incident on the Piper Alpha platform in 1984; what conclusions the investigation reached; what recommendations the investigators made; whether these recommendations were implemented; and if he will publish the report of the investigation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have already undertaken to make a copy of the 1984 report on the Piper Alpha platform available to the public inquiry together with any other information which is relevant.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the construction of the Mersey barrage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I recently announced an extended second phase of the Mersey barrage feasibility studies costing £1·3 million, jointly funded with the Mersey Barrage Company. The studies will further examine engineering, economic and environmental aspects and are expected to last about two years. The timing of the studies will allow the Mersey Barrage Company to negotiate with the electricity companies which result from our privatisation proposals, and thus to form its views on the commercial prospects of the barrage.

Berkeley Power Station

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on *(a)* the eventual total cost and *(b)* the annual cost for each of the next 10 years of the decommissioning of Berkeley Magnox nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB estimates the eventual total cost of decommissioning Berkeley power station at about £300 million. The board expects that a total of about £80 million will be spent during stages 1 and 2 of the decommissioning process which are planned to occur in the first 10-15 years after shutdown. Both estimates are at March 1988 prices.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effect on *(a)* the book value and *(b)* the market value of the major electricity generating successor company of the decommissioning of Berkeley Magnox nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB has already made substantial provision in its accounts for the decommissioning of the Berkeley power station. As a result of the decision to close the station, the book value of the CEGB will have to be reduced by the residual value of the Berkeley station together with the remaining decommissioning provisions originally due to be made between now and the end of the life of the station. The market value of the successors to the CEGB will be determined by many factors, including market conditions at the time of the sale.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any public funds *(a)* have been or *(b)* will be committed to the Central Electricity Generating Board in connection with the decommissioning of Berkeley Magnox nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: During the operating lifetime of nuclear stations, the CEGB make provisions in the board's accounts with the aim of accumulating sufficient funds to meet the total estimated cost of decommissioning. The board's annual accounts explain the accounting policies adopted.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effects on the balance between nuclear and non-nuclear capacity in the electricity generating industry when privatised of the decommissioning of Berkeley Magnox nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Berkeley represents less than 0·5 per cent. of the CEGB's total capacity and its closure is not therefore significant.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to ensure that section 2*(c)* of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 is being implemented in regard to opencast operations at licensed sites where the volume of coal extracted greatly exceeds 25,000 tons.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) on 18 February at column *686*.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the long-term study into the effects upon health of opencast mining operations to commence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No such study is being undertaken by the Department of Energy. Responsibility for the health and safety of opencast mining operations lies with the Health and Safety Commission and Executive.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to assist British Coal in improving the security of redundant opencast coal mining sites.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Security of redundant opencast coal sites is the responsibility of the owners of the site.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will update to 31 March the information on the allocation of plutonium produced in the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board Magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 24 July 1987, *Official Report*, columns *517-18*;

(2) if he will update to 31 March the information on thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by each of the Central Electricity Generating Board Magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 24 July 1987, *Official Report*, columns *517-18*.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government intend to publish figures for 1987-88 on the plutonium produced at Britain's power stations, reprocessing activities at Sellafield and civil plutonium stocks. This information should be available in September and will include thermal energy generated, spent fuel discharged and the allocation of plutonium. The information will be placed in the Library of the House and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to be sent a copy.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his oral reply to hon. Members on 14 June, *Official Report*, column 146, if the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefits is now fully operational.

Mr. Portillo: Yes.

Powdered Baby Milk

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether the brand of powdered baby milk which was withdrawn from the market as a result of salmonella infection has now been returned to supermarket shelves; and if he will make a statement;

(2) which powdered baby foods were withdrawn from the market earlier this month; where they were manufactured; and what was the source of contamination.

Mrs. Currie: On 1 July 1988 Milupa UK recalled two dried baby milks, Milumil and aptamil, and three infant breakfast cereals, '7 cereal', 'oat breakfast with apple', and 'mixed fruit with cereal' all produced at their factory in Colmar, France, following a finding of salmonella in one sample of Milumil produced in January 1988. The source of the infection is still not known despite extensive investigations by the company and the French authorities. Intensive cleaning was carried out by the company at the beginning of May 1988, and it has been agreed that withdrawn products may be replaced by those manufactured after this date. Products made in the Milupa factory in West Germany are not affected, and have remained on retail sale.

Staff Training

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *394*, how many hours training individual staff of his Department received showing, in particular, how many hours were received by office managers, social fund officers, counter staff and other categories.

Mr. Portillo: The number of hours social fund training received by DHSS local office staff (using seven hours as a working day where training took place other than in a training centre) were as follows:

	Hours
Office Managers	28
Social Fund Officer (Higher Executive Officer)	115
Social Fund Officer (Local Officer Grade I)	108
Social Fund Local Officer Grade II	13½
Social Fund Aministrative Assistant	10
Non Social Fund Staff	3

Family Credit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average length of time that families in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency, who were in receipt of family income supplement, had to wait between application and granting of family credit during the period of transition.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average length of time that families in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency, who were in receipt of family credit, had to wait between application and granting of benefit during the period of change over.

Mr. Portillo: I assume the hon. Members are referring to families who were receiving family income supplement up to April 1988. Such families were reassessed for family credit from 11 April 1988, and an award issued, without the need for a further claim. Around 90 per cent. of cases were dealt with before 11 April, and the remainder were mainly cases where the claim for family income supplement was made shortly before 11 April. Information is not available in respect of families from particular local areas.

Hospital Patients (Discharge)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the efficiency of

system of notification between hospitals and the local social services department on the discharge of patients from hospital.

Mrs. Currie: We believe the system normally works well; however, a few cases have given cause for concern. A draft circular has therefore been prepared and issued for comment. It updates existing advice and reminds health authorities of the need to establish and thereafter monitor clear procedures to be followed when patients are discharged from hospital, including notification of social services departments. Comments already received on the draft circular indicate that many authorities already have effective systems for notifying local social services departments about patients being discharged from hospitals. The circular is being revised in the light of comments received, and will be issued in the autumn.

Allowances

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to improve the rate at which claims for invalid care allowance and attendance allowance are processed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The necessary processes involved in considering an attendance allowance claim are such that we do not envisage any significant short-term improvements in the clearance times reported in my answer to my hon. Friend on 5 July at columns *512-13*. But we are seeking substantial short-term improvements in invalid care allowance clearance times. For both benefits we will be studying whether increased use of computer technology will lead to long-term improvements in processing times.

Doctors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of National Health Service *(a)* male doctors and *(b)* female doctors who are also carrying out private practice work; and what percentage this represents of the total in each case (i) for England and Wales and (ii) for the Doncaster area health authority.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors are currently employed within the National Health Service; how many of these were trained overseas; and what levels of written and spoken English, and other skills, are required for the latter prior to appointment.

Mr. Newton: The number of doctors employed in the hospital and community health services in England at 30 September 1986 was 52,058. Information is not readily available centrally on their countries of qualification; but 13,721 were born overseas. The majority of overseas doctors appointed in the NHS come here for postgraduate training. Overseas doctors must satisfy the General Medical Council that they have the linguistic and professional skills to practise in the NHS.

AIDS

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to improve the supply of National Health Service factor VIII needed for the treatment of haemophiliacs.

Mrs. Currie: Factor VIII for the treatment of haemophilia patients in England and Wales is made for the National Health Service by the blood products laboratory (BPL) at Elstree. A new BPL costing £60 million was opened in April 1987. After an extensive commissioning programme BPL is issuing factor VIII at record levels, and production is planned to rise steadily to meet the needs of haemophiliacs.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will identify the average per capita cost to *(a)* the hospital and community health services, *(b)* the family practitioner service and *(c)* personal social services of (i) 0-20 year olds, (ii) 20-64 year olds, (iii) 64-75 year olds and (iv) 75 year olds and above.

Mr. Newton: Estimates of gross current expenditure per head of population on *(a)* the hospital and community health services, *(b)* the family practitioner service and *(c)* personal social services for 1985-86 are shown in the table. I regret that the age breakdown which is routinely available does not exactly match that requested.

Estimated gross current expenditure per head—England 1985-86

(£)

	0-15	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75+*
Hospital and community health services	120	105	390	970
Family practitioner service	70	65	100	150
Personal social services	80	20	80	355

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of voluntary, private and local authority residents care homes for elderly people in England and Wales; and, in each case, what is the total number of places available.

Mrs. Currie: The latest available information, as at 31 March 1986, on the numbers of voluntary, private and local authority homes in England for elderly people and the total numbers of places available are contained in the Department's publication RA/86/2—"Residential Accommodation for Elderly and for Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes". Copies are available in the Library.

Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Refugees

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why his Department is restricting the allowances to refugees who have sought sanctuary in the United Kingdom to 90 per cent. of income support; if he

will give the numbers of refugees who have submitted claims to the Department of Health and Social Security and have received payments at only 90 per cent. of income support since April; if he has plans to review this policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Income support, like its predecessor, supplementary benefit, is not payable under the normal rules to people who are admitted temporarily to the United Kingdom. Special provisions enable urgent cases payments to be made to asylum-seekers admitted temporarily to the United Kingdom whilst their applications for refugee status are considered. Once accepted as qualifying for refugee status under the United Nations convention, normal benefit is payable.

Under income support, urgent cases payments are made at 90 per cent. of the normal rate, although allowances for children and housing costs are met in full. These rules apply not just to asylum-seekers but to other groups of people in defined circumstances. The reason for the abatement is that there would be no point in having rules which exclude people from benefit in certain situations if they could obtain full benefit by virtue of the urgent cases rules.

All instances in which urgent cases payments are made to people from abroad are notified by local social security offices to the office of the chief adjudication officer (OCAO). In the period 6 April-30 June 1988 OCAO received information about 613 new cases.

We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Private Beds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of bills for the use of private beds or private facilities in the National Health Service have remained unpaid for each year since 1979, (costings);

(2) what was the figure in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* as a percentage of the total, of unpaid bills tendered by health authorities in respect of private beds and the private use of National Health Service facilities, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: Information derivable from the summarised accounts of health authorities in England for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 (the latest available) is shown in the table. I regret that comparable information for earlier years is not held centrally.

	1985-86	*1986-87*
Amounts Written-Off for bad debts and claims abandoned—Private Patients	£641,001	£810,219
As a Proportion of Total Gross Income from Private Patients' Percentage	1·0	1·4

Source:
Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Notes:
1. The figures relate to services provided for private in-patients and private out-patients under sections 65 and 66 of the NHS Act 1977 respectively. Separate write-off figures for income due under section 58 (which arises mainly from services provided to private health care establishments) are not collected centrally.
2. Sums written-off in each financial year include amounts due from earlier years which are not separately identifiable. The totals written-off in each year are offset against the relevant income headings by health authorities to produce the next income figures recorded in their annual accounts.

Postgraduate Hospitals

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the omission of references to postgraduate teaching hospitals from the cardinal principles set out by Bloomsbury health authority which it will not breach without further reference to the authority in respect of savings measures, he will instruct the authority to adopt the principle that the role of the postgraduate hospitals and institutes should not be fundamentally undermined and that they should continue to be able to sustain postgraduate teaching and research.

Mr. Newton: I understand that Bloomsbury health authority intends that the teaching and research role of the postgraduate hospitals should be preserved.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an inquiry into the decline or development that has occurred with the postgraduate hospitals, with particular regard to the financial effect on the hospital of being independent as against being within a district health authority.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the continued incorporation of postgraduate hospitals in health authorities with severe financial problems.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to change the existing arrangements under which hospitals with postgraduate teaching facilities are managed by particular health authorities.

Consultants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards National Health Service consultants holding other than full-time contracts.

Mr. Newton: Current guidance on the appointment of consultants states that posts may be established as either whole-time (with a maximum part-time option) or part-time, and that whole-time posts should be advertised in such a way that doctors able to work only part time for personal reasons can be considered for appointment.

Private

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of beds available in private hospitals and clinics for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table.

Registered beds in private institutions[2] as at 31 December, England

Year	*All institutions*	*Beds in institutions with operating theatres*
1982	34,786	7,663
1983	38,054	8,105
1984	42,898	8,633
1985	50,985	8,634
1986[1]	62,112	8,991

[1] Latest available.
[2] Private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the percentage of private hospital beds which were in the ownership of American companies, for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: We do not collect this information centrally. However, I understand that an Independent Hospitals Association survey of acute hospitals (UK 1988) showed that in 1979 there were 366 beds (5 per cent.) in hospitals owned by American companies and by July 1988 this had increased to 2,320 beds (22 per cent.) We welcome this growing response to public demand.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of private residential care and nursing homes employed staff who are suitably qualified, for each year for which figures are available since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. It is a statutory requirement that all nursing homes provide adequate professional, technical, ancillary and other staff. Similarly, residential care homes must employ sufficient suitably qualified and competent staff for the well being of residents. Available information is given in the table.

Registered Private Institutions [2] as at 31 December, England

Year	*All Institutions*	*Qualified Nursing Staff W.T.E.*
1982	1,214	12,208
1983	1,316	13,754
1984	1,491	15,446
1985	1,833	18,354
[1]1986 (latest available)	2,266	21,683

[1] Comparable statistics were not collected prior to 1982.
[2] Private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield, *Official Report*, column *58*, 11 July, he will state why his Department does not collect information about the percentage of residents in private residential care and private nursing homes who are in receipt of income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The cost of collecting the information in the form requested would be disproportionately large.

Myringotomy and Tympanostomy

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many myringotomy and tympanostomy operations have been carried out in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: Estimated numbers for the last five years for which data are held centrally is given in the table:

Estimated number of myringotomy/tympanostomy operations performed in NHS hospitals, England, 1981 to 1985

Year	*In-patients*	*Day cases*	*Total*
1985	35,670	22,740	58,410
1984	35,190	19,210	54,400
1983	34,350	16,920	51,270
1982	29,520	12,970	42,490
1981	30,420	13,570	43,990

Hearing Aid Centres

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department last compiled a list of hearing aid centres; when he next intends to compile such a list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Department last compiled a list of hearing aid centres in 1985. The procurement and distribution of National Health Service hearing aids is now administered by Mersey regional health authority which keeps its own list of centres.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many hearing therapists have been employed by the National Health Service in each of the last five years;

(2) how many hearing therapists are currently employed by the National Health Service and, for the latest period for which details are available, by region.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Medical Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are to be taken in order to clear the backlog of medical appeals tribunals in the north-west region.

Mr. Portillo: The administration of medical appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals, his honour Judge Byrt, QC.

I am advised by the president that delays in individual medical appeal tribunal cases are attributable to a variety of causes, some of which are beyond his organisation's control. The president is confident that a number of measures now in hand, including the recruitment of additional medical appeal tribunal chairmen and members, an increase in the number of hearings held and the deployment of additional administrative resources, will significantly reduce delays in both the north-western region and elsewhere.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the quality of data he receives from local authority social services departments concerning the services they provide for people with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: Central data on certain services for people with disabilities are collected annually by means of statistical returns issued to each of the local authority social services departments in England. The returns are subject to validation procedures to check that the overall quality of data is within acceptable limits. The coverage of the statistical returns is reviewed regularly in consultation with representatives of the local authorities.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people currently in receipt of

mobility allowance, other than those with reserved rights under the former vehicle scheme, are due to reach their 75th birthday before the end of 1988.

Mr. Scott: None of the current recipients of the allowance, apart from those who have transferred from the former invalid vehicle scheme, is due to reach age 75 before 29 November 1989.

Benefits (Scotland)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of supplementary benefit and income support claims received in the last six weeks period for which records are available in his Department's local offices in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* the Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Portillo: Information on supplementary benefit and income support claims is not available for six-week periods. The numbers of supplementary benefit and income support claims received for the period 11 April to 31 May 1988 are as follows:

	Supplementary Benefit	*Income Support*
Greenock Local Office	287	1,017
Port Glasgow Local Office	190	499
Strathclyde Region[1]	12,439	27,332
Scotland	17,610	55,248

Source: Internal Regional Management statistical returns. (These figures are provisional and subject to amendment).

[1] The administrative region of Strathclyde encompasses 31 Local Offices of the Department, excluding National Insurance Offices, and the boundaries are not conterminous.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the staffing allocations for 1988-89, as determined by the agreed complementing system for his Department's local offices in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* the Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and what were the comparable staffing levels in (i) 1986-87 and (ii) 1987-88.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is as follows:

	1988-1989	*1987-88*	*1986-87*
Greenock ILO	150	175	172
Port Glasgow ILO	74	81	79
Strathclyde	4,128	4,643	4,431
Scotland	7,449	8,299	7,896

Abbreviation--ILO = Integrated Local Office.

The figures given exclude cleaners.

The reduction in complement for 1988-1989 results largely from the replacement of supplementary benefit by income support and the fall in numbers of unemployed claimants.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women receiving (i) invalidity benefit and (ii) severe disablement allowance in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow; *(b)* the Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table which shows the estimated numbers of recipients of those benefits in Scotland as at 4 April 1987, the latest date for which the information is held:

Benefit	*Men*	*Women*
Invalidity benefit	96,100	39,100
Severe Disablement allowance	12,800	18,900

Separate local office records are not kept for these benefits.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families are in receipt of family credit in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency; and how many families in Greenock and Port Glasgow were in receipt of family income supplement in each of the past three years.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not available. Family income supplement claims were dealt with centrally and no information was maintained about claims from particular local areas. Family credit is also being dealt with centrally, and information is available only on a national basis.

Priority Issues

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the priority issues which he has identified to district health authorities in the last two years.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are guided by the priorities set out in the planning guidelines circulars issued by the Department. Copies of the relevant circulars, HC(86)2 and HC(87)7, are in the Library.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he plans to take against health authorities intending to use some of the additional money earmarked for the cost of nurses' pay awards for other areas of expenditure.

Mr. Newton: We have no reason to believe that health authorities intend to use the additional funds we have allocated following the review body awards other than to meet pay costs.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of psychiatric hospitals in each region for each year from 1974 to April 1988 and the number of beds in each hospital.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the number of National Health Service mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units by each health authority in England for each year between 1974 and 1986, the latest year for which information is available. The table shows the average daily number of available beds by region, as it would incur disproportionate cost to provide from central information the number of beds in each hospital.

Numbers of Psychiatric Hospitals and available beds by Region, England

Regional Health Authority	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern													
Hospitals	28	28	29	28	29	31	29	30	31	33	32	37	38
Beds	10,647	10,566	10,243	9,900	9,585	9,405	9,300	9,170	9,041	9,004	8,781	8,682	8,346
Yorkshire													
Hospitals	37	37	40	40	39	38	38	41	41	41	43	45	47
Beds	11,862	11,748	11,703	11,489	11,383	11,029	10,572	10,369	10,101	9,731	9,508	9,140	8,572
Trent													
Hospitals	46	52	56	62	61	61	62	63	63	64	68	65	67
Beds	12,938	12,793	12,782	12,765	12,572	12,432	12,483	11,968	11,754	11,552	11,228	10,641	10,304
East Anglia													
Hospitals	20	21	21	22	21	21	21	22	22	28	29	28	29
Beds	5,134	5,076	5,074	4,933	4,860	4,769	4,657	4,687	4,550	4,616	4,439	4,190	4,054
North West Thames													
Hospitals	32	34	34	35	35	34	35	35	33	33	33	36	36
Beds	14,755	14,052	13,664	12,870	12,514	11,959	11,696	11,514	11,297	11,011	10,599	10,150	9,659
North East Thames													
Hospitals	25	29	35	36	36	36	36	35	39	41	41	41	43
Beds	10,946	10,451	10,221	10,202	10,021	9,739	9,522	9,268	9,140	8,921	8,761	8,347	8,052
South East Thames													
Hospitals	43	45	44	43	42	43	43	43	42	42	45	46	53
Beds	11,450	12,114	11,431	11,013	10,760	10,451	10,176	10,012	9,758	9,415	8,939	8,379	7,851
South West Thames													
Hospitals	35	35	37	38	38	38	41	42	42	43	44	44	43
Beds	17,582	15,763	15,288	14,804	14,183	13,697	13,343	12,875	12,403	12,170	11,741	11,368	10,675
Wessex													
Hospitals	27	27	28	29	28	28	28	30	31	47	55	64	69
Beds	8,568	7,592	7,274	7,122	6,885	6,748	6,629	6,508	6,443	6,324	6,099	5,752	5,484
Oxford													
Hospitals	28	28	31	30	28	26	28	29	29	32	34	34	36
Beds	5,554	5,102	5,079	4,842	4,695	4,577	4,488	4,332	4,185	4,082	4,005	3,919	3,665
South Western													
Hospitals	30	30	34	35	37	38	43	45	45	50	52	54	61
Beds	12,780	11,997	11,436	11,068	10,889	10,588	10,423	10,223	9,921	9,540	8,930	8,283	7,579
West Midlands													
Hospitals	39	39	40	41	43	42	43	43	45	46	46	61	72
Beds	15,655	14,702	14,182	13,824	13,663	13,315	12,878	12,536	12,365	11,869	11,370	10,964	10,565
Mersey													
Hospitals	29	31	30	28	29	29	29	31	33	32	31	32	35
Beds	9,633	9,609	9,494	9,316	9,300	9,002	8,741	8,681	8,523	8,136	7,751	7,392	7,099
North Western													
Hospitals	35	34	35	37	38	40	42	43	45	48	48	50	52
Beds	11,569	11,309	11,176	10,942	10,648	10,666	10,672	10,569	10,564	10,426	10,144	9,700	9,417
England													
Hospitals	458	470	494	504	504	505	518	532	541	580	601	637	681
Beds	159,073	152,874	149,047	145,090	141,958	138,377	138,580	132,712	130,045	126,797	122,315	116,900	111,322

[1] Changes to Health Authority boundaries occurred in 1979 and 1982.
[2] The Special Hospitals and Special Health Authority hospitals are not included as they provide a national service.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* all national and local offices of his Department identifying whether they are freehold or leasehold, how long each lease has to run and the cost of each lease.

Mr. Portillo: The Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment has responsibility for acquiring property on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security and acts as lessee for all buildings occupied. The information could be obtained but only at disproportionate cost.

Leukaemia Clusters

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the number and location of the leukaemia clusters being investigated at present;

(2) what plans his Department has to investigate all leukaemia clusters found throughout the United Kingdom with a view to establishing their cause.

Mrs. Currie: Leukaemia, like other rare diseases, tends to cluster as a matter of statistical chance, and investigation will not necessarily lead to the detection of local environmental causes. Nevertheless, the Government are funding developments in the statistics to facilitate the systematic detection and investigation of clusters. In particular, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) on 30 March 1988 at columns *550-51*. The small area health statistics unit is funded by Government and its work is guided by a steering committee on which sit independent experts and officials.

Research into the epidemiology of leukaemia is undertaken by a number of cancer registries and research organisations funded both by Government and independently, and arrangements have been agreed between them to co-ordinate the development of methods and their investigations.

Meanwhile, the Department is involved with investigations into leukaemia clusters around Sellafield in Cumbria and Aldermaston and Burghfield in Berkshire. I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the

Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Wales that their Departments are involved with a number of investigations.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 8 June 1988 at columns *600-1* about the report of the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment on the incidence of leukaemia around Dounreay. Also, an independent committee in Northern Ireland is examining the patterns of disease with a possible association with radiation. This will include a search for possible leukaemia clusters. In Wales, an investigation into the incidence of leukaemia on the north Wales coast is in progress.

Social Fund

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that women who take refuge from violence inflicted by a spouse or partner, who is in receipt of income support, remain eligible for social fund loans or grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Social fund crisis or budgeting loans or community care grants may be available to enable people to move to new accommodation following a breakdown in a relationship. Loans and grants may also be available for clothing where the applicant is unable to recover clothing from the former home because of the risk of violence or where clothing has been damaged as a result of the breakdown in the relationship. Community care grants may be awarded only to people receiving income support, and budgeting loans to people who themselves or whose partners have been in receipt of income support for 26 weeks; but crisis loans may be awarded to people without resources whether on income support or not.

Community Care

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to enable those of Vietnamese origin granted refuge in the United Kingdom to be eligible to claim community care grants for setting up home and obtaining their basic needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Community care grants to set up home may be available to refugees receiving income support if they are being resettled in the community from a hostel or other form of accommodation for refugees by an organisation as part of a planned programme of resettlement.

London Ambulance Service

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to take steps to improve the response of the London ambulance service to emergency calls.

Mrs. Currie: The responsibility for response times lies with the South West Thames regional health authority which is responsible, on behalf of the four Thames regions, for the management of the London ambulance service (LAS). I understand, however, that the LAS is in the process of negotiating revised accident and emergency rotas with the staff side of the LAS. When these are implemented they will enable the LAS to provide more relief staff and thus improve its manning levels.

Ms. Harman To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will conduct an inquiry into the response to an emergency call to the London ambulance service at 1 am on Saturday 25 June from Donnington road, Worcester Park.

Mrs. Currie: No. I understand my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Lords) will receive a report from the London ambulance service which is carrying out an inquiry into the case.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about staffing levels in the London ambulance service.

Mrs. Currie: The staffing levels for ambulance personnel are at present:

	In post
Leading Ambulance Personnel	60·0
Qualified Ambulance Personnel	1,451·0
Ambulance Personnel	685·5

A further 12 full-time and seven part-time staff are at present contracted to become ambulance personnel. I understand that the London ambulance service is continuing to carry out a recruitment programme.

Administration of Benefits

Mrs. Virgina Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to consider the status of the administration of social security benefits in the light of the report, "Improving Management in Government: The Next Steps."

Mr. Moore: I have asked my officials to examine the organisation of the whole of social security operations including computer services and to recommend whether they can with advantage be run as a "Next Steps" agency or agencies.

The "Next Steps" initiative presents important new opportunities to all Government Departments, but particularly for the DHSS. Administration of the social security scheme employs nearly 90,000 people (nearly 90 per cent. of DHSS staff) who work in a network of central, regional and local DHSS offices across the country, authorising, calculating and paying benefits and collecting national insurance contributions. The study I have commissioned will consider how this huge "business" could produce a better service to the public and improved value to the taxpayer by being changed into an executive agency, or agencies, along the lines recommended in the "Next Steps" report.

In the light of the recommendations of officials the Government will be in a position to reach conclusions on the most appropriate way to run social security operations and, if appropriate, the shape and form of an agency or agencies.

District Nursing Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list for each district health authority

in England, the number of whole-time equivalent health visitors employed per head of the population aged *(a)* up to five years and *(b)* 65 years and over;

(2) if he will list, for every health authority in England *(a)* the number of whole-time equivalent district nurses employed in 1979-80, *(b)* the number of whole-time equivalent district nurses employed in 1986-87 and *(c)* the number of district nurses employed per 1,000 of the population aged 65 years and over;

(3) if he will indicate, for each district health authority in England, the number of whole-time equivalent health visitors employed in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1986-87.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* I regret that it is not possible to provide all the information requested.

The number of health visitors and the total qualified district nursing staff employed in each region at September 1979 and September 1986 is shown in the table. Comparable figures by district health authority for 1979 and 1986 are not available because of the 1982 NHS reorganisation. As regards ratios of staff to population it is not meaningful to provide such information for specific age groups as the staff provide care to all ages.

Qualified health visitors and district nursing staff employed in each regional health authority—30 September

Wholetime equivalents[1]

	Qualified health visitors[2]		*Qualified district nursing staff*[3]	
	1979	*1986*	*1979*	*1986*
Northern	560	690	1,050	1,160
Yorkshire	670	740	1,060	1,110
Trent	780	960	1,330	1,520
East Anglian	310	370	530	590
North West Thames	680	810	930	990
North East Thames	600	740	1,000	1,010
South East Thames	710	830	1,160	1,240
South West Thames	670	640	930	970
Wessex	530	610	720	910
Oxford	530	560	690	690
South Western	590	680	840	970
West Midlands	980	1,120	1,430	1,570
Mersey	490	500	740	800
North Western	920	1,170	1,530	1,640
London Post-Graduate Special Health Authorities	—	—	—	20
England total	9,010	10,430	13,930	15,190

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Notes:

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) wholetime equivalents.

[2] Includes health visitors in both the Community and School Health Services, HV fieldwork teachers, TB visitors with HV certificate, dual/triple posts (HV/DN/Mid) and bank health visitors. Excludes HV students and other qualified and unqualified nursing staff.

[3] Includes district nurse practical work teachers; registered and enrolled nurses assisting district nurses, dual posts (DN/Mid) and bank district nurses. Excludes DN students and unqualified nursing staff.

Day Care Places

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many day care places for the elderly mentally infirm are currently available in the National Health Service in each regional health authority; and if he will express the figure per head of the population aged 75 years and over for each region.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The numbers of patients aged 75 years and over attending a day hospital or a day centre at a main hospital are given in the table, together with the rate per 100,000 population aged 75 and over.

Mental illness hospitals and units—patients aged 75 and over attending a day hospital, or a day centre in a main hospital, on the last working day of 1986, in England

Regional health authority	*Number of day attenders (age 75 and over)*	*Rate per 100,000 population (age 75 and over)*
England	2,134	69
Northern	108	57
Yorkshire	160	68
Trent	112	39
East Anglian	98	71
North West Thames	114	54
North East Thames	159	65
South East Thames[1]	107	41
South West Thames	109	49
Wessex	141	66
Oxford	190	145
South Western	165	66
West Midlands	146	49
Mersey	134	90
North Western	386	148
Special Health Authority Hospital[1]	5	—

[1] For the purpose of rates per 100,000 population the Special Health Authority Hospital has been included in the numbers for South East Thames.

Mental Handicap Nurses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses entered into mental handicap nurse training for each of the past five years in each region in England.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for the years ended 31 March 1985, 1986 and 1987 is shown in the table. Information is not available prior to 1985.

The figures for 1986-87 relate to all entrants to training, including those undertaking training for a second qualification. Those for 1984-85 and 1985-86 related just to those entering training for their first basic nurse qualification. Therefore they are not comparable.

Numbers entering registered and enrolled mental handicap nurse training—England—Years ended 31 March

	1984-85[1]		*1985-86*[1]		*1986-87*[2]	
	Registered training	*Enrolled training*	*Registered training*	*Enrolled training*	*Registered training*	*Enrolled training*
Northern	61	23	48	Nil	77	—
Yorkshire	63	30	67	18	72	9
Trent	79	46	59	23	101	26
East Anglian	23	10	28	6	36	20
North West Thames	56	48	33	15	21	19
North East Thames	48	28	35	14	39	35

	1984-85[1]		1985-86[1]		1986-87[2]	
	Registered training	Enrolled training	Registered training	Enrolled training	Registered training	Enrolled training
South East Thames	33	20	28	18	57	—
South West Thames	100	22	76	16	137	17
Wessex	46	5	50	Nil	79	—
Oxford	10	12	15	11	22	19
South Western	46	28	84	21	72	9
West Midlands	100	25	110	18	132	10
Mersey	35	15	34	7	72	30
North Western	70	23	101	24	123	8
Outside NHS	17	1	68	12	—	—
Total	787	336	836	203	1,040	202

Source: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

[1] The figures may differ slightly from those shown previously as some small corrections have been made.

[2] The figures for 1986-87 are not comparable with those for 1984-85 and 1985-86. The 1986-87 figures relate to all entrants to training including those undertaking training for a second qualification. Those for earlier years relate just to those entering training for their first basic nurse qualification.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many community mental handicap nurses are employed by each health authority in England.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The total number of nursing staff employed in the community mental handicap service in each region at 30 September 1986 is shown in the table. Similar information for 1987 is not yet available.

NHS staff in post by regional health authority community mental handicap nursing staff[1] at September 1986.

Regional Health Authority	Whole-time equivalents[2]
Northern	79
Yorkshire	88
Trent	50
East Anglian	83
North West Thames	53
North East Thames	51
South East Thames	50
South West Thames	92
Wessex	24
Oxford	33
South Western	111
West Midlands	169
Mersey	85
Northern Western	131
London Post-Graduate Special Health Authorities	1
TOTAL	1,100

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Notes:

[1] Includes qualified and unqualified nursing staff employed in the community mental handicap service.

[2] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

National Insurance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he issues to local offices on the grounds on which they may waive class 1 national insurance contributions unpaid by employers; and when they were last revised.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* Authority for granting waivers of unlimited amount has been delegated to local office management since April 1983. Before then this authority rested with regional finance officers.

The relevant guidance to local offices suggests that in deciding whether a waiver should be granted, they should take account of such factors as whether there was genuine and reasonable doubt about the class of contribution payable, whether this or another Government Department may have misdirected the employer on national insurance contribution liability, and the size of the arrears. In combination with one or more of those factors, local offices may take into account the assets of the employer.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what grounds the local Department of Health and Social Security office decided on 3 April 1985 to waive the class 1 national insurance contributions which New College school, Cardiff had omitted to pay in respect of the staff it employed from 6 April 1980 to 5 April 1984.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The waiver was given on the grounds that there was genuine and reasonable doubt about the class of national insurance contribution payable. The Department considered that the school managers had acted in good faith in not paying class 1 contributions. In these circumstances, it was decided not to jeopardise the financial stability of the school and thereby the jobs of its employees by demanding arrears of contributions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he expects to recover any or all of the sum of £16,575, being class 1 national insurance contributions unpaid by New College school, Cardiff, in respect of the staff it employed between 6 April 1980 and 5 April 1984.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* No. An absolute waiver was given.

Income

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the index of average income for 1981 and 1983 in tables A1,2,3; C1,2,3; D1, 2, 3 and F1,2,3 of "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis."

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

As explained in the report of the technical review of the low-income statistics, and in the technical annex to the households below average income statistics, to enable meaningful comparisons, the actual cash incomes received by households are adjusted to reflect varying household size and composition and expressed in terms of individuals

in households. National average income per individual, calculated after these adjustments, is shown in the table defined as 100. Incomes at other levels are expressed as an index of average income. The figures therefore provide a basis for comparisons of relative cash incomes between individual groups and individual years but do not provide an indication of the actual cash incomes of the households concerned.

Indices of the average household incomes of individuals in 1981 and 1983
(Adjusted for family size and composition)
Great Britain—current prices—weekly basis

All individuals—before housing costs

Tables A1 and A2

Indices of average income—percentile of income distribution

	below 10 per cent.	below 20 per cent.	below 30 per cent.	below 40 per cent.	below 50 per cent.	Total population
1981	41·0	48·7	54·1	59·0	63·9	100
1983	41·1	49·2	54·7	59·6	64·3	100

Dependent children—before housing costs

Table A3

Indices of average income—percentile of income distribution

	below 10 per cent.	below 20 per cent.	below 30 per cent.	below 40 per cent.	below 50 per cent.	All Children
1981	40·6	46·9	53·1	57·2	62·3	100
1983	42·9	49·2	54·0	58·9	63·3	89·7

All individuals—before housing costs

Tables C1 and C2

Indices of average income—below a given proportion of the average

	below 0·5	below 0·6	below 0·7	below 0·8	below 0·9	below 1·0	Total population
1981	39·2	48·0	54·6	59·8	64·7	69·1	87·3
1983	38·6	47·8	54·7	60·3	65·1	69·6	100

Dependent children—before housing costs

Table C3

Indices of average income—below a given proportion of the average

	below 0·5	below 0·6	below 0·7	below 0·8	below 0·9	below 1·0	All Children
1981	39·3	46·3	52·8	58·2	63·1	67·4	87·3
1983	41·0	48·2	54·0	59·5	64·0	68·4	89·7

All individuals—after housing costs
Tables D1 and D2
Indices of average income—percentile of income distribution

	below 10 per cent.	*below 20 per cent.*	*below 30 per cent.*	*below 40 per cent.*	*below 50 per cent.*	*Total population*
1981	33·8	42·4	48·7	54·5	60·2	100
1983	34·5	43·8	50·0	55·4	60·8	100

Dependent children—after housing costs
Table D3
Indices of average income—percentile of income distribution

	below 10 per cent.	*below 20 per cent.*	*below 30 per cent.*	*below 40 per cent.*	*below 50 per cent.*	*All children*
1981	34·1	41·2	47·7	53·9	59·2	86·0
1983	37·9	44·4	49·7	55·2	60·6	87·9

All individuals—after housing costs
Tables F1 and F2
Indices of average income—below a given proportion of the average

	below 0·5	*below 0·6*	*below 0·7*	*below 0·8*	*below 0·9*	*below 1·0*	*Total population*
1981	37·8	44·9	50·7	55·9	61·3	65·8	100
1983	36·5	45·4	51·9	56·9	62·0	66·4	100

Dependent children—after housing costs
Table F3
Indices of average income—below a given proportion of the average

	below 0·5	*below 0·6*	*below 0·7*	*below 0·8*	*below 0·9*	*below 1·0*	*All children*
1981	37·3	43·5	49·9	55·1	60·5	64·8	86·0
1983	39·3	45·8	51·6	56·7	61·6	65·7	87·9

Notes: Household income is defined after the payment of any income tax and national insurance and the receipt of any social security benefits. Individuals within households have been ranked according to their household incomes. Table numbers refer to "Households Below Average Income 1981-85". This publication, copies of which are in the Library, provides further details on the methods and assumptions used in these analyses.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Development Corporations

12. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of grant assistance has so far been awarded to the seven urban development corporations created in December 1987.

Mr. Ridley: Grant-in-aid for all English urban development corporations in the financial year 1988-89 is £203 million. Of this, £15 million has been set aside for UDCs to be established during the financial year.

41. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has decided who will become the chairmen of the seven urban development corporations created in December 1987.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has appointed Dr. James Grigor as chairman of the Central Manchester development corporation, Mr. Peter Hartley as chairman of the Leeds development corporation, Mr. Hugh Sykes as chairman of the Sheffield development corporation and Mr. Christopher Thomas as chairman-designate of the proposed Bristol development corporation.

45. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with regard to the seven urban development corporations created in December 1987.

Mr. Trippier: Good progress is being made by all the urban development corporations (UDCs). Three new UDCs and an extension to the Black Country DC were announced last December, a further UDC and an extension to Merseyside DC were announced in March. I am pleased to say that three of the four new UDCs (Central Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds DC) and the extension to the Black Country DC were established on 30 June. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State laid an order to designate the Merseyside DC extension on 12 July. Bristol city council has unfortunately petitioned against the order to establish a Bristol DC, resulting in considerable cost and delay.

Council Properties (Incentive Allowance Schemes)

15. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities operate incentive allowance schemes for council tenants to move out of their tenancies in order for the property to be sold to private developers.

Mrs. Roe: I am not aware of any such schemes.

Sports Council

16. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what remuneration is paid to senior members of the Sports Council; and what changes in their duties he expects to follow from the reduction in the membership of the council.

Mr. Moynihan: The chairman is paid £15,392 per annum and the vice-chairmen £11,595 per annum and £9,276 per annum respectively. The duties of the paid appointments to the council remain unchanged but it is for the council to determine how it organises the structure and management of its business in the light of the reduction in the membership of the council.

54. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Sports Council; and if he will raise with him his policy on how the council is to organise its structure and its business with a reduced membership.

Mr. Moynihan: I will be meeting the chairman of the Sports Council on 28 July to discuss the council's draft corporate plan for 1989-90. It is for the council to determine how it organises the structure and management of the business in the light of the reduction in the membership of the council.

84. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial savings are envisaged from his proposed changes in the Sports Council structure.

Mr. Moynihan: I announced on 1 July my proposal to reduce the membership of the Sports Council to less than half its present size. This change will make the council more efficient and effective, but it will not affect the level of the Sports Council's grant-in-aid.

Water Metering

17. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress in water metering experiments.

Mr. Moynihan: So far the Department has received formal proposals for six metering trial schemes. The first of these, covering a small scale trial in Chandlers Ford in Hampshire was approved by my right hon. Friend last week. The other five schemes are under detailed consideration. I expect to receive proposals for other metering trials from water undertakers over the next few months.

London Docklands Development Corporation

19. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs have been attracted to the London Docklands development corporation since 1981; and how many jobs were lost in the previous four years.

Mr. Trippier: There are an estimated 36,000 jobs in the LDDC area, compared to 27,000 in 1981 when the corporation was created. About 20,000 are new jobs created or jobs attracted to the area since 1981. Some 10,000 jobs were lost between 1978 and 1981.

Trafford Park UDC

20. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Government funding has so far been invested in the Trafford Park urban development corporation; and what progress the Trafford Park urban development corporation has so far made.

89. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how far forward the Trafford Park urban development corporation is with its plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Trafford Park development corporation has drawn down £13·5 million of grant-in-aid since its inception in February 1987, £10·45 million in the financial year 1987-88, the remainder in the present financial year.

The corporation has been engaged in a programme of strategic land acquisition and environmental improvement projects. It has brought forward proposals for the redevelopment of Trafford Park village as a business centre; the upgrading of the Haddfield street industrial area; and for waterside developments in the Wharfside area.

The corporation has been taking initiatives in many other areas and through its marketing strategy has generated a substantial amount of private sector interest.

Housing Associations

21. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives of housing associations; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans for such a meeting, but there are frequent contracts with individual housing associations and representatives of the movement, at both ministerial and official level, on matters of common interest.

Rural Voluntary Action

22. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take, in the light of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations' 10-point plan regarding rural voluntary action, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: We attach great importance to the role of voluntary organisations in rural areas. We shall continue to assist them in appropriate ways, particularly through the Rural Development Commission.

Redundant Agricultural Buildings

23. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue further guidelines to planning authorities to ensure that applications for change of use of redundant agricultural buildings receive speedy and positive attention.

Mrs. Roe: Our planning policy guidance notes on green belts and rural enterprise and development, issued in January, reiterated our encouragement to planning authorities to treat positively applications for the reuse of redundant agricultural buildings. We continue to urge authorities to process all planning applications as quickly as possible.

Rating Reform

24. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of people to be exempted from paying the community charge.

Mr. Howard: We estimate that about half a million people will be exempt from paying the personal community charge.

52. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of the effect of the proposed national non-domestic rate on the northern region.

Mr. Howard: Rate poundages in the northern region are presently between 10 and 28 per cent. more than this year's national average of 239·5p. A uniform non-domestic rate poundage at that level would have reduced rate bills in the region by £110 million on current rateable values. The national non-domestic rate will be introduced simultaneously with a revaluation. The outcome of that is not yet known, but it is expected that businesses in the northern region will benefit further, though the impact will vary for different types of property. With a national non-domestic rate, rate poundage will rise no faster than the rate of inflation, unlike this year when increases in Durham ranged from 14 to 20 per cent. Lower and more stable rate poundages will encourage investment and allow businesses to plan sensibly.

100. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the element of the estimated community charges in Derbyshire and Staffordshire for 1988-89 attributable to county precepts.

Mr. Howard: In the new local government finance system, authorities will be accountable for all their expenditure requirements, not just the amount remaining to be found after the attribution of Government grant. The community charge figures published on 23 June for local authority areas in Derbyshire and Staffordshire included expenditure of £643 and £595 per adult for those councils, respectively. Those expenditure levels are £55 and £3 per adult, respectively, greater than the needs assessments for those councils and add those amounts to the community charges there.

Planning Control

25. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific planning control items will be accorded priority for inclusion in his Department's proposed new planning and development legislation.

Mr. Ridley: Although I have a number of items in mind, I cannot anticipate the content of a later Session's legislative programme.

Homelessness

26. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the use of Government-owned empty properties for homeless families.

Mrs. Roe: Each Department is responsible for bringing its empty dwellings back into use or, where they are no longer needed for operational reasons, disposing of them as quickly as possible. Where dwellings likely to be required in future are temporarily empty, Departments are encouraged to let them to local authorities or housing associations, which can make them available to homeless families.

34. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in each year from 1985 whose homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 27 June at column *146*.

72. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for the number of homeless families accepted by local authorities in the current year.

95. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of homeless people in England.

Mrs. Roe: The available information is on the households accepted as homeless by English local authorities and the latest estimate appears in table 1 of "Local Authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the first quarter of 1988. Supplementary Tables", which is available in the Library.

83. **Miss Lestor** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide further resources to tackle homelessness.

Mrs. Roe: We have already done so—£74 million additional resources have recently been provided, in particular to help get empty property into use for the homeless. In addition, estate action funding is available for particular schemes. Homelessness pressures will be taken into account in local authorities' HIP allocations for 1989-90, for which bids have just been invited.

96. **Mr Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the estimated total annual cost for homeless families placed in bed and breakfast by local authorities.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 27 June at column *159*.

Sport (Drug Testing)

27. **Mr McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* the current annual cost of drug testing in British sport, *(b)* how many positive results have been reported and *(c)* what action was taken in respect of them.

Mr. Moynihan: The 1988-89 doping control budget allocations of the four United Kingdom sports councils total £674,000 of which approximately £500,000 will be spent on their testing programmes. Since 1 April, when the implementation of the new drug testing regime began, analysis of initial samples taken from sportsmen and women have produced 12 adverse findings, the majority of which relate to instances where a banned substance such as codeine had been taken in small dose as medication. However, three cases are proceeding to further investigation and governing body decisions on appropriate action will be taken once this process has been completed. Any action they do take will be considered by the independent review panel set to monitor the operation of the drug testing programme and of governing body actions.

London City Airport

28. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning any planning application for test flights or full-scale commercial flights of jet aircraft to or from London City airport.

Mr. Trippier: As set out in my answer of 8 July, planning permission was granted by the London Docklands development corporation on 5 July allowing the London City airport to be used on three days for demonstration flights by British Aerospace 146 aircraft. The corporation has not received planning applications to use the airport for commercial flights by the BAE 146 or other jet aircraft.

Public Bodies (Surplus Land)

29. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will cause an analysis to be made of the disincentives to the release of surplus land by public bodies.

Mr. Trippier: My Department's programme of research in the current financial year includes an examination of the cost-effectiveness of various policy measures for bringing vacant land into use. The examination is expected to cover any factors that hinder this process.

Housebuilders Federation

30. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the Housebuilders Federation to discuss development in the south-east.

Mr. Waldegrave: I last met representatives of the Housebuilders Federation on 12 October 1987 to discuss regional housing issues in the south-east. There have been subsequent meetings between officials.

Local Authority Sports and Leisure Facilities

31. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he received from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on competition in the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities.

Mr. Moynihan: The association responded in detail to the consultation paper which we issued last autumn. A copy of its response has been placed in the Library. I met representatives of the association on 8 March. Among other things, we discussed the Government's proposal to introduce compulsory competition into the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities.

Football Violence

32. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he is considering to combat the effects of violence in or around football stadiums.

Mr. Moynihan: Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's meeting on 6 July with the football authorities, the Government announced their intention to bring forward proposals for legislation to give statutory backing to a national membership scheme.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

33. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce his plans for the reform of local authority capital expenditure.

56. **Mr. Holland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a Green Paper on the reform of local authority capital expenditure.

Mr. Howard: The Government's proposals for a new system to regulate local authority capital expenditure and finance in England and Wales were published in a consultation paper on 7 July.

Football League Matches

36. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* how many individual spectators paid to watch Football League matches in England in the 1987-88 season, *(b)* the average amount of time spectators take to pass into Football League grounds and *(c)* in how many such grounds in that season serious crowd trouble occurred.

Mr. Moynihan: The information available is as follows:

(a) The total attendances at Football League matches during the 1987-88 season was 18,273,621.

(b) There are no statistics available on the average length of time spectators take to pass into Football League grounds.

(c) There were 19 matches at Football League grounds reported to the Football Association during the 1987-88 season at which incidents of crowd disorder took place which the Football Association considered were sufficiently serious to warrant investigation with the clubs concerned. In addition, the police report that the potential for violence was present at a significant number of matches because of the hostile atmosphere created by the provocative and aggressive behaviour of some sections of the crowd.

Football (Crowd Control)

37. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives from the Football Association and the Football League to discuss crowd control.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 13 July at column *228*.

Water Supply (Aluminium)

38. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department proposes to commission any research into the possible link between high aluminium levels in water supplies and senility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has no plans to commission any research into a possible link between high aluminium levels in water supplies and senility. However, as the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) was informed on 20 June, the Medical Research Council, with which we are in close touch and which is the main agency through which the Government support medical research in the United Kingdom, is carrying out research on this subject.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the supply outlets of domestic water in the northern region that are currently being treated with aluminium sulphate, have aluminium concentrations in excess of the European Commission guidelines and are subject to derogations for these and other reasons.

Mr. Moynihan: Information on the water supplies in the northern region which are currently being treated with aluminium sulphate is not held centrally. The only supply which regularly exceeds the European Commission directive standard, is Tunstall, which serves around 60,000 people in the Bishop Auckland area. The Department has applied to the European Commission under article 20 of the directive for a delay in applying the aluminium standard to the Tunstall area until the end of 1988. The improvement programme is on target to meet that date. However, current aluminium concentrations are not considered to be a health risk.

New Construction

39. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest set of quarterly orders for new construction figures; and if he will comment on them.

Mr. Trippier: The latest figures of construction orders for new work in Great Britain by private contractors are given in the table.

	1988 first quarter provisional figures £ million 1980 prices seasonally adjusted	*Percentage change from first quarter 1987 per cent.*
Public housing	154	−16
Private housing	1,060	+8
Public other new work	1,130	+9
Private industrial	663	+3
Private commercial	1,905	+62
All new work	4,911	+22

These impressive results are largely due to orders placed by private sector clients. Private commercial orders were at a new record level in the first quarter of 1988, and private housing orders were at the highest level for 15 years.

The continuing high level of new orders placed in recent months supports the generally held view that this will be another good year for the construction industry with further growth in output expected.

Stonehenge

40. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from English Heritage about its plans to enhance facilities at Stonehenge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The chairman of English Heritage has kept us regularly in touch with his plans as they have developed. Officials of the Department have been helping English Heritage identify options for providing access to the proposed new visitor centre, in discussion with the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Transport and the county council. English Heritage now needs to reach agreement in principle with MoD and any private landowners affected on the best choice of route.

Capital Expenditure Controls

42. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the local authority associations to discuss the reform of capital expenditure controls.

Mr. Chope: The consultation paper which my right hon. Friend published on 7 July was discussed at the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 11 July.

Local Plans

43. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he proposes to take to encourage local authorities to comply with the recommendations contained in the draft planning policy guidance note on local plans.

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that local planning authorities will see the value of preparing statutory local plans for their areas: development control decisions taken in accordance with such plans are generally less susceptible to successful challenge. As the draft guidance note makes clear, where there is an up-to-date local plan, together with properly substantiated reasons for the local authority's decision, my right hon. Friend and his inspectors will be guided by it in dealing with planning appeals.

Water Industry Privatisation

44. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with private water companies about the implications of foreign investment in their companies for the privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend met the chairman and other representatives of the Water Companies Association to discuss foreign investment and other topics on 8 June.

Planning Policy (Investment)

46. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of planning policy on the location of investment.

Mr. Waldegrave: While the planning system cannot of itself stimulate investment, the effect of placing necessary restrictions on development in particular areas or locations may be to divert investment elsewhere. The effectiveness of a simplified planning regime in encouraging investment into particular locations was one of the issues considered in the recently published evaluation of the enterprise zone experiment.

Waste Imports

47. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about Government policy in respect of importing foreign waste for disposal in Britain.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received representations recently, principally in respect of proposals to import domestic waste from the United States of America.

85. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received in respect of proposals to import foreign waste for landfill disposal in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received many representations in respect of proposals to import domestic waste from the United States of America for landfill in the United Kingdom.

92. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will announce a statutory code of practice on imported waste transit and disposal.

Mr. Moynihan: The transport, transfer and disposal of imported waste are subject to the same controls that apply to indigenous waste. The Government announced on 29 June a number of measures to strengthen these controls. A code of practice will contain guidance on the steps to be expected of waste producers and holders in transferring waste to another person so as to discharge a new statutory duty of care. Any person importing waste will be subject to the new duty. The code will be published when legislation is before Parliament.

Brick Deliveries

48. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the level of brick deliveries in the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Trippier: Brick deliveries in the first quarter of 1988 totalled 1,141 million. Allowing for normal seasonal variations, deliveries in this period were 10 per cent. higher than in the fourth quarter of 1987 and 13 per cent. higher than in the corresponding period a year earlier. These increases reflect the continuing strong growth in building activity in the United Kingdom.

Power Stations

49. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what detailed assessment he has made as to whether sulphur dioxide emissions will be significantly reduced by retrofitting by 1993 three power stations with flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Moynihan: Retrofitting one 2,000 MW coal-fired power station with flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) will eliminate about 140,000 tonnes per annum of sulphur dioxide emissions (assuming use of coal of average sulphur content for United Kingdom power stations). The Government do not consider that it would be practicable to complete by 1993 a 6,000 MW FGD programme but the CEGB's programme announced in 1986 envisaged commissioning 1,330 MW capacity by the end of that year.

Planning Permission

50. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to introduce a right of appeal for objectors to decisions by local authorities to grant planning permission.

Mr. Waldegrave: In our response (Cm. 43) to the fifth report from the Environment Committee, Session 1985-86, we endorsed the Committee's view that it would not be appropriate to give to third parties rights to appeal against the grant of planning permission.

Draft Planning Circular

51. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of green field sites.

62. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of unused public land.

65. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of green field sites.

69. **Sir Dudley Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of unused public land.

71. **Sir Richard Body:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of unused public land.

73. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of green field sites.

75. **Mr. Grylls:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the abandonment of the five-year land bank.

82. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the use of green field sites.

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the draft planning circular regarding the development of unused public land.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan)

Departmental Telephone Numbers

53. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the reasons for the change in his Department's telephone numbers; and what steps have been taken to inform hon. Members in advance of the changes.

Mr. Ridley: The Department of the Environment's telephone system is being modernised as part of the wider scheme to modernise the telephone network linking Government offices in the Whitehall area.

The existing large exchange which serves the Department of the Environment and others is being phased out and replaced by a number of modern digital exchanges situated in the buildings they serve.

In some cases it has been necessary to keep both the old and the new exchanges running in parallel, and when this has happened a new telephone number has been required for Departments.

The switchboard supervisor at the House was informed of new ministerial office numbers in the first week after the change. Arrangements have also been made to direct incoming calls on old numbers to the appropriate new numbers.

I regret no steps were taken to inform Members individually.

Nitrate

55. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards increasing the permitted level of nitrates in water from 50 mg/litre to 100 mg/litre.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's policy is to comply with the standard of 50 mg of nitrate per litre of drinking water set in the European Commission directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC).

Council House Sales

57. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of total council house sales receipts currently held by housing authorities in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: At 31 March 1987, local authorities in England are estimated to have held £3,714 million of cash backed receipts attributable to their housing functions. Returns for 31 March 1988 are not yet available, but such receipts are estimated to have increased by then to £4·2 billion.

80. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold under the right-to-buy legislation since 1979.

Mrs. Roe: Up to the end of March 1988, English local authorities and new towns had sold 709,300 dwellings under the right-to-buy legislation.

Rural Housing

58. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding his proposals for housing in rural areas.

Mrs. Roe: We have had no formal representations. Comments on the discussion paper "Village Housing and New Villages" have been requested by 26 September.

Arpley Meadows Dumping Site

59. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *621*, if he will make a further statement regarding the outcome of his discussions with representatives of Cheshire county council concerning the future of the Arpley Meadows dumping site.

Mr. Moynihan: At my meeting with representatives of Cheshire county council we discussed the proposal to import domestic waste from the United States of America and the problems this may pose with regard to the county's long-term disposal plan, local amenity and plant and animal health.

I was most encouraged to learn of the seriousness with which the council is dealing with these problems as part of

its responsibilities for planning and licensing of waste disposal. The Government are continuing to examine the wider implications of the proposals. Meanwhile it remains for the council to consider the proposal that has been put to it taking all relevant factors into account.

The hon. Member will have noted my remarks in the Adjournment debate on 29 June during which I made the Government's position clear.

Cleveland

60. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed in local government in the county of Cleveland and its four borough councils in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

March figures

	1979			*1988*		
	Full time	*Part time*	*Total*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Total*
Cleveland CC	17,462	9,716	27,178	16,347	13,516	29,863
Hartlepool	1,511	167	1,678	975	146	1,121
Langbeurgh	1,610	238	1,848	1,290	351	1,641
Middlesborough	1,931	270	2,201	1,896	306	2,202
Stockton-on-Tees	2,493	232	2,725	1,509	228	1,737
Total	25,007	10,623	35,630	22,017	14,547	36,564

Source: Joint Manpower Watch for England.
Figures relate to all services including law and order.

Association of County Councils

61. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the officers of the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I met the local authority associations, including the ACC, at the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 11 July. The items discussed were my statement of 7 July on local government finance; community charge preparation costs; the development of grant-related expenditure assessment for the 1989-90 RSG settlement; and the consultation paper on capital expenditure and finance.

Cemetery Sales (Westminster)

63. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received asking him to exercise his powers to order an extraordinary audit in relation to the disposal of cemeteries by Westminster city council.

78. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received asking him to exercise his powers to order an extraordinary audit of Westminster city council in relation to the disposal of that authority's assets.

Mr. Chope: Twenty-five since 4 January.

Hooliganism

64. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet European Ministers for sport to discuss common problems of hooliganism.

Mr. Moynihan: I attended the Council of Europe's 13th informal meeting of Ministers responsible for sport in Athens on 1-2 June 1988 which, inter alia, discussed spectator violence, and I will be attending the Council's 6th conference of Sports Ministers in Reykjavik on 31 May to 1 June 1989, when hooliganism will again be on the agenda. One of my officials is today chairing a meeting of the standing committee of the European convention on spectator violence.

Development Land Bank

66. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is considering relaxing the requirements in PPG3 (1/88) that planning authorities maintain a five-year land bank for development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. It remains the case that planning authorities should ensure that there is a five-year housing land supply consistent with the provisions of the development plan, including any policies for the phasing of residential development. The development plan is the proper context for determining the appropriate level of future housing provision, but its purpose would be defeated if steps were not taken to ensure that the land needed to meet that provision is actually available.

Empty Properties

67. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the number of empty properties owned by local authorities in England and Wales.

Mrs. Roe: We have received a number of representations recently about empty council dwellings, almost all supporting legislative measures to get them back into use. I am not responsible for Wales.

National Cricket Coaching System

68. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to establish a national cricket coaching system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: A national cricket coaching system was introduced in 1952. The scheme is run by the National Cricket Association, on behalf of the Cricket Council, the game's overall governing body.

Water Supply Pipes

70. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many kilometres of England's and Wales's water supply pipes are bitumen-lined; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am advised that, as a broad estimate, 200,000 km of water mains in England and Wales are lined with bituminous materials.

Derelict Land Grant

74. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of waste land have been brought back into use as a result of derelict land grant since its inception.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available. However, between 1 April 1974 and 31 March 1987, 40,500 acres of derelict land in England have been reclaimed with the aid of derelict land grant.

Housing (Disabled People)

76. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement concerning the provision of housing for the disabled in Leicester.

Mrs. Roe: Leicester's housing investment programme return shows that the housing department knows neither how many dwellings it has which are suitable for the disabled, nor how many disabled people there are on its waiting list. The first requirement, therefore, is for sound, basic information.

Crouch Valley Housing Association

77. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to whether tenants in Rochford will be given full details of the financial implications of the transfer of council properties to the Crouch Valley housing association.

Mrs. Roe: The statutory requirements for tenant consultation where a local authority proposes to dispose of tenanted housing are set out in section 6 and schedule 1 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986. These provisions will apply to disposals to registered housing associations once part 1 of the Housing Bill comes into effect. In the meantime, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has stated that he will not expect to give consent to a disposal unless the local authority has followed the procedures set out in those provisions.

River Pollution

79. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is considering any amendment to the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to prevent industries which pollute rivers from remaining anonymous; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no anonymity for an industry, or for anyone else, found guilty of polluting rivers. However, if a firm considers that disclosure of the terms of a consent would, by revealing trade secrets, unreasonably prejudice its commercial interests, it may apply to the Secretary of State for this information to be excluded from the public register. If the case is accepted, the Secretary of State would then issue a certificate which is noted in the public register. No such certificate has ever been issued. We have no proposals to change these arrangements.

Landfill Costs

81. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on landfill costs in the United Kingdom in relation to those pertaining in other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no reliable and comparable statistics on landfill costs in the United Kingdom and other member states from which sensible conclusions could be drawn.

Paris Commission Meeting

86. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the last annual meeting of the Paris commission held in Lisbon on 15 to 17 June.

Mr. Moynihan: This year's annual meeting of the Paris commission made good progress in a number of areas. The commission endorsed measures taken by member states to reduce pollution from emissions of mercury, cadmium and PCBs in response to earlier recommendations. New recommendations were agreed to reduce inputs of nutrients to those areas of the sea where they were likely to cause pollution, and to develop procedures to restrict the use of tributyl-tin compounds on sea-going vessels. The commission unanimously adopted two new recommendations relating to radioactivity in the marine environment which strengthen the agreement reached at the second North sea conference. Together with the Oslo commission, the commission accepted the invitation in the North sea conference declaration to establish a scientific task force to develop a harmonised programme of studies on the North sea. A decision on the use of oil-based muds in offshore activities was adopted, including a standard for the oil content of drill cuttings, but with reservations from the United Kingdom and Denmark. However, the United Kingdom undertook to review its position on this.

A proposal from Ireland calling for the commission to recommend the closure of Sellafield was not supported.

The commission's annual report, containing an account of its proceedings, will be published in the autumn.

Urban Development Grants (Leicester)

87. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been made by Leicester city council since 1983 for urban development grants; and how much has been given to Leicester as a result.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1983 my Department has received 14 applications for urban development grant assistance from Leicester city council. Four grants totalling £0·886 million have been approved.

Chlorofluorocarbons

88. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to exercise his overall responsibility for policy on chlorofluorocarbons in

relation to the use of chlorofluorocarbon-related products and the protection of the ozone layer, the needs of developing countries, the ecosystem's conservation requirements and export potential.

Mr. Moynihan: As indicated in my right hon. Friend's answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 20 June, at column *608*, the Department of the Environment consults other Government Departments on policy matters relating to chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and the protection of the ozone layer. The Department also has regular meetings with the industries representing producers and users of CFCs.

Greenhouse Effect

90. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new plans he has to help limit the greenhouse effect on the world's climate.

93. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on combating the greenhouse effect on the world's climate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The first priority is to improve our scientific understanding of man-made climate change and its impact on the Environment. We are initiating our own research and playing a full part in international efforts to this end.

Meanwhile, our present understanding strengthens the case for various measures which are in hand or under consideration for other reasons. CFCs, which are powerful greenhouse gases, are to be controlled under the Montreal protocol agreed last year to protect the ozone layer. Realistic pricing of energy to encourage its efficient use and the continued development of sources of power other than fossil fuels will also reduce the generation of greenhouse gases. The exhaust emission standards for small cars agreed by the European Community last month preserve the incentive to develop the fuel-efficient lean-burn engines.

Enterprise Zones

91. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the future of enterprise zones.

Mr. Trippier: Since December 1987 when my right hon. Friend announced that there would be no general extension to the enterprise zone experiment, representations have been received in respect of proposed extensions to the Telford and north-east Lancashire enterprise zones.

Planning Applications

94. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review his Department's relevant circulars to ensure they give specific and unambiguous guidance to local planning authorities about relevant criteria to be applied in determining planning applications.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our planning policy guidance (PPG) and minerals planning guidance (MPG) notes and circulars and other statements provide local planning authorities with extensive planning guidance which must be taken into account, where it is relevant, in determining planning applications

Since the circumstances of development proposals vary widely, this guidance must inevitably be general and will have to be applied appropriately in each case to which it is relevant.

Nirex (Document)

97. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has met representatives of Nirex since the close of consultation on its document "The Way Forward;" and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of Nirex on 4 July. The Government will await proposals from Nirex, to be made in the light of responses to "The Way Forward".

Green Belts

98. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will vary the procedures for extending green belt areas to incorporate green wedges designated by local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: Proposals for altering the general extent of a green belt in a county structure plan or the detailed boundary in a local plan (or in an old development plan) can be considered in the process of making or modifying the appropriate plan. Our planning policy guidance note on green belts (PPG2) advises that the essential characteristic of green belts is their permanence and their boundaries should be set to endure and should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.

Structure and Local Plans (New Housing)

99. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent he will take county structure plans and other local plans into account in considering major planning applications for new housing development.

Mr. Waldegrave: Section 29 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 requires that the planning decision shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material consideration. We have made clear (in planning policy guidance note No. 1) that where the development plan is up to date and relevant to the particular proposal, it should normally be given considerable weight in the decision, and strong contrary planning grounds will have to be demonstrated to justify a proposal which conflicts with the plan.

Consultative Documents

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the length of time given for representations to be received in response to the 20 most recent consultative documents issued by his Department.

Mr. Ridley: Of 21 consultative documents issued by my Department since February 1988, four gave a suggested period for response of three months, two of two and a half months, four of two months, one of seven weeks, six of six weeks, one of five weeks, two of four weeks and one of three weeks.

Parkinson Houses

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the current status of approved, or part approved schemes of repair for Parkinson houses, detached, semi-detached and terraced.

Mrs. Roe: Michael Dyson Associates' repair system for Parkinson houses has been licensed by PRC Homes Ltd.; another, by K. Parsons Associates, based on a previous system by Avebury Design Associates, is currently under appraisal. I understand that PRC Homes Ltd. also hopes to receive a further proposed repair system, by Craddy and Partner. These systems allow for semi-detached repair, provided appropriate access can be obtained from adjoining properties. Details are available from PRC Homes Ltd's progress reports, which are deposited in the Library.

Empty Government Property

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of Government-owned property is unoccupied in *(a)* the Doncaster area and *(b)* in England and Wales.

Mr. Chope: For property in the ownership of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, the percentage of unoccupied property (including properties being prepared for occupation and those in the process of disposal) is as follows:

	Percentage
England and Wales	3·99
Doncaster	nil

City Parks

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to protect city parks from development.

Mr. Waldegrave: Any proposals to develop city parks would have to be considered having regard to the provisions of the development plan and any other material considerations. I should expect that the amenity value of city parks would be important as such a consideration.

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding his Department has made available for housing co-operatives in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are providing direct support in 1988-89 as follows:

—£632,000 in grant so far approved for housing associations and secondary co-ops to provide housing management advice, education and training services to primary co-ops.

—£53,000 towards the cost of staff employed by the National Federation of Housing Co-operatives.

The Housing Corporation is providing the following support in 1988-89 for co-ops which are registered housing associations:

—£22·24 million so far allocated for the capital costs of schemes;

—£3·58 million in mini-HAG for short-life projects (of which the bulk will go to co-op schemes);

—£131,500 for secondary co-ops.

I announced on 16 June, at column *251*, a review of the arrangements for promoting and supporting co-ops, and invited interested parties to submit representations by 29 July. I have asked the review team to report by the end of the year.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he possesses on the final report of the European Parliament's special committee of inquiry into the handling and transport of nuclear waste and nuclear materials in the EEC; and whether the report contains any information or recommendations pertinent to his Departmental policy on the management of nuclear wastes.

Mr. Moynihan: The report of the European Parliament's special committee of inquiry into the Mol/Transnuklear affair was produced earlier this month and the Department has been notified of its recommendations. The European Commission is expected to formulate proposals in response to the committee's findings shortly. We shall consider these when they arise.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Housing Corporation; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Roe: I last met the chairman of the Housing Corporation on 30 June when we discussed the tenants' guarantee and other issues relating to the future work of the Housing Corporation.

DEFENCE

Mr. Wallace and Captain Holroyd

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has anything to add concerning the allegations surrounding the service in Northern Ireland by Mr. Colin Wallace and Captain Fred Holroyd, following the Adjournment debate on 20 June about psychological warfare operations in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Mr. Wallace joined Government service as an assistant information officer at Headquarters Northern Ireland in 1968 and became a senior information officer in 1974. His job as a senior information officer in Northern Ireland was to brief the press on military operations and terrorist activities in the Province. As is customary, it would have been necessary on occasions to give such briefings on an unattributable basis. But of course it was not part of his job to hand over classified documents to the media. Shortly after he left Northern Ireland for a new post in Great Britain it was discovered that a classified document had been delivered by Mr. Wallace to the London home of a journalist on *The Times*.

Mr. Wallace was suspended for handing over the document, and it was decided that he should be dismissed from the Civil Service. Clearly, it is impossible to employ in a position of trust as an information officer, with constant access to the media, someone who deliberately leaks classified information to the press.

Mr. Wallace was disciplined for releasing a classified document without authority. His case was subsequently considered by the Civil Service Appeal Board in 1975. The Civil Service Appeal Board accepted the Ministry of Defence argument that Mr. Wallace was bound by the security regulations and that he had no authority to release classified information.

The board agreed that Mr. Wallace could not remain in the Civil Service but found that, in view of his previous good service, he should be allowed to resign rather than be dismissed.

For the next few years Mr. Wallace appears to have been out of contact with the Department. In the light of his subsequent allegations this long period of apparent silence might seem rather surprising. In 1981 he was convicted of manslaughter. This case was entirely unrelated to his service in Northern Ireland. In 1982, Mr. Wallace's attention focused on the investigation by Sir George Terry, the chief constable of the Sussex police, into alleged homosexual offences against those in care in homes and hostels for young children and persons in Northern Ireland, including the Kincora boys' home. He alleged that both the Army and the intelligence services knew of the homosexual activities at Kincora long before the matter became public and that rather than reporting these criminal activities they sought to use the information for their own ends. The police were of course anxious that Mr. Wallace should give them any information in his possession which could help them in their inquiries.

The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland gave an assurance that Mr. Wallace would not be prosecuted for any breach of the Official Secrets Act in respect of any information which he communicated concerning these matters. Additionally at Mr. Wallace's specific request, the director of Army security separately authorised Mr. Wallace to disclose to the RUC any information in his possession directly relevant to the investigation, which he gained during the course of his employment with the Ministry of Defence.

Following an approach to the Prime Minister it appeared that Mr. Wallace was concerned that information which he might give to the investigators might be used as evidence for charges against him. The Prime Minister drew attention to the assurances already given that he would not be prosecuted on any charge on the basis of evidence he might provide in answering questions put to him in the course of the investigations. Mr. Wallace was also concerned about the provision of legal advice and assistance, and the Lord Chancellor provided advice as to how he should apply for legal aid. In spite of every effort being made to remove obstacles from his path, Mr. Wallace apparently felt unable to help the RUC. In parallel with all this, Mr. Wallace petitioned the Home Secretary about the circumstances of his conviction for manslaughter in 1981, claiming that he had been wrongly convicted and claiming that this was part of a cover-up to prevent him revealing what he knew about Kincora. It was explained to him that there was no known link between his conviction for manslaughter and either his resignation from the Ministry of Defence, or allegations concerning the Kincora boys' home in Northern Ireland, these matters having already been the subject of inquiries by the appropriate authorities, in the course of which Mr. Wallace was given every opportunity to make his views known. In any case, it is not clear how his conviction could have prevented him from revealing what he knew.

Mr. Wallace's representations about his convictions were fully and extensively investigated. Nothing emerged which cast serious doubts upon his conviction or offered any grounds for the Home Secretary to intervene.

In 1985, the question arose of Mr. Wallace presenting evidence to the committee of inquiry into children's homes and hostels (chaired by his honour Mr. W. H. Hughes), which had been appointed by the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland in the wake of Sir George Terry's investigations to focus on the administration of children's homes where homosexual abuse had occurred and how those responsible for residential child care had discharged their responsibilities. Again, the director of Army security wrote to Mr. Wallace, confirming that he could disclose to members of the committee any information in his possession which was directly relevant to the investigation including, where necessary, information gained in the course of his employment with the Ministry of Defence and which might be security classified.

It was also made clear to Mr. Wallace that the Ministry of Defence would not wish to prevent him from presenting any relevant evidence he may have to the committee or, if he believed he had evidence of unlawful activity, to the police. He had been given all the assurance he could possibly need to enable him to make available to the RUC any relevant information without fear that it would be used subsequently against him. It was further explained to him that although he had been unwilling to release a file which he had forwarded to the Prime Minister in November 1984, but to which he apparently attached some significance, the Government had, at the committee's request, given the committee acccess to all the papers from the file of which it retained copies. Mr. Wallace was also told that a specific document to which he attached particular significance was among those which had been passed to the inquiry by the RUC. Mr. Wallace was further advised that any further relevant material he had would be a matter for the inquiry, or if it involved unlawful activity, the police.

Mr. Wallace also received an assurance that there was no geographical limitation on the undertaking given him that any relevant evidence that he gave to the Kincora inquiry would not subsequently be used against him. Thus the way seemed clear for Mr. Wallace to give his evidence —if he had any—to that inquiry.

The result of the inquiry's approaches to him is recorded in paragraphs 4.70 to 4.87 of the Kincora report which was published on 4 February 1986. It concluded that Mr. Wallace had declined to give straight answers to questions or to authenticate alleged documents. And that in connection with the RUC's investigation whose scope was wider than the inquiry, he had been asked whether he would be interviewed about all the allegations in the documents made available to the inquiry but had refused. Despite repeated approaches, he refused to substantiate his allegations and the inquiry therefore concluded that his evidence had no value.

The other individual who has made allegations is a retired officer, Captain Holroyd, who was employed in Northern Ireland on confidential and exacting duties at a time when he was also under the strains of severe personal bereavements. At this time he appeared to be suffering from stress and his commanding officer considered he should seek medical help. The initial report from the commanding officer referred to a possible mental problem.

Since the situation in the Province at the time precluded the admission of a military officer to a civilian psychiatric hospital for reasons of personal safety, he was returned to England and referred to the Royal Victoria hospital, Netley. While in hospital, Captain Holroyd wrote letters resigning from his post in Northern Ireland and resigning from the Army. However, he also decided to appeal to the Army board of the Defence Council against his referral to Netley on the grounds that this would damage his career as he felt he would forever carry a stigma as a psychiatric patient. The Army board confirmed that no stigma was attached to his removal from his appointment and agreed that all references to a mental problem be removed from his personal records. However, Captain Holroyd was not satisfied and wanted the medical record amended also. The Army board felt unable to do this as it considered that it could not supress a doctor's expression of his professional opinion. Furthermore, such alterations could in future prove to be against the well-being of the patient. In addition, Captain Holroyd was assured that the fact that he had been referred to Netley would not affect his future career. Despite having this assurance and having had part of his appeal upheld, Captain Holroyd was not satisfied and he resigned from the Army in September 1976.

Six years later, Captain Holroyd wrote to the Army legal services department, making serious allegations about the circumstances which led to his resignation from the Army. He mentioned releasing information for the purpose of obtaining publicity for his grievances. The importance of acting responsibly in the matter was stressed to him, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of lives in Northern Ireland, in respect of classified or privileged information that he had obtained during the course of his duties.

The records relating to the circumstances of his resignation were re-examined and nothing was found to substantiate his allegations. It was considered there were no grounds for reopening his case. As to his allegations of criminal behaviour by the Army in Northern Ireland, which he had said he would divulge if it were necessary to clear his name of the stigma he considered was attached to him, the Ministry of Defence advised him that his proper course was to put all his allegations to the police. He put these before the Essex police and they were subsequently investigated by the RUC.

In 1984, while the RUC investigation was still continuing, Captain Holroyd managed to interest a journalist in his case, who ran a series of articles about alleged criminal activity in the Province by the security forces. In November 1984 the cases of Mr. Wallace and Captain Holroyd merged, when Captain Holroyd wrote to the Prime Minister, repeating his allegation of criminal activity and enclosing a file provided by Mr. Wallace. Captain Holroyd was reminded that all his allegations of criminal activites had been the subject of a very thorough investigation by the RUC. He was also assured that Mr. Wallace's case had also been the subject of the most rigorous investigations, following petitions to the Home Secretary about his trial and conviciton and the most thorough enquiries into the circumstances which led to Mr. Wallace's resignation from the Ministry of Defence and into the Kincora affair, and that in both cases Mr. Wallace had been given every opportunity to make his views known. Mr. Wallace's file was returned to Captain Holroyd.

In December 1984 the Director of Public Prosecutions Northern Ireland concluded that the evidence concerning Captain Holroyd's allegations did not warrant the initiation of criminal proceedings against any person; nor did he request any further investigation to be undertaken.

The two strands of this story should be drawn together at this point, as nothing new of any consequence has arisen since the conclusion in 1984 of the RUC's investigations into Captain Holroyd's allegations, or the publication of the results of the Hughes inquiry in 1986. Neither has put any fresh evidence since then to the RUC or any other appropriate authority. However, both Mr. Wallace and Captain Holroyd have continued to pursue their grievances. Their allegations remain completely unsubstantiated.

The position rests as I described it in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 3 March 1987, at column 577. The various allegations made by Captain Holroyd and Mr. Colin Wallace over many years about the conduct of the security forces in Northern Ireland have been fully and carefully investigated since they brought them to the attention of the authorities some years after they left the province in 1975. No evidence has been discovered as a result of those investigations to substantiate any of their allegations.

Clansman Radio Outfits

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that the Royal Marines 3 Commando Brigade and its support services are fully equipped with Clansman radio outfits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Royal Marines 3 Commando Brigade and its support services are already fully equipped with Clansman radios. As is our normal practice, we keep this requirement under review.

NATO (Conventional Defence)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the special areas identified in the 1985 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation conventional defence improvement plan of action; and what special effort has been made in each such area.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A number of areas identified in the conventional defence improvements exercise have been set out in the communiqués of the defence planning committee meeting on 22 May 1985 and of subsequent defence planning committee meetings, copies of which are available in the Library. Details of the exercise are confidential; progress so far has been good.

Press and Broadcasting Committee

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the membership, role and functions of the defence press and broadcasting committee.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The membership of the defence press and broadcasting committee is:

Member	*Role*	*Function*
Sir Michael Quinlan	Permanent Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence	Chairman
J. M. Ramsden	Editor-in-Chief, Flight International	Vice Chairman and representing Periodical Publishers Association
Sir Clive Whitmore	Permanent Under Secretary of State, Home Office	
K. C. Macdonald	Second Permanent Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence	
J. D. I. Boyd	Deputy Under Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office	
J. Bishop	Editor-in-Chief, Illustrated London News Group	Representing Periodical Publishers Association
P. Cole	Deputy Managing Editor ITN	Representing ITN
J. K. Donlan	Managing Editor, News and Special Projects, The Sun	Representing Newspaper Publishers Associa-tion
M. Hoy	Managing Editor, The Times	Representing Newspaper Publishers Associa-tion
E. Laird	Editor-in-Chief, Sunday Mail, Glasgow	Representing Scottish Daily Newspaper Society
A. C. D. Stuart	Editor-in-Chief, Thomson Regional Newspapers Limited	Representing Newspaper Society
D. Trelford	Editor, The Observer	Representing Newspaper Publishers Associa-tion
C. Webb	Editor-in-Chief, The Press Association	Representing Press Association
K. Whetstone		Representing Newspaper Society
J. Wilson	Controller, Editorial Policy, BBC	Representing BBC
Secretary	Rear Admiral W. A. Higgins (Retired)	
Deputy Secretary	Rear Admiral A. J. Whetstone (Retired)	

The defence press and broadcasting committee is a joint Government—media committee established to provide advice to editors, publishers and producers on the publication of information which the Government consider they have a duty to protect in the interests of national security. The day-to-day business of the committee is conducted by its secretary and the committee meets as circumstances dictate but no less frequently than once every six months. The D notice system is advisory and voluntary, and has no statutory force.

Pensions

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much it would cost to standardise at the current levels the pensions payable to widows under the war pension scheme and to beneficiaries of the armed forces pension scheme.

Mr. Freeman: Differences between the total pensions received by war widows whose husbands were killed before April 1973, and subsequently arise mainly from the introduction at that date of improvements to the armed forces occupational pension scheme. Those improvements did not apply retrospectively. It has been estimated that to bring all war widows up to current levels of award would involve additional expenditure in the region of £200 million a year.

Nuclear-capable Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to how many of the United States F15E nuclear-capable aircraft equipped with the new medium range cruise missiles will be stationed in Britain.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 3 December 1987 at columns *708-9*.

Small Firms Advice Division

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken to ensure that his Department's small firms advice division does only work which cannot be carried out by the private sector.

Mr. Sainsbury: The activities of the small firms advice division are entirely appropriate to the public sector. In particular, the division does not undertake dedicated, in-depth consultancy work; nor is there any intention that it should do so.

RAF Sculthorpe

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is considering any plans or proposals to expand flying activity at RAF Sculthorpe during 1989.

Mr. Freeman: There are no plans to expand flying activity at RAF Sculthorpe over and above the temporary deployments of aircraft to the base which have regularly taken place during recent years for exercises, or when aircraft have been displaced from their home stations by airfield maintenance work.

RAF Scampton

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is considering any plans or proposals to expand flying activity at RAF Scampton during 1989.

Mr. Freeman: No.

RAF Binbrook

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is considering any plans or proposals to expand flying activity at RAF Binbrook during 1989.

Mr. Freeman: No. RAF Binbrook, which ceased operational flying in May this year, is now designated as a relief landing ground. In April-November 1989, while the

runway at RAF Waddington is closed for repair, Jet Provost aircraft from RAF Scampton, which normally practice diversions to RAF Waddington, will use RAF Binbrook instead. However, the level of activity at RAF Binbrook will remain significantly lower than when the station was operational.

RAF Waddington

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is considering any plans or proposals to expand flying activity at RAF Waddington during 1989.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Military Aircraft (Accidents)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any military aircraft accident summary reports on accidents or incidents concerning RAF aircraft in categories 4 and 5 have been produced.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. Since 1980 military aircraft accident summaries have been published on accidents concerning RAF aircraft involving category 4 or 5 damage. Copies are placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider opportunities for the United Kingdom to share details with the Soviet Union of yields of its nuclear tests, conducted at the United States nuclear test site in Nevada, to complement the exchange of similar information on United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics nuclear tests carried out on 28 June.

Mr. Sainsbury: The exchanges referred to were part of the US/USSR protocol on the joint verification experiment (JVE). As my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement stated in another place on 30 June, the JVE and the associated exchange of data are bilateral initiatives by the US and USSR aimed at securing ratification of their bilateral threshold test ban treaty.

RAF Aircraft (Accidents)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many accidents or incidents concerning RAF aircraft in the categories 1 to 5 have occurred since April 1985.

Mr. Freeman: Damage to RAF aircraft is categorised on the following basis:

Incidents

a. Category 1—The damage is repairable on site by established first line personnel. (1)

b. Category 2—The damage is repairable on site by established second line personnel. (2)

Accidents

c. Category 3—The damage is repairable on site but is beyond unit technical resources. Assistance from a repair and salvage unit or civilian contractor is required.

d. Category 4—The damage is not repairable on site. The aircraft must be removed to an established depot or civilian repair organisation.

e. Category 5—The aircraft is damaged beyond repair or is missing, or in accordance with current Ministry of Defence policy, is not worth repairing.

(1) First line personnel conduct before flight, after flight and turnround servicing including minor component changes.

(2) Second line personnel conduct deeper servicing, including major component changes and structural repair.

On this basis the information requested is as follows:

Damage Category	*1st April 1985—December 1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*January 1988—15 July 1988*
1/2	2,756	3,755	3,492	1,908
3	41	43	37	18
4	1	0	0	1
5	11	16	14	10
Total	2,809	3,814	3,543	1,937

Note: It is not possible to separate damage in Categories 1 and 2.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visas (Delays)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why there are delays in processing applications for visas by Polish visitors to Britain; and if he will take immediate steps to rectify the delays.

Mr. Mellor: In the first five months of this year visa applications unexpectedly increased by 15 per cent. Measures have since been taken to reduce the delays that resulted.

Romania-United Kingdom (Marriage Applications)

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate, as at 10 July, and list according to the date of application, the outstanding applications-to-marry cases currently lodged with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Romania in respect of Romanian citizens wishing to marry United Kingdom nationals; and if he will identify the recorded occupation of each Romanian applicant.

Mr. Mellor: The list of outstanding Anglo/Romanian marriage applications known to us on 10 July was as follows:

Miss Anne SWEENEY
Mr. Floring MOCANU (profession not known)
Registered 17 July 1986

Mrs. Lucia LAMBERT
Mr. Petre CLAR (engineer)
Registered 9 March 1987

Mr. Peter Anthony KENNEDY
Miss Gabriela ENE (teacher)
Registered 27 April 1987

Miss Audrey MOORE
Mr. Constatin CIMPIAN (economist)
Registered 23 September 1987

Mr. John Miller RITCHIE
Ms. Maria SUCIA (unemployed)

Registered 23 March 1988

Mr. Michael Lewis John SELBY
Miss Beatrice Mihaela SANDU (profession not known)
Registered 23 March 1988

Miss Sarah Jane CREEDY
Mr. Petru SIMION (Worker)
Registered 30 March 1988

Miss Susan Louise INGRAM
Mr. Sorin Paul ULRICH (locksmith)
Registered 4 April 1988

Mr. Mark BEAN
Miss Gabriella Paula MURANYI (computer programmer)
Registered 20 April 1988

Eleven other cases were resolved by the Romanian authorities after delays of up to 16 months on 8 July. A further three cases have been resolved since 10 July: Miss Sweeney/Mr. Mocanu, Mrs. Lambert/Mr. Clar, and Mr. Kennedy/Miss Ene. The Romanians have told us that Miss Moore/Mr. Cimpian have withdrawn their application.

Children's Rights

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any articles in the current draft of the proposed United Nations convention on the rights of the child conflict with current United Kingdom legislation or practice with regard to the rights of children.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) on 1 July.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on finalising the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Mellor: The first reading of the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child was completed at this year's meeting of the Commission on Human Rights, which ended in March. The second reading is due to commence later this year.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the proposal for the United Nations to establish a committee to monitor implementation of the proposed convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Mellor: We support the proposal that there should be a committee to monitor the implementation of the proposed convention on the rights of the child.

Cellmark Diagnostics

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average length of time which elapses between the sending of a telex in DNA cases from Cellmark Diagnostics and the calling for sampling of the family concerned.

Mr. Mellor: Appointment for sampling is made by Dhaka and Islamabad on receipt of the telex from Cellmark Diagnostics and, in most cases, the sample is actually taken four weeks after the telex is received.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs into which queue a fiancé(e) who was refused entry and who then applied as a husband or wife would fall.

Mr. Mellor: Re-applicant spouses previously refused as fiancé(e)s are placed in Q4. However, if, for example, the reason for the refusal was on the grounds that the couple had not met and they had since been able to show that they had met, they would be placed in Q2.

Immigration Interviews

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present waiting times to first interview for all categories of applicant in each country in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:.

Waiting times in months at 31 May 1988

Post	*Queue*	*Actual*
New Delhi	1	0
	2	4
	3	7
	4	10
Bombay	1	3
	2	6
	3	9
	4	10
Madras	1	0
	2	0
	3	0
	4	6
Calcutta	1	1
	2	1
	3	1
	4	1
Dhaka	1	3
	2	7
	3	7
	4	22
Islamabad	1	4
	2	8
	3	19
	4	20
Karachi	1	2
	2	5
	3	10
	4	13

Settlement queues are organised as follows:
Q1 Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, special compassionate cases;
Q2 All spouses, and all children under 18 years;
Q3 Fiance(e)s and others applying for the first time for settlement;
Q4 Re-applicants.

Immigration (Primary Purpose Rule)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new instructions have been sent to visa officers at British posts abroad about the way in which they should operate the primary purpose rule, in the light of the decisions in ex parte Kumar and ex parte Hoque; and when these instructions will be published.

Mr. Mellor: No instructions have been issued, but further guidance was sent to posts in the Indian sub-continent on 8 July 1988 and subsequently to other posts.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances and for what reasons staff at British posts overseas state the maximum duration of an intended visit when issuing a visa.

Mr. Mellor: Staff at posts overseas will, if asked, advise visa applicants that the duration of stay is at the discretion of the immigration officer at the port of arrival in this country but that visits are normally restricted to six months.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long he estimates a person applying for entry clearance for settlement at the British post in *(a)* Manila, *(b)* Accra, *(c)* Lagos, *(d)* Kingston, *(e)* Nicosia, and *(f)* Cairo on 31 March, or on the latest convenient date, will wait for (i) interview, (ii) referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received in the post, (iii) decisions and (iv) an explanatory statement prepared by the post in the event of an appeal against a refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: The available information sought at (ii) and (iii) is not available. Processing times vary considerably from case to case. As to (i) and (iv) the position as at 15 July 1988 is as follows:

	(i)	*(iv)*
Manila	17 weeks	16 weeks
Accra	Same day	12 weeks
Lagos	Same day	5 weeks
Kingston	Same day	16 weeks
Nicosia	One day	6 weeks
Cairo	Same day	0

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long he estimates a person applying for entry clearance on 31 March, or the latest convenient date, at each post in the Indian sub-continent will wait, in each queue, for *(a)* first interview, *(b)* referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, *(c)* decision after first interview, and *(d)* for the explanatory statement prepared by the post in the case of appeal against any refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: The waiting times as at 31 May 1988 for first interview in each queue are as follows:

Post	*Queue*	*Actual (in months)*
New Delhi	1	0
	2	4
	3	7
	4	10
Bombay	1	3
	2	6
	3	9
	4	10
Madras	1	0
	2	0
	3	0
	4	0
Calcutta	1	1
	2	1
	3	1
	4	1
Dhaka	1	3
	2	7
	3	7
	4	22
Islamabad	1	4
	2	8
	3	19
	4	20
Karachi	1	2
	2	5
	3	10
	4	13

Settlement queues are organised as follows:

Q1. Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, special compassionate cases.
Q2. All spouses, and all children under 18 years.
Q3. Fiance(e)s and others applying for the first time for settlement.
Q4. Re-applicants.

On (b) and (c), this information is not available. Processing times vary considerably from case to case.

On (d), the information is not yet available for all posts in the Indian sub-continent and is being sought. I will write to the hon. Member when I receive the replies.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many explanatory statements, related to entry clearance appeals, are awaiting typing at the British embassy at Islamabad; how many typists are employed full-time and part-time at the post; how many spouses or partners of embassy staff are retained to type documents at home; when he expects the backlog in typing appeal statements to be cleared; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: On 15 July 1988 there were 993 explanatory statements awaiting typing at the British embassy in Islamabad. There are nine full-time typists and one part-time typist in the visa section. No spouses of embassy staff are retained to type documents at home. It is hoped that the backlog in the typing of explanatory statements will be cleared in three months.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training in operating modern office equipment is given to entry clearance officers prior to appointment, or after appointment, to British overseas posts, in particular those on the Indian sub-continent; and what modern office equipment is available at *(a)* all overseas posts and *(b)* Islamabad.

Mr. Mellor: All entry clearance officers going to posts with FCO-standard computer systems (which includes all

posts in the Indian sub-continent) are offered pre-posting training on IT equipment. In addition, on-site training is provided as required by visiting trainers. Training for officers at posts with non-standard systems is provided by use of commercial training courses in the United Kingdom or at the posts.

On *(a)*, a wide range of multi-user microcomputers, running standard software, has been installed in 94 posts, including all those in the Indian sub-continent. This represents some 1,000 work stations. A further 20 posts have other multi-user microcomputers running non-standard software. In addition there are 36 posts with stand-alone word processors for general use. On *(b)*, in Islamabad FCO-standard systems were installed in November 1987. Islamabad has a total of 31 work stations, of which 15 are in the immigration consular Sections. The purchase and training in the use of other items of office equipment is, for the most part, arranged by posts overseas themselves and central records are not maintained.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any contact with his counterparts in the United States of America or Soviet Union since the recent Moscow summit on the prospects and arrangements for conveying to the Soviet Union the details of yields of United Kingdom nuclear tests conducted at the United States nuclear test site at Nevada.

Mr. Mellor: There has been no such contact. But the United Kingdom already publicly notifies all nuclear tests which it conducts. These are of a kilotonnage which falls within the limits set by the so far unratified bilateral United States/Soviet threshold test ban treaty.

China (Claims Agreement)

Mr. Sackville: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in regard to the distribution of the moneys received from the People's Republic of China under the claims agreement of 5 June 1987.

Mr. Mellor: Determination of claims against the China compensation fund was entrusted under the Foreign Compensation (People's Republic of China) Order 1987 to the Foreign Compensation Commission which is being assisted in performance of its administrative and executive tasks by the private accountants Ernst and Whinney.

By the deadline for submission of bond claims on 30 June, 1,849 claims in respect of 233, 941 bonds with face values in 15 different currencies had been received. However, these figures may rise slightly as the commission considers in the light of the provisions of the commission's China rules of 1988 those cases where applicants had given notice of their claims, but had not delivered application forms to the commission on or before the cut-off date.

The deadline for submission of claims against the China fund in respect of debts, bank balances, shares and other property is 31 August. Application forms have been sent by Ernst and Whinney to the 542 claimants registered under the 1980 order (who are required to resubmit their claims under the 1987 order) and to 550 new inquirers. Thus far, 368 property claims have been received.

Those who intend to submit property claims before the 31 August deadline should contact the Foreign Compensation Commission c/o Ernst and Whinney, Alexandra House, Kingsway, London WC2B 6TT (Telephone 01-379-7088) to obtain application forms and explanatory leaflets if they have not already done so.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 July 1988

NATIONAL FINANCE

Consultants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of employing management or computer consultants for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Lilley: The cost of consultancies in Customs and Excise from 1982-83 to 1987-88 is as follows:

£	*Year*
1982-83	nil
1983-84	18,782
1984-85	190,711
1985-86	1,337,042
1986-87	2,039,839
1987-88	1,443,735

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Lilley: The following consultancies with Customs and Excise were extant on 1 January 1987:

BIS Applied Systems Ltd—Customs systems testing strategy.

CCTA—VAT computer replacement study.

Computer Search and Selection—Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) computer analysis.

ICL—CHIEF analysis and programming.

LBMS—SSADM analysis and programming.

Peat Marwick McClintock—Development of Customs accounting system Touche Ross—Customs project advice.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract extant in the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency as at 1 January 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Brooke: The following management or computer consultancy contracts were extant in the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) at 1 January 1987:

Firm	*Subject of assignment*
Simpact Systems (now Learmonth & Burchett Management Systems (LBMS, Ltd.)	Study on the use of Project Organisation Management and Technique (PROMPT) methodology in Government.
Data Dictionary Systems Ltd.	Structured Systems Analysis and Design Methodology (SSADM) interface documentation for SDM and Quickbuild.
PE Consulting Services Ltd.	Consultancy Support for CCTA's Programming and Data Management Branch.
Scientific & Business Systems Ltd.	Consultancy support for Systems Engineering Branch (2 contracts).
VNG Professional Services	Consultancy support for Systems Engineering Branch.
Data Dictionary Systems Ltd.	Study of interface between SSADM and Application Generators.
Learmonth Burchett Management Systems Ltd.	Study of interface between SSADM and Government turnkey procedures.
The Systems Training Co.	Development of a transputer-based graphic system for Multi-User Systems Tool (MUST).
Model Systems Ltd.	Consultancy support for SSADM.
Model Systems Ltd.	Provision of ad hoc consultancy support to users of SSADM.
Lorien Computer Services	Consultancy support for Programming and Data Management Branch.
University of Edinburgh	Provision of system software consultant.
Learmonth & Burchett Management Systems Ltd.	Monitoring of take-up of SSADM-ad hoc project reviews.
Prolog System Ltd.	System designers for the computer based aids section.
BIS Applied Systems Ltd.	Automated software tool for risk management methodology.
Prolog Systems Ltd.	Consultancy to advise departments on the use of call information loggers.
EOSYS Ltd.	Consultancy project to plan and implement Out of Area Lines on the Government Telecommunications Network (GTN).
Ashpier Ltd.	Communications consultant in the telecommunications Group.
Logica UK Ltd.	Inter-departmental Electronic Mail (IDEM) project (Stage III).
Admiral Computing Group Ltd.	IDEM—Quality Assessor.
British Telecommunications plc	Project to model the GTN.
British Telecommunications plc	Development of a Network Management System.
RPG Sheldrake	Consultancy support for the telecommunications Group.
PA Consulting Services Ltd.	Study of use of GTN for non-voice requirements.
Castell	Verifications of electronically-reproduced data in Court (VERDICT).
Rollstest Ltd.	Consultancy support for Data Communications Branch.
Yale Data Computer Consultants	Provision of 2 systems consultants.
Touche Ross Management Consultants	Provision of systems consultant.
Amtec Consulting Ltd.	Provision of 2 systems consultants.
Hoskyns Group Ltd.	Provision of 2 systems consultants.
DE Barnard Systems Ltd.	Provision of 2 systems consultants.
System Assurance Ltd.	Provision of systems consultant.
Christine Howarth Ltd.	Development of handbook—A Role for Users in System Design and Development.
Insight International Ltd.	Development of User Friendly Option for optic ethernet model
Prolog System Ltd.	Benchmark for Performance & Test Harness (PATH) Development
University of Salford	Conversion of CCTA Fortran programs
J. Westgate Consultants Ltd.	Consultancy support for Government Open Systems Interconnection Profile (GOSIP) (2 contracts)

Firm	*Subject of assignment*
Performance Systems Incorporated	Consultancy support for development of automatic modelling for Virtual Machine Environment (VME) system
Grafton Ltd.	Developing a Customer Information Control System (CICS)/ADABAS version of PATH
Carnell Computer Technology	Support and development of VME Government Accounting Package
R. M. O'Connor	Study of IT standards in Government procurement
University of Edinburgh	CCTA funded post at Centre for Applications Software and Technology to support VME version of SIR/Database Management System (DBMS)
Prolog Systems Ltd.	Consultancy to advise departments on the use of call information loggers.
EOSYS Ltd.	Consultancy project to plan and implement Out of Area Lines on the Government Telecommunications Network (GTN).
Ashpier Ltd.	Communications consultant in the telecommunications Group.
Logica UK Ltd.	Inter-departmental Electronic Mail (IDEM) project (Stage III).
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DE Barnard Systems Ltd.	Provision of 2 systems consultants.
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University of Edinburgh	CCTA funded post at Centre for Applications Software and Technology to support VME version of SIR/Database Management System (DBMS)

British Telecom
(International Products and Overseas Division)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made to the effect on the dividend to be received by Her Majesty's Government of the operating losses of the International Products and Overseas Division of British Telecom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No estimate has been made. The amount of the dividend is a commercial matter for British Telecom.

Alcohol (Excise Duty)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the level of excise duty on alcohol for each of the last 10 years, taking the level in 1977 as a base of 100.

Mr. Lilley: Following is the information.

Level of Excise duty rates on alcoholic drinks: 1977 = 100[1]

Calendar Year	*Spirits*	*Beer*	*Cider and Perry*	*Wine of Fresh Grape*[2] *Low Strength*	*Medium Strength*	*High Strength*	*Sparkling Wine*
1978	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
1979	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
1980	113	120	113	113	113	113	113
1981	130	164	134	132	146	146	132
1982	140	192	153	150	167	167	149
1983	147	205	180	160	179	179	159
1984	151	226	257	136	192	191	172
1985	154	244	298	138	206	203	186
1986	154	248	304	140	209	205	189
1987	154	248	304	140	209	205	189

Notes:
[1] Average duty rates have been used.
[2] Duty bands restructured from 14 March 1984.

Public Expenditure

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the percentage increases or decreases on expenditure since 1979 in real terms of each of the 17 programmes of public expenditure.

Mr. Major: The information requested can be derived from either table 5.8 (Planning total in real terms by Department, 1978-79 to 1990-91) or table 5.12 (Planning total in real terms by function, 1978-79 to 1990-91) in Volume I of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" (Cm. 288).

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the latest figure for estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Management and Personnel Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material;

(2) what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Management and Personnel Office;

(3) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Management and Personnel Office on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Brooke: Nil. Under the provisions of the Transfer of Functions (Minister for the Civil Service and Treasury) Order 1987, which took effect on 25 December last year, the Management and Personnel Office ceased to exist as a Government Department; its work being divided between Her Majesty's Treasury and the newly created office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Cash Limits

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give revised cash limits for 1988-89 resulting from the carry forward of capital underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility scheme for central Government and for local authority expenditure.

Mr. Major: A list of revised cash limits totalling £567·740 million is shown in the following table. The increases in cash limits on central Government votes are subject to parliamentary approval for the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

The total increase classified as public expenditure is £574·062 million. This sum will be met from the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

CaLiTab *Revisions to 1988-89 cash limits resulting from the carryforward of capital underspends*
Cash limits on voted expenditure

Class & Vote	*Accounting Department*	*Description of expenditure*	*Current cash limit £'000s*	*Increase £'000s*	*Revised cash limit £'000s*
I.2(1)	Ministry of Defence	Defence Procurement	8,291,096	322,669	8,613,765
II.1	Foreign & Commonwealth Office	Overseas representation	432,022	7,000	439,022
II.3	Foreign & Commonwealth Office	BBC: external services	117,482	2,963	120,445
IV.4	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Other agricultural and food services and support for the fishing industry	147,261	883	148,144
VI.3	Department of Energy	Administration	25,678	210	25,888
VII.2	Department of Employment	Administration	263,170	2,000	265,170
VII.5	Department of Employment	Training Commission	1,938,178	559	1,938,737
VIII.2	Department of Transport	Administration & Transport services	213,838	2,000	215,838
VIII.4	Department of Transport	Driver and Vehicle Licensing	122,076	377	122,453
X.2	Department of the Environment	Central environmental services, etc	244,219	393	244,612
X.4	Department of the Environment	Royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, ancient monuments & the national heritage	90,906	295	91,201
XXI.1	Department of Education and Science	Schools, further education and other education services	480,021	2,180	482, 201
XII.3	Department of Education and Science	Universities etc	1,843,510	370	1,843,880
XIV.1	Department of Health and Social Security	Hospitals and Community health services and other services, England	11,191,900	7,092	11,199,082
XIV.3	Department of Health and Social Security	Miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England	418,146	1,115	419,261
XVI.2	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	Agricultural services and fisheries	77,597	445	78,042
XVI.14	Scottish Home and Health Department	Prisons, hospitals and Community health services etc. Scotland	1,869,753	7,253	1,877,006
XVI.15	Scottish Education Department	Education, arts, libraries and social work, Scotland	198,516	73	198,589
XVII.8	Welsh Office	Hospital and Community health services etc. Wales	776,625	392	777,017
XVII.9	Welsh Office	Central administration	42,377	149	42,526
XIX.2	Customs and Excise	Economic and Financial Administration	513,733	1,000	514,733
XIX.7	Inland Revenue	Economic and financial	1,104,513	2,903	1,107,416
XIX.13	Her Majesty's Treasury	Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	18,083	406	18,489
XX.6(2)	Land Registry	Records, registrations and Surveys	2	1	3
XX.7	Ordnance Survey	Records, registrations and Surveys	21,434	1,018	22,452
XX.13	Office of Fair Trading	Office of Fair Trading	10,152	75	10,227
XX.16	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	Records, registrations and Surveys	24,360	392	24,752
XX.19(3)	Property Services Agency	Civil accommodation, administration and miscellaneous	1	1	2
Carryforward on voted expenditure					364,214

Cash limits on non-voted expenditure

Cash block accounting	*Department*	*Description of expenditure*	*Current cash Limit £'000s*	*Increase £'000s*	*Revised cash Limit £'000s*
DOE/LA1	Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England by local authorities on roads and transport, housing, schools, further education and teacher training, personal social services and other environmental services.	2,550,595	141,700	2,692,295
SO/LA1	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland by local authorities on roads and transport, water and sewerage, general services, urban programme, police and social work, schools, further education, teacher training, and arts and libraries.	438,146	25,040	463,186
SO/LA2	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland on housing by local authorities, new towns, and the Scotish Special Housing Association, on schemes financed by the Housing Corporation and commercial investment by new towns.	521,668	3,885	525,553
DOE/UA1	Department of the Environment	External financing requirements of urban development corporations, and capital expenditure by local authorities and other bodies on the urban programme, the derelict land reclamation programme and other expenditure (including some inner cities initiatives).	509,272	17,224	526,496
DOE/HC1	Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England on housing financed through the Housing Corporation.	655,000	420	655,420
DOE/NT1	Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England by new towns on housing, roads, commercial and industrial investment and certain water services.	—305,000	15,257	—289,743
Carryforward on non-voted expenditure				203,526	
Total carryforward (voted and non-voted)				567,740	
(of which public expenditure)				(574,062)	

Notes:

(1) The five cash-limited defence votes are each separate cash limits but, by agreement with the Treasury, are managed as a cash block. Underspend on expenditure eligible for the scheme in these cash limits has been carried forward to class 1 vote 2.

(2) This vote is token one; carryforward will be taken in the form of increased appropriations-in-aid of £465,000.

(3) This vote is a token one; carryforward will be taken in the form of increased appropriations-in-aid of £5,857,000.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many computer work stations there are in his Departments; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 20 July 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

HM Treasury

The Treasury, which includes the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, Chessington Computer Centre and the Civil Service Catering Organisation, has 1,300 computer work stations. The overall ratio of work stations to staff is about 1:2·5. This figure includes all terminals and microcomputers but excludes stand-alone dedicated word processors. Planned expansions by the year 1993 will bring the overall ratio to about 1:1·5.

Inland Revenue

There are at present over 37,500 computer work stations in use within the Inland Revenue representing a ratio of 1:1·77 work stations to staff. The Department expects the number of terminals to grow significantly over the next five years as several major computer systems are implemented, increasing the ratio of terminals to staff.

Customs and Excise

The number of computer work stations in HM Customs and Excise is 2,750. There is a ratio of 1:9·5 on current staff in post in the Department.

Over the next five years a steady increase in the number of work stations is expected, rising to a total of approximately 7,500. This will represent a ratio of approximately 1:3·5 based on current staff in post.

National Savings

There are about 1,600 computer work stations in National Savings and 7,400 posts: a ratio of 1:4·6. Over the next five years the ratio is expected to increase to about 1:3.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office

HMSO currently has 1,073 computer work stations, which is approximately 1:3 of the 3,200 permanent staff. It is estimated that in five years' time the ratio will be 2:3.

Paymaster General's Office

Within the Paymaster General's Office there are currently 241 work stations, equal to a ratio of 1:3·4 civil servants. This is expected to increase to a ratio of 1:1·2 civil servants over the next five years.

Central Office of Information

The Central Office of Information currently has 87 computer work stations at a ratio of one per 10 civil servants in the Department. This figure is expected to rise to 425 work stations at a ratio of one per two civil servants over the next five years if the current staffing level is maintained.

The Royal Mint

The Royal Mint currently has in use approximately 70 computer work stations which include stand-alone personal computers and visual display units connected to the main computer network. The ratio of work stations to non-industrial civil servants is one work station to every 4½ non-industrial staff.

Over the next five years, the use of work stations is expected to increase significantly and it is estimated that the ratio of work stations to non-industrial civil servants will increase to one work station to every three non-industrial staff.

Registry of Friendly Societies

The Registry of Friendly Societies has 67 computer work stations and the ratio of work stations to staff is 1:2. Present plans would indicate no significant change in the ratio.

Government Actuary's Department

The Government Actuary's Department has 42 computer work stations, representing 80 per cent. of staff members. Over the next five years the number may increase very slightly as further work conversions are carried out.

National Investment and Loans Office

The National Investment and Loans Office currently has nine computer work stations, giving a ratio of work stations to staff of approximately 1:5.

A further six work stations are estimated to be acquired in the next five years thereby increasing the ratio to 1:3.

Information Technology Strategy Committee

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his departments; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 20 July 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

HM Treasury

The information technology strategy committee (ITSC) is the senior IT committee in the Department, covering IT strategy for central Treasury, CCTA and the Chessington Computer Centre. It is chaired by the principal establishment and finance officer. The members include the directors of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) and the Chessington Computer Centre (CCC) and other representatives at grade 3 and grade 5 levels. Ministers have not attended meetings of ITSC.

Inland Revenue

The senior IT strategy committee in the Inland Revenue is the Board of Inland Revenue, chaired by the permanent secretary with membership at grade 2 level. It had several meetings in the last year dealing with IT issues, and meets from time to time with main suppliers. It is supported by a steering group, chaired at grade 2 level, dealing with the different areas of IT within the Department.

Regular progress reports on major projects are made to Ministers.

Customs and Excise

The information technology strategy committee in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is composed of:

The Deputy Chairman of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise *(Chairman)*	—Grade 2
Director Customs	—Grade 3
Director Personnel	—Grade 3
Director Outfield	—Grade 3
Director VAT	—Grade 3
Director Organisation—Grade3	
Accountant and Comptroller General	—Grade 5
Assistant Secretary CCTA	—Grade 5

Ministers have not attended any meeting of this committee in the past year.

National Savings

The senior IT committee in National Savings comprises:

Director *(Chairman)*
Deputy Director
Finance Officer
Establishment Officer
Product Division Controllers (3) and Deputy Controllers (3)
Head of Advertising and Press Department
Head of Management Services Department
Head of Technology Services Department
CCTA(CT1) Group Head
Secretary.

No meetings in the past year have been attended by a Minister.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office

The HMSO information technology committee consists of:

2 × Grade 4
6 × Grade 5
2 × Grade 6
1 × Grade 7

This committee has met four times in the past year. No Minister has attended.

Paymaster General's Office

The IT Steering Committee in the Paymaster General's Office is composed of all senior management posts at grade 7 and above, in total 10, plus a departmental representative from CCTA, and is chaired by the Asaistant Paymaster General (grade 5). No Ministers have attended meetings in the past year.

Central Office of Information

The composition of the COI information technology steering committee is as follows:

Deputy Director General of COI (Grade 4) Chairman
Principal Establishments and Finance Officer (Grade 5) Deputy Chairman
Three × Representatives of Operational Groups (Grade 6)
Head of Management and Information Technology Branch (Grade 7)
CCTA Liaison Officer (Grade 7)

Meetings of this committee have never been attended by Ministers.

Royal Mint

Information technology strategy within the Royal Mint is approved and reviewed by the Royal Mint executive board which comprises:

Deputy Master (Chief Executive)
Production and Human Resources Director
Finance Director (responsibilities include Information Technology)
Sales Director
Marketing Director

Information Technology strategy is dealt with in the Royal Mint's corporate plan which was reviewed with the Paymaster General at a meeting held on 21 April 1988.

Registry of Friendly Societies

The composition of the Registry of Friendly Societies information technology strategy committee is as follows:

Chairman

Deputy Chairman of the Building Societies Commission

Members

Deputy Registrar, Registry of Friendly Societies
Commissioner, Building Societies Commission
Two assistant Commissioners, Building Societies Commission
Principal Establishment and Finance Officer
Supervisor Building Societies Commission
Supervisor Central Office, Registry of Friendly Societies
Information Technology Project Officer

The committee has met nine times in the past year and no Minister has attended.

Government Actuary's Department

The Government Actuary's Department IT strategy committee consists of the Government Actuary and principal computer officer, supported by a steering committee, including the establishment and finance officers and users' representatives. Ministers have never attended its meetings.

National Investment and Loans Office

The IT strategy committee of the National Investment and Loans Office consists of the director, computer manager and user branch managers as appropriate.

No meetings of the committee have been attended by Ministers in the past year.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of the Inland Revenue with regard to communicating with individuals in Wales who wish to carry out their correspondence with its offices through the medium of the Welsh language.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 20 July 1988]:* The Inland Revenue's policy is that inquiries written in Welsh to their tax and collection offices in Wales will receive a reply in that language. Where inquiries in Welsh are made to offices elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it would be the practice to try to provide a reply in Welsh.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The Government's economic policies are designed to maintain a vigorous economy in which business and enterprise can flourish. Among the specific measures helpful to small businesses introduced in the last Budget were:

Small companies' rate of corporation tax reduced to 25 per cent.

Basic rate of income tax reduced to 25p and higher rates above 40 per cent. abolished (benefits unincorporated businesses).

Capital gains rebased to 1982.

Capital gains retirement relief increased.

Inheritance tax threshold increased to £110,000 and four rates replaced by single rate of 40 per cent.

Capital duty abolished.

£4 million limit introduced on amount most companies can raise under business expansion scheme to target relief on smaller companies.

Further improvements to employee share schemes.

VAT registration threshold increased to £22,100, maximum permissible under EC law.

Easing of VAT registration requirements.

Electronic Data Interchange

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Government Departments now operate electronic data interchange.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Nationalised Industries (Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide, pursuant to his written reply, *Official Report*, 14 June, comparable tables showing the information on expenditure on fixed assets in the United Kingdom by the nationalised industries for the years 1979-80 to 1988-89.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* The table shows the expenditure on fixed assets in the United Kingdom by nationalised industries for 1979-80 (consistent with table 3.3 of Cmnd. 8175) and 1988-89 plans (consistent with table 4.4 of Cm. 288-I). The 1979-80 figures are given in both cash prices and real terms (base year 1988-89). Also included are the percentages of the industries' capital requirements financed internally for 1979-80. For reasons of confidentiality the Government do not publish estimates of internal resources or external finance by industry for future years. But the current plans imply that, taken together, around 87 per cent. of the industries' capital requirements for 1988-89 can be met from internal resources.

The figures for 1980-81 to 1987-88 are not given in the table on the grounds of disproportionate cost. They can be derived from the public expenditure White Papers for these years.

Expenditure on fixed assets in the United Kingdom by nationalised industries

£ million

	1979-80 outturn (Cmnd. 8175)			
	Cash	*Real terms[1] (base year 1988-89)*	*Percentage of capital requirements financed internally*	*1988-89 plans (Cmnd. 288)*
British Aerospace	42	76	100·0	—
British Airports Authority	54	98	88·9	—
British Airways Board	289	524	23·2	—
British Coal	665	1,205	0·0	649
British Gas Corporation	402	728	100·0	—
British National Oil Corporation	218	395	100·0	—
British Railways Board	381	690	0·0	641
British Shipbuilders	18	33	0·0	8
British Steel Corporation	289	524	0·0	256
British Transport Docks Board	13	24	100·0	—
British Waterways Board	4	7	0·0	8
Civil Aviation Authority[2]	—	—	—	36
Electricity (England and Wales)	834	1,511	89·3	1,534
Girobank[3]	—	—	—	14
London Regional Transport[4]	—	—	—	365
National Bus Company	60	109	0·0	—
National Freight Company Ltd.	35	63	34·3	—
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board	46	83	58·7	66
Post Office[5]	1,284	2,327	100·0	163
Scottish Transport Group	16	29	18·8	18
South of Scotland Electricity Board	65	118	100·0	171
Water (England and Wales)[6]	—	—	—	1,158
Total	4,715	8,543	40·9	5,087

[1] Real terms figures are the cash outturns adjusted to 1988-89 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflators.
[2] Civil Aviation Authority was not a Nationalised Industry in 1979-80[7].
[3] The figure for Girobank was included in that for Post Office for 1979-80[7].
[4] London Regional Transport was not a Nationalised Industry in 1979-80.
[5] The figure for Post Office included those for British Telecom and Girobank in 1979-80[7].
[6] Water (England and Wales) was not a Nationalised Industry in 1979-80[7].
[7] Figures for 1979-80 were allocated retrospectively, and the details (from Table 3.2 in Cmnd. 9143-11) are as follows:

£ million

	1979-80 outturn (Cmnd. 9143)		
	Cash	*Real terms (base year 1988-89)*	*Percentage of capital requirements financed internally*
British Telecom	1,215	2,202	100·0
Civil Aviation Authority	12	22	0·0
Giro Bank	5	9	0·0
Post Office	64	116	100·0
Water (England and Wales)	613	1,111	36·7

DEFENCE

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why F-111 aircraft based at RAF Upper Heyford are now heavier when taking off than previously, resulting in a lower flight path over the village of Steeple Aston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As I stated in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 16 June 1988 at column *221*, a number of modifications have been made to the F-111 during its life which have reduced its thrust-to-weight ratio.

Boeing (AWACS Offset Agreement)

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made in evaluating the offset reports submitted by Boeing under the terms of the AWACS offset agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have completed our evaluation of Boeing's first offset report, which covered the period from November 1986 to June 1987. This report listed contracts covering a wide range of items similar to the high technical quality contained in the AWACS aircraft. The contracts were placed with a number of United Kingdom defence contractors and their value totalled $141 million. Following our evaluation, we have agreed with Boeing that a total offset credit of $96·6 million should be allowed. We are now in the process of evaluating Boeing's second

report, which covers the period July to December 1987, listing contracts showing a total value of some $192 million.

Departmental Houses

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the use of Ministry of Defence owned houses outside security areas, by members of the public.

Mr. Freeman: Ministry of Defence houses are provided specifically to accommodate married service personnel, Ministry of Defence police officers and certain key civilian employees. When houses outside security areas become surplus to MOD's long-term requirements and can be sold, they are normally offered either to service men or tenants under one of our internal discount schemes or, if that is not possible, an open market sale is arranged. Sometimes, however, we have houses ouside security areas which we know will be needed in the long-term, but which are, nevertheless, likely to be vacant for at least six months. Wherever possible we offer these properties to local authorities or housing associations on a short lease to house members of the public on a temporary basis. We currently have 378 properties on lease to local authorities in various parts of the country.

Cash Limits

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any changes to the defence cash limits for 1988-89.

Mr. Younger: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury announced today an increase to the cash limit for Class I, Vote 2 of £322,669,000 under the end year flexibility scheme for central Government expenditure. I can now announce that the cash limit for that Vote will be increased by a further £208·5 million, from £8,613,765,000 to £8,822,265,000. Of this new increase, £206 million comes under the terms of the additional flexibility arrangements I announced to the House on 19 December 1986, *Official Report* column *778*. These arrangements provide for carry forward of underspend resulting from procurement decisions taken to improve contractors' performance and the value for money obtained from our defence procurement contracts during the 1987-88 financial year, including the Department's tauter approach to interim payments. The remaining £2·5 million of the cash limit increase is to compensate the defence budget following a decision to write off part of a debt in respect of loan service and training charges incurred by the Nigerian Government. These sums will be met from within the reserve and will not therefore add to the public expenditure planning total.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in view of the recent awards of special pensions for ill health suffered as a result of exposure to radiation during the British nuclear tests in the 1950s, he will as a matter of urgency review his policy towards the payment of compensation to those former service personnel who have suffered ill health as a result of their involvement in these tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: The decision to review claims for war pensions from those former Service men suffering leukaemia (excluding chronic lymphatic) and multiple myeloma stems from the provision in the war pensions legislation that harm may be regarded as attributable to service factors if there is reliable evidence of reasonable doubt. The possibility of such doubt was caused by the identification in the recent study by the National Radiological Protection Board of a small number of extra cases of these diseases in participants in the nuclear test programme compared with the control group. However, in the absence of more conclusive evidence that these diseases are actually linked to participation, especially with exposure to radiation, even on a balance of probabilities, the Government cannot agree to the payment of any special compensation, since this would require much firmer evidence than is required by the "reasonable doubt" provision in war pensions legislation.

Fraud Investigations (Burghfield)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement about the investigation into a fraud at the atomic weapons establishment, Burghfield; and what type of equipment is involved;

(2) how many staff at the atomic weapons establishment, Burghfield, have resigned as a result of possible fraud charges relating to equipment used at the establishment.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature of the fraud at the atomic weapons establishment at Burghfield; what sums were involved; what equipment is missing; whether nuclear materials were involved; and whether the equipment and materials would be of use to a foreign power.

Mr. Sainsbury: This matter is currently being investigated by the Ministry of Defence police and it would therefore be inappropriate to go into detail at present. However I can say that no classified or hazardous equipment or material is known to have been involved and that there is no reason to believe that national security has been prejudiced. One member of the staff has offered his resignation in this connection and this has been accepted.

HMS Conqueror (Collision)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the exact circumstances, including time and location, of the collision between the Dalriada and HMS Conqueror, on 2 July; what damage was sustained by both vessels; what injuries were sustained by the crew of the Dalriada; what other ships were in the area at the time; what services were involved in the rescue; what kind of inquiry he has instituted into the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: At 0113 on 2 July 1988 a collision occured about 11 nautical miles south of the Mull of Kintyre light between the periscope of the submarine, HMS Conqueror, and the yacht Dalriada, owned by the Army Sail Training Association. Dalriada sustained damage to her side and sank shortly after the collision. HMS Conqueror was undamaged and surfaced immediately after the collision. Dalriada's mayday signal was acknowledged by the frigate, HMS Battleaxe, which was

some 5 nautical miles from the collision. She proceeded at once to Dalriada's assistance and recovered her four crew members, who were uninjured. They were subsequently transferred to the Donaghadee lifeboat, from which they were landed at Larne. A formal naval board of inquiry was convened on 2 July to establish the full circumstances of the collision.

HMS Otus (Collision)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the exact circumstances, including time and location, of the collision between the Drum and HMS Otus; what damage was sustained by both vessels; what injuries were sustained by anyone involved; what kind of inquiry he has instituted into the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: At 02.45 on 16 July 1988 a collision occurred about 7 nautical miles south of the Mull of Kintyre light between the masts of the submarine, HMS Otus, and the yacht Drum. HMS Otus surfaced immediately after the collision. Drum's outer skin was punctured and she also suffered some damage to her guard rails and rigging, but she was able to continue her passage without assistance. HMS Otus's masts were damaged. No one was injured in the collision. A formal naval board of inquiry is currently under way.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the collision between HMS Otus and the yacht Drum occurred in lanes designated for naval use.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The collision occurred in a designated submarine exercise area which is marked as such on Admiralty charts.

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mr. Sainsbury: The staff complements by grade in Ministry of Defence statistical divisions for the years in question are as follows:

Grade	[1]*1979*	[1]*1984*	[2]*1988*
Grade 3	1	1	0
Grade 4[3]	0	0	1
Grade 5—Chief Stat[3]	4	4	2
Grade 6[3]	0	0	1
Grade 7—Admin	2	2	1
Grade 7—Stat[3]	23	26	26
PSO	1	0	0
SSO	1	1	0
SEO	9	3	2
HEO—Admin	31	19	14
HEO—ADP	1	5	7
HSO	0	1	1
RO2	1	0	0
SO	1	0	0
EO—Admin	55	36	32
EO—ADP	17	20	19
AS/SAS[3]	8	9	10
AO	111	64	58
AA	34	23	18
SPS	1	1	0
PS	4	4	2
Reprographic Operator	1	1	1
SDP	1	1	0
DP	3	3	0
TOTAL	310	224	195

[1] 1 April figures
[2] 1 June 1988
[3] Statistical posts

In 1979, there were also 16 service men employed in statistical divisions; equivalent figures for 1984 and 1988 are nine and 15.

A direct comparison between the figures quoted for 1979 and 1984 and the 1988 figures is not possible because a reorganisation in the defence statistical organisation took place in 1985. Prior to that date all defence statistical branches reported to a single Under-Secretary, whereas they are now integrated into a number of different areas within the Ministry of Defence.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure in 1988-89 by each of the armed forces on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This information is not held centrally. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Armed Forces (Allowances)

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures have been taken to ensure that members of the armed forces are aware of the recently announced outcome of the review of armed forces allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: To supplement the usual methods of communicating changes in allowances, presentations were given at major service establishments and units. In addition, a video recording was sent to ships and establishments of the Royal Navy. Also, each of the three services produced a special publication explaining the changes in broad terms to every member of their serving personnel. I have placed a copy of these three publications in the Library of the House for the convenience of right hon. and hon. Members. Work on writing the detailed regulations is proceeding.

Service Personnel

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those countries outside of NATO in which British service personnel are based.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The countries and dependencies outside NATO where British service personnel are based are as follows:

Ascension Island
Belize
British Indian Ocean Territory (Diego Garcia)
Brunei
Cyprus

Falkland Islands (including South Georgia)
Gibraltar
Hong Kong

The list excludes loan service and seconded personnel serving in a number of countries and dependencies throughout the world.

Hong Kong

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the agreement on the future sharing of defence costs between the Hong Kong Government and Her Majesty's Government to be finalised.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Governor of Hong Kong and I yesterday signed in London an agreement on the future sharing of defence costs in Hong Kong. This new defence costs agreement will run from 1 April 1988 to 30 June 1997. Under the new agreement, some items of garrison costs previously shared between the two Governments will be fully funded by one or the other, and the balance of the cost of the garrison will be apportioned between the Hong Kong Government and Her Majesty's Government on a 65:35 basis. I believe that this agreement represents a sound and equitable financial basis for meeting the costs of the garrison from now until 1997.

THE ARTS

Scottish Arts

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been, for each year since 1970, the total contribution to the arts in Scotland by public funds, in 1988 terms.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The Scottish Arts Council is funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain which is supported by grant-in-aid from my expenditure programme. The Scottish Council's estimated expenditure in the current financial year, and its expenditures in the last three years, are as follows:

	1988-89 prices £
1985-86	14,702,000
1086-87	14,910,000
1987-88	14,755,000
1988-89	[1]15,258,000

[1] Estimate.

Note:
Details for earlier years are not readily available.

Grants towards the arts from the expenditure programme for Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give, for each year since 1970, the total Government grants given in Scotland to (i) the performing arts, (ii) music, (iii) painting, (iv) sculpture and (v) literature in 1988 terms.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The Arts Council of Great Britain, which receives grant-in-aid from my expenditure programme, makes an allocation of funds to the Scottish Arts Council. The Scottish council's estimated grants in the current financial year, and its grants in the last three years, are as follows:

£, 1988-89 prices

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Music	5,838,000	5,969,000	5,833,000	[1]5,909,000
Drama, Mime and Dance				
Community Arts, Festivals, (including music, visual arts)	6,034,000	6,145,000	6,138,000	[1]6,303,000
Literature	566,000	620,000	599,000	[1]628,000
Art	1,276,000	1,307,000	1,399,000	[1]1,305,00

[1]Estimate
Details for other spending categories and for earlier years are not readily available.

Grants towards the arts from the expenditure programme for Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he intends to make an official visit to any of the regional theatres in south Yorkshire during 1988.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so. I visited the site of the new West Yorkshire Playhouse on 30 June.

Glasgow

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit Glasgow; and when was his last visit.

Mr. Luce: I next intend to visit Glasgow on 18 October for the British American Arts Association symposium on arts and the changing city. I last visited the city on 3 May 1988 when I enjoyed watching part of "The Mahabharata" cycle, and met the director and members of the cast.

Bristol Arts Organisations

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will pay a visit to Bristol arts organisations to discuss funding for the arts in the south-west.

Mr. Luce: I will be visiting Bristol on Thursday 28 July. The level and distribution of arts funding is a matter to be determined by the Arts Council and South West Arts.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Jurors

69. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received on the selection and identification of jurors; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has received one recent representation from a member of the Bar concerning the identification of jurors, which is being considered at present.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Attorney-General when he received from the Director of Public Prosecutions his report on the Crown Prosecution Service for the year 1987-88; and when this report will be laid before Parliament.

The Solicitor-General: The report was received on 19 July and was laid before Parliament on 20 July. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total spending by the Law Officers' Department and the Lord Chancellor's Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

The Solicitor-General: The figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department for 1987-88, excluding staff costs, are as follows:

	£
Press and Public Relations	34,500
Advertising	13,500

My own Department, the Law Officers' Department, makes no expenditure on press, public relations or advertising.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Lord Chancellor's Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

The Attorney-General: The figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department for 1988-89, excluding staff costs, are as follows:

Estimated Expenditure 1988-89

	£
Television Advertising	Nil
Radio Advertising	Nil
Newspaper Advertising	15,000
Other Promotional Material	45,000

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The Attorney-General: At present there are five staff employed in the press and public relations office of the Lord Chancellor's Department, increasing to six in August.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Lord Chancellor's Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

The Attorney-General: The estimated expenditure by the Lord Chancellor's Department on press and public relations for 1988-89 is £35,000, excluding staff costs.

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in the Law Officers' Department and that of the Lord Chancellor; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

The Attorney-General: There are no statistical divisions in the Law Officers' Department. The information that is readily available on the number of staff by grade in the statistics branch of the Lord Chancellor's Department is shown in the table.

Grade of Staff in Post	*January 1980*	*July 1984*	*July 1988*
Grade 7/Statistician	1	1	1
Assistant/Senior Assistant Statistician	1	1	1
Senior Executive Officer	1	—	—
Higher Executive Officer	1	1	1
Executive Officer	3	3	3
Administrative/Clerical Officer	6	6	4
Administrative/Clerical Assistant	1	1	2

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Parenthood

71. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science in what discussions he is involved about how best to prepare young people to be parents.

Mrs. Rumbold: Preparation for parenthood may form part of the provision made in the school curriculum for personal and social education (PSE). My right hon. Friend is asking the National Curriculum Council to give early priority to considering the content of PSE; he has also asked the subject working groups for the national curriculum to consider how pupils' personal qualities and competencies can be developed through their subjects.

Student Unions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of reference of his Department's review of students unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many student unions will be investigated by his Department during the current review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many *(a)* colleges and *(b)* universities will be investigated by his Department during the current review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what organisations have been consulted by his Department during the current review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mrs. Rumbold: The staff-in-post figures for the Department's statistics branch for 1 April 1979, 1984 and 1988 were as follows:

Grade	*1 April 1979*[1]	*1 April 1984*[2]	*1 April 1988*
3	1	1	1
5	1	1	—
Chief statistician	2	2	2
6	1	1	—
7	5	3	1
Statistician	8·5	7	8
Principal research officer	1	1	1
SEO	15	13	3
Senior assistant/assistant statistician	3	3	4
HEO	38	36	19·5
EO	64	65	35
Senior personal secretary/PS	5	6	3
AO	66	37	22
AA	55	8	12
Senior data processor	11	11	—
Data processor	57	52	—

[1] The figures for 1979 include a number of clerical posts which were later transferred to the Department's Pensions Branch; these cannot readily be identified.

[2] In 1984 the DES Statistics Branch still formed part of a larger branch together with the Department's Computing Services divisions. Computing posts were later transferred to a new Information Technology Branch; the posts transferred cannot readily be identified.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: Total spending, including staff costs, on press, public relations, advertising and departmental publications in 1987-88 was £2·5 million. Costs cannot readily be disaggregated.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest figures for estimated spending by the Department on advertising, publicity and publications for the current financial year (1988-89) are as follows:

	£
Television	nil
Radio	40,000
Newspapers (including magazines and directories)	454,000
Other expenditure (publications, videos, exhibitions etc.)	2,400,000

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of staff employed in the information branch at 20 July 1988 was 33.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest estimated expenditure for the current financial year on press, public relations and departmental publications, including staff costs, is £3·7 million.

Chemistry Week

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition during the week beginning 24 October relating to Chemistry Week to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 24 October to Friday 28 October.

Research Councils

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils in relation to the public expenditure survey for 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am publishing the advice today and would like to express my appreciation to Sir David Phillips and the board for the work they have done. Copies have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office. I will be considering the advice carefully in discussions on the 1988 survey and in the context of the Government's reply to the board's strategy document.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in the Overseas Development Administration; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	1 April 1979	1 April 1984	1 April 1988
Statistical posts			
Chief Statistician (Grade 5)	2	1	1
Statistician (Grade 7)	5	5	4·5
Assistant/Senior Assistant Statistician	4	3	4
Administrative posts			
Higher Executive Officer	[1]—	2	1
Executive Officer	[1]—	3	2
Administrative Officer	[1]—	7	5
Personal Secretary	[1]—	1	1
Total	36	22	18·5

[1] An analysis by grade of the administrative posts is not readily available for 1979 and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Horn of Africa (Famine)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government will present its observations on the first report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1987-88, on "Famine in the Horn of Africa", HC 297.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's observations are being laid before Parliament today.

PRIME MINISTER

Singapore (Air Services)

Q47. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if, when she visits Singapore at the end of the month, she will discuss with the Singapore authorities air services between the United Kingdom and Singapore.

The Prime Minister: I do not propose to raise air services during my visit to Singapore. United Kingdom and Singapore civil aviation officials are reviewing air links between our two countries and will be meeting later in the year.

Parliamentary Questions

Q117. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy, and if she will issue instructions to Ministers accordingly, that, when replying to parliamentary questions to the effect that it would not be appropriate to give the information requested or that it is not the practice to do so, they should give the reasons or the policy considerations which underlie such an answer; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Hollingbourne

Q139. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Hollingbourne.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

UNITA

Q151. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the UNITA organisation in Angola.

The Prime Minister: We have received representations advocating and opposing contact between Her Majesty's Government and UNITA.

European Community Commission

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the Chairman of the European Community Commission.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

EC (Sovereignty Transfer)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the recent speech by the President of the Commission about the likely transfer of sovereignty from national Government to the Community; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The President of the Commission gave an expression of opinion with which I fundamentally disagree.

Consultation Documents

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will request all Ministers who issue consultation documents to state prominently on the first page thereof the closing date for responses, and to whom responses should be sent.

The Prime Minister: It is already the practice to state clearly the closing date for responses to consultation documents and to indicate to whom responses should be sent. I will draw my hon. Friend's point to the attention of Ministers.

Productivity Statistics

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Prime Minister what definition the Central Statistical Office uses of the employed labour force for the purposes of calculating productivity statistics; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: For the purposes of calculating productivity statistics the Central Statistical Office uses a definition of the employed labour force as the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

Engagements

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters she has received *(a)* opposing and *(b)* supporting privatisation of the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: To date I have received over 1,800 letters almost all pre-printed and written in identical terms opposing privatisation.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total spending by her office on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

The Prime Minister: My office did not incur any expenditure on advertising in 1987-88. Total expenditure by 10 Downing street on press and public relations in 1987-88 is estimated at £341,526.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Cabinet Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office does not expect to incur any expenditure on promotional advertising on television, radio or in newspapers in 1988-89. The latest estimate of expenditure on other promotional material in 1988-89 by the Cabinet Office, including the Central Statistical Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, as well as on such services provided to the Office of Arts and Libraries, is £9,500.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the Central Statistical Office; and if she will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

The Prime Minister: Information on numbers of staff by grade is not readily available for 1979 and 1984 and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost. The other information requested is as follows:

	Members of Statistician Group[1]	*Members of Administration and other groups* [2]	*Total*
1 April 1979	65	190	255
1 April 1984	41	146	187
1 April 1988			
Grade			
1A	1	—	1
3	3	—	3
5	9	1	10
7	25	4	29
Senior Executive Officer	—	8	8
Higher Executive Officer	—	20	20
Executive Officer	—	31	31
Administration Officer	—	21	21
Senior Personal Secretary	—	1	1
Personal Secretary	—	11	11
Senior Assistant Statistician	6	—	6
Assistant Statistician	3	—	3
Cadet Statistician	6	—	6
Chief Draughtsman	—	1	1
Senior Draughtsman	—	1	1
Higher Draughtsman	—	2	2
Draughtsman	—	5	5
Information Officer	—	1	1
TOTAL	53	107	160

[1] 1979 and 1984 figures exclude Cadet Statisticians.
[2] Includes all other non statistician group staff.

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: Seventeen staff are presently employed by the Cabinet Office, including the Central Statistical Office, the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, and 10 Downing street on press and public relations activities.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations offices of her office.

The Prime Minister: Including support staff, eight people are presently employed in 10 Downing street on press and public relations activities.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Cabinet Office on press and public relations during 1988-89.

The Prime Minister: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The latest estimate of expenditure on press and public relations in 1988-89 by the Cabinet Office, including 10 Downing street, the Central Statistical Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, as well as on such services provided to the Office of Arts and Libraries, is £525,000.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Entry Clearance Charges

70. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the recent increase in entry clearance charges to £60 per applicant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Letters on this matter have been received from 11 colleagues. The reason why the settlement and long-term entry clearance fee had to be increased at this time was given in the replies to the questions asked by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 21 June at columns *517-18*.

Malaysia

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he will be making to the Government of Malaysia, regarding the continued detention without trial of 42 citizens of that country.

Mr. Mellor: We shall continue to monitor the Internal Security Act detentions closely, in consultation with our European partners. Representatives of the Twelve have already discussed the matter with the Malaysian authorities and have made known our collective concerns. We shall ensure that the Malaysian authorities remain aware of those concerns. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the question of the detentions during his visit to Malaysia in April.

Live Monkey Brains

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take the necessary steps to prohibit the consumption of live monkey brains in Hong Kong restaurants.

Mr. Mellor: The consumption of live monkey brains in Hong Kong restaurants is already prohibited. Hong Kong's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance makes acts of cruelty to animals illegal and provides powers to arrest offenders. The Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance, which gives effect to CITES, controls inter alia the import and possession of endangered species including all species of monkey.

The Hong Kong Government have no evidence of the consumption of live monkey brains in Hong Kong restaurants. Any reports would be investigated vigorously.

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: I refer to the written answer of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 17 December 1987 at columns *629-30*. Final outturns for 1987-88 are not yet available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Mellor: The number of staff employed in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office news department and Overseas Development Administration press office is 19.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Mellor: Latest Foreign and Commonwealth Office estimates of expenditure on advertising and other promotional material for the year 1988-89 are:

	£
Foreign and Commonwealth Office Diplomatic Wing	280,000
Foreign and Commonwealth Office Overseas Development Administration Wing	352,000
	632,000

This expenditure relates mainly to advertising for recruitment; publicity to promote the entitlement of certain British residents overseas to vote in British and European Parliament elections; consular advice for Britons travelling abroad; and general material. A disaggregation of these figures to identify the medium to be used is not available.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual budget provided by the Welsh Office to the Welsh Housing Associations Council.

Mr. Grist: In the current financial year the Welsh Office will provide the Welsh Housing Associations Council with grant in aid of £10,000 to support the council's administrative costs. In addition the Department will provide £30,000 specifically to support a co-operative development officer.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines exist *(a)* to direct and *(b)* to verify the expenditure of the Welsh Housing Associations Council.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Housing Associations Council is an independent body which exists to represent the housing association movement in Wales. It also carries out training and research on a collective basis. Although the Department provides financial support towards the council's administrative costs, we do not consider it appropriate to attach conditions to that support which would inhibit the council's independence.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision is made by the Welsh Housing Associations Council to offer hospitality to potential tenants, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the Welsh Housing Associations Council.

Waste Disposal

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he has as to how many local authorities in Wales which are responsible for domestic waste disposal services separate such domestic waste into *(a)* glass, *(b)* metal, *(c)* plastic and *(d)* papers for recycling purposes;

(2) what information he has as to what proportion of the total number of local authorities responsible for domestic waste disposal in Wales separate all or part of their domestic waste into different categories for recycling purposes.

Mr. Grist: Of the 37 waste disposal authorities in Wales, a total of 25 are involved in recycling activities as follows:

	Number of local authorities
Glass	25
Metal	4
Plastic	Nil
Paper	13

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of hospital waiting lists by area and specialty for each year since 1974 to date.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the Welsh Office publications "Bed Use Statistics", copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision is made in the rate support grant for *(a)* the cost in 1989-90 of introducing the Education Reform Bill and *(b)* the cost in 1989-90 of preparing for the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Grist: Rate support grant paid in support of local authority services generally is not hypothecated to particular services or initiatives.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which of the projects in his Valleys initiative announced on 5 July had not been previously announced; and what is the value of Government funding for them;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a schedule of all the items in his Valleys initiative, giving the original date of announcement of each project and of each extension to a project, with the relevant level of Government spending associated with each stage of the announcements;

(3) which of the projects listed in his Valleys initiative had been announced *(a)* before June 1987, *(b)* between June 1987 and 31 December 1987 and *(c)* between 1 January 1988 and 31 March 1988; and what was the total value of Government funding for the projects initiated in each date band.

Mr. Peter Walker: Programmes and projects involving new or enhanced action are listed in the "Action not Words" chapter of the document "The Valleys: A Programme for the People" published on 14 June 1988. Copies are available in the Library of the House. Of the items listed only the increased level of Welsh Development Agency factory provision had been the subject of a previous announcement. The agency announced on 30 March 1988 that it intended to start building or designing an extra 1 million sq ft of factory space in 1988-89. This subsumed some of the factory building which forms part of the valleys programme.

Where it is feasible to do so, public expenditure costs of the individual projects and programmes mentioned are given in the document. In other cases expenditure will depend in part on the number and nature of projects which come forward.

Expenditure on key programmes affecting economic development, environmental improvement and urban renewal is expected to exceed £500 million over the three years of the valleys programme.

Health Authorities (Staff)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each area health authority the number of whole-time employed staff and number of hours worked of *(a)* hospital nurses, *(b)* midwives, *(c)* health visitors, *(d)* district nurses, *(e)* ancillary staff, *(f)* ambulance personnel and *(g)* administrative and clerical staff for each year since 1974 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: The information available is given in the table. Staff-in-post figures are derived primarily for NHS payroll records and a break down for nursing and midwifery into the requested categories *(a)* to *(d)* is not

considered to be sufficiently reliable. Information prior to 1977 is not available by district on a comparable basis to that shown in the table:

Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Nursing and Midwifery Staff[1]											
Clwyd	2,840	2,966	2,991	3,231	3,427	3,503	3,498	3,528	3,618	3,671	3,673
East Dyfed	2,253	2,252	2,350	2,478	2,507	1,966	2,042	2,106	2,081	2,170	2,194
Pembrokeshire						631	615	640	661	676	679
Gwent	3,460	3,550	3,663	3,964	4,061	4,141	4,221	4,312	4,351	4,354	4,337
Gwynedd	1,632	1,594	1,710	1,809	1,918	1,890	1,862	1,946	2,092	2,031	2,088
Mid Glamorgan	4,279	4,347	4,438	4,604	4,834	4,918	4,904	5,032	5,127	5,160	5,413
Powys	799	888	963	1,041	1,014	1,092	1,149	1,121	1,127	1,104	1,125
South Glamorgan	4,053	4,161	4,211	4,387	4,523	4,607	4,490	4,565	4,640	4,596	4,752
West Glamorgan	2,546	2,628	2,705	2,852	3,078	3,161	3,200	3,198	3,317	3,425	3,503
Ancillary Staff											
Clwyd	1,246	1,289	1,324	1,412	1,383	1,383	1,350	1,289	1,261	1,221	1,186
East Dyfed	1,140	1,222	1,239	1,200	1,176	917	919	849	813	795	729
Pembrokeshire						259	243	232	205	204	216
Gwent	1,913	1,948	2,013	2,072	2,019	1,978	1,927	1,790	1,703	1,562	1,492
Gwynedd	759	781	796	807	795	794	775	823	835	812	770
Mid Glamorgan	2,041	2,176	2,253	2,262	2,255	2,272	2,241	2,147	2,088	1,978	1,860
Powys	411	424	421	417	412	410	418	395	373	372	359
South Glamorgan	2,444	2,468	2,370	2,323	2,285	2,266	2,224	2,076	2,035	1,859	1,818
West Glamorgan	1,436	1,427	1,444	1,477	1,496	1,486	1,444	1,351	1,432	1,395	1,368
WHCSA[2]	17	18	19	19	18	19	18	12	12	12	12
Ambulance Personnel[3]											
Clwyd	164	164	167	166	176	177	180	183	181	187	191
East Dyfed	158	154	164	167	166	127	124	130	143	141	150
Pembrokeshire						42	46	46	46	46	46
Gwent	233	233	230	236	239	249	245	242	243	256	245
Gwynedd	136	162	161	161	182	182	186	191	191	185	186
Mid Glamorgan	233	241	245	245	247	240	248	251	250	283	279
Powys	61	67	69	73	76	90	90	89	90	114	119
South Glamorgan	166	172	166	163	168	173	172	184	180	193	207
West Glamorgan	135	137	134	136	142	136	137	144	148	157	166
Administrative and Clerical Staff											
Clwyd	606	633	636	664	705	708	651	704	740	779	800
East Dyfed	575	600	603	601	603	470	489	501	501	517	518
Pembrokeshire						124	145	156	166	166	174
Gwent	823	812	846	863	872	887	900	936	941	947	965
Gwynedd	395	415	472	443	450	465	469	516	540	560	541
Mid Glamorgan	918	972	995	999	1,007	1,012	1,014	1,035	1,047	1,067	1,097
Powys	154	160	169	174	172	169	178	172	171	171	193
South Glamorgan	1,354	1,391	1,410	1,405	1,429	1,447	1,469	1,443	1,474	1,424	1,490
West Glamorgan	643	654	651	670	681	689	702	710	760	798	824
WHCSA[2]	426	418	439	460	471	466	464	453	447	495	485

[1] No adjustment has been made to take account of the change in the working week of nurses and midwives in 1980.
[2] Welsh Health Common Services Authority. The authority does not employ nurses and midwives or ambulance staff.
[3] Ambulance personnel includes ambulancemen/women, ambulance officers and control assistants.

Slurry Tank (Ciliau Moor Common)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether those organisations consulted on the siting of a slurry tank on Ciliau moor common were in favour of the proposal.

Mr. Grist: The Open Spaces Society was not in favour of the proposal and the Countryside Commission had no comments to offer.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from organisations, other than those consulted, concerning the siting of a slurry tank on Ciliau moor common.

Mr. Grist: Representation was received from the West Wales Trust for Nature Conservation, Pembrokeshire Coast national park authority, Nature Conservancy Council, Welsh water authority, Ramblers' Association and the National Farmers' Union as well as representation from the National Trust in support of its application.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total expenditure on press and public relations and advertising in 1987-88 was £1,057,841·52. This figure includes expenditure on salaries and accommodation for all the information grades and support staff.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total estimated expenditure on press and public relations in 1988-89 is £1,198,000. This figure includes expenditure on salaries and accommodation for all the information grades and support staff.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Peter Walker: For 1988-89 the total estimated expenditure on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material is £710,500.

Statistical Division

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical division in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mr. Peter Walker: The numbers of staff in post in my economic and statistical services division on 1 July this year and at the same date in 1979 and 1984 were as follows:

	1 July 1979		*1 July 1984*		*1 July 1988*	
	Statistical	*Other*	*Statistical*	*Other*	*Statistical*	*Other*
Grade 5	1	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 7	8	1	7	1	10½	3
Senior Executive Officer	—	2	—	—	—	—
Senior Assistant Statistician	2	—	2½	—	5½	—
Higher Executive Officer	—	3	—	1	—	—
Assistant Statistician	2	—	3	—	1	—
Executive Officer	—	19	—	18	—	16
Administrative Officer	—	33½	—	18½	—	21½
Administrative Assistant	½	6	—	6½	—	5
Personal Secretary	—	2	—	2	—	2
Totals	13½	67½	13½	48	18	48½

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: At 1 July 1988, a total of 20 full-time and one part-time.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each local authority in Wales the revised illustrative figures for 1988-89 of the first year safety netted community charge, the full community charge and the current average rate bill per adult and per household.

Mr. Grist: Illustrative community charge figures for each district and county council in Wales, with no allowance for transitional arrangements, are shown as follows in table 1. The district council figures include the average community council community charge. The figures are based on present needs assessments which are under review.

It is presently proposed to apply the safety net at charging authority area level and not to individual tiers. On this basis safety netted community charges for each area together with the average rate bills per adult and per household are given in table 2. Households are defined, for this purpose, as domestic hereditaments.

Table 1. Revise illustrative figures for Wales 1988-89

	Full community charge £
Alyn and Deeside	19
Colwyn	26
Delyn	28
Glyndwr	27
Rhuddlan	15
Wrexham Maelor	30
Carmarthen	19
Ceredigion	9
Dinefwr	5
Llanelli	29
Preseli Pembrokeshire	5
South Pembrokeshire	9
Blaenau Gwent	36
Islwyn	34
Monmouth	25
Newport	30
Torfaen	32
Aberconwy	31
Arfon	29
Dwyfor	30
Meirionnydd	34
Ynys Mon	24
Cynon Valley	18
Merthyr Tydfil	30
Ogwr	27
Rhondda	19
Rhymney Valley	34
Taff Ely	26
Brecknock	21
Montgomeryshire	5
Radnor	11
Cardiff	0
Vale of Glamorgan	11
Port Talbot	42
Lliw Valley	22
Neath	7
Swansea	36
Clwyd	124
Dyfed	133
Gwent	122
Gwynedd	107
Mid Glamorgan	140
Powys	114

	Full community charge £
South Glamorgan	112
West Glamorgan	165

Table 2

Revised illustrative figures for Wales 1988-89

	First year safety netted community charge £	Average rate bill per adult £	Average rate bill per household £
Alyn and Deeside	176	176	352
Colwyn	198	198	351
Delyn	177	177	346
Glyndwr	153	155	287
Rhuddlan	170	170	339
Wrexham Maelor	162	162	314
Carmarthen	123	123	243
Ceredigion	136	136	257
Dinefwr	110	110	213
Llanelli	137	137	262
Preseli Pembrokeshire	126	126	239
South Pembrokeshire	152	152	280
Blaenau Gwent	116	116	221
Islwyn	127	127	249
Monmouth	167	167	348
Newport	185	185	349
Torfaen	154	154	297
Aberconwy	173	173	324
Arfon	129	129	222
Dwyfor	160	160	247
Meirionnydd	158	158	246
Ynys Mon	154	154	279
Cynon Valley	108	108	200
Merthyr Tydfil	124	124	236
Ogwr	151	151	309
Rhondda	85	85	159
Rhymney Valley	139	139	275
Taff Ely	145	145	290
Brecknock	131	131	255
Montgomeryshire	128	128	236
Radnor	134	134	236
Cardiff	179	179	354
Vale of Glamorgan	166	166	343
Port Talbot	154	154	296
Lliw Valley	142	142	274
Neath	141	141	273
Swansea	192	192	381

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of dwellings identified as unfit in the Welsh housing condition survey in 1979 and 1988 in each local authority area together with the percentage of the total housing stock in each local authority area that these figures represent and the percentage each local authority figure represents as a percentage of all unfit dwellings in Wales.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* This information is only available for 1981 and 1986 when house condition surveys were carried out. The data requested, at county level only in 1981 and for each local authority area in 1986, are given in the table:

Dwellings identified as unfit in the 1981 and 1986 Welsh house condition survey

Welsh districts	1981 Unfit dwellings	1981 Percentage total of housing stock[1]	1981 Percentage of all unfit dwellings	1986 Unfit dwellings	1986 Percentage total of housing stock[1]	1986 Percentage of all unfit dwellings
Alyn and Deeside	—	—	—	1,300	4·9	1·7
Colwyn	—	—	—	300	1·5	0·4
Delyn	—	—	—	500	2·2	0·7
Glyndwr	—	—	—	800	4·9	1·0
Rhuddlan	—	—	—	600	2·6	0·7
Wrexham Maelor	—	—	—	1,700	3·8	2·1
TOTAL CLWYD	6,300	4·1	6·9	5,300	3·4	6·6

Welsh districts	1981 Unfit dwellings	1981 Percentage total of housing stock[1]	1981 Percentage of all unfit dwellings	1986 Unfit dwellings	1986 Percentage total of housing stock[1]	1986 Percentage of all unfit dwellings
Carmarthen	—	—	—	1,400	6·5	1·8
Ceredigion	—	—	—	4,100	15·9	5·1
Dinefwr	—	—	—	2,100	13·9	2·7
Llanelli	—	—	—	3,200	10·5	4·0
Preseli	—	—	—	3,200	11·9	4·0
South Pembroke	—	—	—	1,000	6·6	1·3
TOTAL DYFED	13,400	11·1	14·7	15,100	11·1	18·8
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	—	3,400	10·9	4·2
Islwyn	—	—	—	800	3·2	1·0
Monmouth	—	—	—	2,200	8·0	2·8
Newport	—	—	—	1,300	2·5	1·6
Torfaen	—	—	—	1,100	3·1	1·4
TOTAL GWENT	17,000	10·6	18·7	8,800	5·1	11·0
Aberconwy	—	—	—	300	1·4	0·4
Arfon	—	—	—	1,500	7·0	1·9
Dwyfor	—	—	—	2,100	16·9	2·7
Meirionnydd	—	—	—	400	2·6	0·5
Ynys Môn	—	—	—	1,100	4·0	1·4
TOTAL GWYNEDD	4,700	5·4	5·2	5,500	5·5	6·9
Cynon Valley	—	—	—	4,400	16·4	5·5
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	—	2,500	10·5	3·1
Ogwr	—	—	—	3,900	7·8	4·8
Rhondda	—	—	—	4,900	15·3	6·1
Rhymney Valley	—	—	—	2,100	5·5	2·6
Taff-Ely	—	—	—	2,700	7·8	3·4
TOTAL MID GLAMORGAN	20,500	10·5	22·6	20,400	9·9	25·6
Brecknock	—	—	—	1,100	6·6	1·3
Montgomeryshire	—	—	—	1,800	8·7	2·2
Radnor	—	—	—	500	5·5	0·6
TOTAL POWYS	4,200	10·4	4·6	3,400	7·3	4·2
Cardiff	—	—	—	9,100	8·5	11·4
Vale of Glamorgan	—	—	—	1,800	4·2	2·2
TOTAL SOUTH GLAMORGAN	11,800	8·6	13·0	10,800	7·3	13·6
Llŵ Valley	—	—	—	1,900	8·0	2·4
Neath	—	—	—	2,000	7·6	2·5
Port Talbot (Afan)	—	—	—	1,400	6·7	1·7
Swansea	—	—	—	5,300	7·4	6·7
TOTAL WEST GLAMORGAN	13,000	9·6	14·3	10,600	7·4	13·3
WALES TOTAL (LOCAL AUTHORITIES)	90,000	8·8	—	79,900	7·2	—

[1] Calculated using a total stock figure for all first homes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Order Offences

11. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that justice is dispensed swiftly to those charged with public order offences.

32. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to make sure that justice is dispensed swiftly to those charged with public order offences; and if he will make a statement.

48. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that those accused of public order offences are brought before magistrates within three days.

Mr. John Patten: We are consulting the services working in the magistrates' courts in order to develop a framework for local arrangements to provide swift justice, and I hope to announce further details soon.

Elections (Voting)

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make proposals to amend the law allowing British citizens resident abroad to vote in general and European elections.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend said on 29 April, at columns *285-86*, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), we intend to bring forward legislation to extend the eligibility of British citizens living overseas to register as electors in this country during this Parliament.

Prison Officers (House Sales)

13. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much prison officers' accommodation has so far been sold to prison officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 12 July, 423 properties had been sold to staff under the prison service discount sale of quarters scheme.

Magistrates' Courts (Clerks)

14. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to alleviate the shortage of magistrates' court clerks in the area covered by the clerk to the justices of Mansfield, Worksop, East Retford, Newark and Southwell magistrates' courts.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the joint negotiating committee (JNC) for magistrates' courts staff will take into account information on recruitment and retention when considering the pay settlement for 1988. We shall consider very carefully whatever proposals the JNC puts forward.

51. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the training of juvenile court magistrates' clerks.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to her question on 18 April. Action is being taken to recruit staff to the new Home Office unit mentioned in that reply.

Licensing Act 1988

15. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to bring into effect the Licensing Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

17. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what day the Licensing Act 1988 will come into force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard.)

Police (Assaults)

16. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the incidence of attacks on police officers in the north-west.

53. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of assaults on police officers in Welsh police authority areas.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of police officers assaulted in the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of and fully share the concern of the police service over the increasing frequency of assaults. There is no central record of cases which might be defined as assaults on the police. Different forces keep local records in different ways. For example, in Greater Manchester the number of assaults and consequent days lost through sickness has been monitored only since 1 July 1987. Between then and the end of 1987, 337 officers were assaulted on duty and 3,422 man-days lost as a result. My right hon. Friend has asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary to collect information on assaults on the police on a consistent basis and to publish this information in future annual reports.

Prison Officers

18. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will examine the current procedures for enabling prison officers to serve in prison establishments of their choice.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The overriding need is to provide sufficient staff at all establishments. Subject to that, every effort is made to enable prison officers to serve in the establishment of their choice. In the 12 months up to June 1988, 1,414 experienced officers were given transfers in accordance with their wishes. Of the 857 officers who have joined the service since March 1988, 539 were posted to an establishment of their choice or to one in the immediate area.

Firearms

19. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted for firearms offences in England and Wales during the current year to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There were 2,820 convictions under the Firearms Act 1968 in 1986, the latest year for which information is available. These were for various offences of non-compliance with the law on the possession and use of firearms. With regard to the use of firearms in crime, in 1987 the police recorded 9,000 notifiable offences in which firearms were reported to have been used. Details are available in Home Office statistical bulletin 19/1988, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sunday Trading

20. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any further representations relating to the reform of the Sunday trading legislation.

Mr. Renton: Since I last answered a question on this subject, from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 23 June at column 1253, we have received 12 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and 101 against.

Kirkholt Project, Rochdale

21. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the Kirkholt project, Rochdale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On 6 June the Home Office crime prevention unit published a report describing the first phase of a project aimed at reducing burglary on the Kirkholt estate, Rochdale. The project was carried out with the support of the Greater Manchester police and probation services and has been evaluated by staff of the university of Manchester. Following the construction of a crime profile of the estate, which contains approximately 2,000 dwellings, a preventive programme was developed and implemented in the spring of 1987. The programme involved "cocoon" neighbourhood watch schemes based on victims and their immediate neighbours; the removal of pre-payment coin meters, wherever possible; and the provision of security advice and hardware. An evaluation of the effect of the work after seven months showed a 60 per cent. reduction in domestic burglary and an 80 per cent. reduction in the number of people becoming the victim of crime on more than one occasion. Figures obtained since then show that the success of the scheme has been maintained and there are no signs of crime being displaced to other estates or to other types of offence.

Rape

22. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the rate of recidivism among those sentenced for rape.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that this information is not available, but a study made a few years ago suggested that less than 5 per cent. of men imprisoned for all sexual offences, not just rape, were convicted again of a sexual offence within two years of their release.

British Broadcasting Corporation

23. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is planning any meetings with the chairman of the British Broadcasting Corporation to discuss the financing of the corporation.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman from time to time to discuss a wide range of matters of current interest. The BBC's recently published mid-year review, copies of which are in the Library, explains how the BBC is meeting the challenge of the indexed licence fee.

Guildford and Woolwich Bombing Cases

24. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to announce the publication of his review of the Guildford and Woolwich bombing cases.

26. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to announce the outcome of his review of the Guildford and Woolwich bombing cases.

46. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to announce the outcome of his review of the Guildford and Woolwich bombing cases.

Mr. John Patten: I refer to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall).

Broadcasting

25. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on broadcasting.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations on the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on the future of broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: We have not received any representation about the report. I welcome it as an interesting and challenging contribution to the debate about the future of broadcasting.

Alcohol Control

27. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take further measures to control the availability of alcohol, following recent alcohol-related incidents of violence in the south of England.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that the licensing legislation provides sufficient powers to control the sale of alcohol. We are taking the opinion of magistrates, police and the industry on this point. In a forthcoming circular to the police and magistrates, we shall remind them of the powers available to prevent and deal with alcohol-related disorder and urge them to consider their greater use.

30. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the minimum legal age for the purchase of alcohol.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have at present no plans to do so.

33. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the evidence of illegal sales from off-licences of alcohol to minors.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information available for this purpose does not distinguish between different types of licensed premises. The following information relates to 1986:

	Prosecutions	*Convictions*	*Cautions*
Offences under section 169(1)	296	165	246
Offences under section 169(2)	949	885	1,429

The Licensing Act 1988 contains provisions to strengthen the law on the sale of alcohol to young people and to require sales in off-licensed premises by staff under the age of 18 to be effectively supervised. These new measures will come into force on 1 August.

68. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to make the consumption of alcohol on the pavements, roadways and public areas of sports grounds illegal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985 established controls on the

possession of alcohol on entry to and within designated football grounds. The existing criminal law provides a range of remedies to penalise drunkenness, disorderliness and other misbehaviour frequently associated with heavy drinking. My right hon. Friend has agreed to an experimental bye-law in Coventry which will make it an offence to consume alcohol in designated streets and other public places. The pilot project will run for two years, and will be carefully evaluated by the Home Office and the participating authority.

Immigration Act 1988

28. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to seek to repeal section 1 of the Immigration Act 1988.

Mr. Renton: No.

61. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to bring into effect section 1 of the Immigration Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: By virtue of the Immigration Act 1988 (Commencement No. 1) Order 1988, made on 1 July, sections 1 to 5 of the Act will come into force on 1 August.

Driving Offences (Statistics)

29. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in England and Wales were prosecuted in 1987 for driving vehicles without *(a)* MOT certificates and *(b)* tax discs.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available figures related to 1986 when there were 187,000 proceedings at magistrates' courts for vehicle test certificate offences and 182,000 for failure to pay the appropriate motor vehicle licence duty. There were also 15,700 proceedings for offences of a motor vehicle licence being obscured or not affixed. The available information is published annually in table 5 of "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables", copies of which are in the Library. Figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

Remanded Persons

31. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any physically, sensory or mentally impaired people are being held in remand centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 30 March 1988, the most recent date for which information is available, one prisoner suffering from mental impairment considered by a medical officer to meet the criteria for detention in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 was being held in a remand centre.

Information about numbers of physically or sensorily impaired prisoners is not collected centrally.

Identity Cards

34. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the introduction of a British identity card.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received a steady flow of correspondence and comments from right hon. and hon. Members and the public on the introduction of national identity cards. We shall continue to consider the views which are put to us on this matter, but, at present, we remain to be persuaded that there is a sufficiently strong case for reintroducing compulsory identity cards.

Prisoners (North Sea)

35. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to study the feasibility of accommodating prisoners on purpose-built platforms in the North sea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Traffic Congestion (London)

36. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has recently discussed traffic congestion with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend met the Commissioner on 11 April to discuss a range of matters including the enforcement of road traffic law. Regular discussions also take place between the Metropolitan police and the highway authorities in London, including the Department of Transport, about traffic issues.

Special Constables

37. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of special constables at weekends to police rural towns and villages.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The special constabulary is the main police reserve, which gives frequent and welcome support to the regular police service.

Deployment of the special constabulary throughout England and Wales is a matter for individual chief officers. Special constables are deployed at weekends to assist with such occasions as local carnivals and fetes; to assist with local crime prevention initiatives; and to support the regular police in a wide range of policing tasks.

It is common practice for the special constabulary to support regular officers at weekends in policing rural towns and villages, although specific figures for deployments are not held centrally.

Prisons

38. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on conditions in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government's reply to the Third Report from the Home Affairs Committee (Cm. 263), published in December 1987, described the conditions of the prison system in England and Wales. Since then the prison population has fluctuated, but now stands at 49,963 of which 690 are in police cells. Work continues on the implementation of the package of place-producing measures which my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 30 March at columns 1083-85. In addition, the major changes in staff working practices known as fresh start are in place, or a date has been set for implementation, in all prison service establishments.

55. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons to investigate the desirability of removing Crown immunity from prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are satisfied that the present arrangements are effective in setting and monitoring the standards required by legislation.

Firearms (Amendment) Bill

39. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further changes he will propose to the Firearms (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Government amendments to the Bill agreed in another place this week provide:

(i) a power to prohibit by order any firearm which, by reason of the material of which it is composed, appears to the Secretary of State to be not readily detectable by apparatus for detecting metal objects;

(ii) an exception from the effects of clause 7(2) to provide for the case in which the barrel of a rifle is temporarily shortened by a registered firearms dealer for the purpose of substituting a replacement barrel which is smooth-bored;

(iii) for the payment of expenses to members of the firearms consultative committee; and

(iv) for commencement orders to contain transitional provisions, where necessary.

We have also accepted proposed changes to the terms of reference to the firearms consultative committee and undertaken to consider some minor changes concerning the forfeiture of firearms on revocation of licences; arrangements for the use of rifles under the supervision of estate owners; the extension of the buy-in scheme to cover converted prohibited weapons; and the validity of visitors' permits.

Alcohol Abuse

40. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he intends to take to help to prevent alcohol abuse.

49. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is taking to curb alcohol abuse.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he intends to give to help tackle at local level the problem of alcohol abuse as a means towards reducing the level of violent crime among young people.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are encouraging more rigorous enforcement of the licensing laws, including new provisions to help prevent under-age drinking. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is meeting representatives of the magistrates (with the Lord Chancellor) and of brewers, licensees, the retail trade and the entertainments industry (with the Lord President) to discuss the measures they can take. Discussions are also taking place with chief officers of police. Guidance will be issued to the police and courts on the powers available to deal with and prevent breaches of the licensing laws and with disorder as a result of heavy drinking. The ministerial group on alcohol misuse is co-ordinating further preventive and educational measures, including guidance on good practice in tackling local problems.

Auto Crime

41. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further measures his Department is taking to help prevent car crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 23 June 1988 at columns *680-81*.

60. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had on the measures his Department is taking to seek to prevent car crime.

Mr. John Patten: Car crime accounts for approximately a quarter of all recorded crime, much of it preventable. We receive a steady flow of correspondence and comments from hon. Members and the public about the measures that can be taken to prevent it.

The Home Office standing conference on crime prevention has set up a working group on car crime which will report in December. The Rover Group, which is represented on the working group, is working on a theft-proof concept car, incorporating a range of the latest technology in car security, which will be displayed at this year's standing conference in December.

Five parts of a British standard on vehicle security (mechanical locking systems, security of in-car entertainment equipment, window etching, central power locking and deadlocking) have now been published and work is continuing on the final part, dealing with security glazing. Steps are being taken to have the British standard adopted as an EC directive.

Our new crime prevention publicity campaign, launched in March, includes information on car crime and the scope for preventing it.

In 1987 the number of offences of theft or taking of a motor vehicle recorded by the police in England and Wales fell by 5·2 per cent. compared to 1986. It is encouraging that this reduction coincided with measures taken by the Home Office and by police forces throughout the country with the specific aim of reducing car crime.

Community Service

42. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the record to date of employing offenders on community service in crime prevention initiatives in north-west England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Offenders on community service orders work on a variety of crime prevention projects. Recent examples from north-west England include: erecting fencing for elderly people and other vulnerable members of the community (Bolton and Wigan), distributing leaflets about local crime prevention initiatives (Manchester), making interior flaps to secure household letterboxes (Liverpool), and decorating and preparing a workshop for the production of security grills for doors and windows (Oldham). The probation service also has close links with local victim support schemes and community service workers have been used to make good the damage and to secure premises after a break-in. This

aspect of community service work has not been assessed centrally, but we are keen to encourage area probation services to undertake more projects of this kind.

Crime Rates

43. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what he attributes the fall in recorded crime in London, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and West Midlands during the 12 months ended 31 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Ninety-four per cent. of all recorded crime is against property. All these areas recorded decreases of between 4 and 13 per cent. in the number of burglaries. This suggests that crime can be reduced when effective targeting by the policy is combined with sensible crime prevention by members of the public and businesses.

Video Recordings Act 1984

44. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the working of the Video Recordings Act 1984, with a view to banning computer games which encourage football hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Video Recordings Act already applies to any video game which to any significant extent depicts acts of gross violence or to any extent stimulates or encourages such acts. It is an offence to supply such a game unless it has been classified by the British Board of Film Classification or, if it has been classified, to supply it other than to a person in the age group for which it is classified as suitable.

Metropolitan Police

47. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives have been taken by the Metropolitan police force to improve its value for money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A continuing theme in the Commissioner's strategy for 1988 is to seek improvements in effectiveness, efficiency and the economic use of Metropolitan police resources and to ensure best value for money. Changes have been made this year to the systems of estimating, monitoring and controlling expenditure and to the composition of the cash limit in order to strengthen the controls in running costs and other current expenditure. The estimate screening process has also been streamlined to enable the screening board to concentrate its attention on the relative priorities of competing demands, increasing value for money in the use of resources and identifying policies or projects which require more detailed examination. The existing priority programme on financial management will concentrate this year on the improvement of financial management information and the development of a pilot scheme to assess the effectiveness of divisional budgets. Independent inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary will augment the work of the internal system of inspections in measuring the efficiency of the force.

Other initiatives aimed at improving value for money include a programme of scrutinies and efficiency reviews, contracting out of services and the wider use of output measures and performance indicators.

Recent achievements include:

(a) a reduction of nearly 350 posts at headquarters;
(b) an increase of over 750 in the number of officers on areas;
(c) more than 400 additional police constables on divisions;
(d) an increase of 13 per cent. in the hours spent on street duty by police constables;
(e) a reduction of about 6 per cent. in the overtime budget for 1988-89;
(f) about 200 police officers released for operational duty through civilianisation; and
(g) a 6 per cent. improvement in arrest rates.

52. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to increasing the current level of police manpower within the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In March my right hon. Friend authorised an increase of 300 police officers for the Metropolitan police bringing the establishment to 28,115. The force hopes to reach full establishment later this year. An increase was also authorised of 50 civilian staff who will be used to release police officers for operational duties.

The programme of manpower increases which was announced in May 1986 also allows for further increases of 300 police officers and 150 civilians next year, subject to my right hon. Friend being satisfied that the earlier increases have been used effectively.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

50. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement about the number and progress of neighbourhood watch schemes with particular reference to the Metropolitan police area.

57. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he can report on the number of neighbourhood watch schemes presently in operation and their effect on crime in the areas they cover.

Mr. John Patten: There are now over 50,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales with more than 8,800 in the Metropolitan police area alone. An estimated 3 million households nationally are involved. The growth of neighbourhood watch schemes reflects a growing recognition by concerned members of the community that they are not powerless against crime and that much can be achieved when the community gives active support to its police force. It is not possible to be certain about the precise effects of watch schemes on crime figures, but I very much welcome the fact that as the number of neighbourhood watch schemes has increased there has been a welcome decrease in burglaries in dwellings—down about five per cent. in the Metropolitan police area and 4·5 per cent. in England and Wales as a whole.

Police (Jury Protection)

54. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many police officers are employed on jury protection duties at the Old Bailey on a normal working day.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that officers are deployed on Jury protection duties only as and when the

need arises, so that it is not possible to provide an estimate of the numbers so deployed on a normal working day. When Jury protection is provided I understand that it requires 72 officers to cover each 24-hour period.

Police Cells (Prisoners)

56. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made since his statement of 30 March in reducing the number of prisoners held in police cells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry).

Sunday Sport

58. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought over the past 10 years against sporting bodies for contravention of the law by allowing participation and spectators on a Sunday.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 19 May at column *532*.

Fresh Start

59. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the implementation of the fresh start proposals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Fresh start has been implemented at all establishments except Chelmsford, where local discussions are taking place with the aim of implementing in mid-August. Work is not yet complete on updating the efficiency gain.

Child Abuse

62. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of child sexual and physical abuse were reported to his Department from South Yorkshire in the last year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for five years previously.

Mr. John Patten: The information available is given in the table and relates to the number of persons convicted of those offences of violence against the person and sexual offences where the nature of the offence was such that the victim was necessarily aged 16 or under. For other offences of those types the number of victims aged 16 or under is not known.

Persons found guilty of certain offences where the victim is known to be aged 16 or under: South Yorkshire

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Violence against the person[1]	7	6	1	2	2
Sexual offences[2]	85	91	83	83	87
Total	92	97	84	85	89

[1] Murder of infant under one year of age, infanticide and cruelty to a child.

[2] Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal, attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal, indecent assault on a male person under 16, indecent assault on a female person under 16, unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13, unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16, incest with a girl under 13, inciting a girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse, householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16, person responsible for girl under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution etc, abduction of an unmarried girl under 16 and gross indecency with children.

Solvent Abuse

63. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policies on solvent abuse.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has the lead in co-ordinating Government policies on solvent misuse, which are directed primarily towards education and prevention. This Department's main responsibility in this area is for the application of the criminal law through the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985, which makes it an offence for a person to supply or offer a substance to someone under the age of 18 if he knows or has reasonable cause to believe that it is likely to be inhaled for the purpose of causing intoxication.

Pensioners

64. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met leaders of the National Pensioners Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I met a delegation from the National Federation of Retirement Pensioners Associations (Pensioners' Voice) on 9 May. This was an opportunity for a useful exchange of views on matters of concern to the elderly.

Territorial Support Groups

65. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to expand the operations of the territorial support group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that he has no plans to expand the operations of the territorial support groups. The groups will continue to play a valuable role in dealing with major incidents, and in providing divisions with additional manpower to tackle high priority crimes.

Wheel Clamping

66. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines he has recently issued on the application of wheel clamping in the Metropolitan police area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. However, I understand that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis issued revised force instructions on 1 July 1987 and introduced revised training courses in the same month. Both emphasise the need for police officers authorising clamping to do so with discretion, common sense, and good judgment.

Violent Crime

67. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals were convicted of violent crime during 1987; and what was the equivalent figure 10 years earlier.

Mr. John Patten: In 1987, 47,900 persons were convicted of offences of violence against the person, 6,200 of sexual offences and 4,400 of robbery. Corresponding figures for the previous 10 years can be found in table 5.8 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1986" (Cm. 233), copies of which are in the Library.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about his proposals to alter section 2 of the Official Secrets Act since his statement to the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received very few representations on the proposals set out in our White Paper.

Prisons (Members' Visits)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of the number of visits undertaken by hon. Members to high security prisons since 1979 where their research assistants have been refused permission to accompany them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Research assistants are not permitted to accompany hon. Members visiting prisons, of whatever security category, unless the responsible Minister is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply. Records of such applications are not routinely kept.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Hurd: In 1987-88 the full cost of staff and other costs of Home Office press office was £525,000; for Home Office publicity section the cost was £306,000; the cost of advertising was £4,837,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* TV advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Hurd: It is estimated that Home Office spending during 1988-89 will be as follows:

	£
TV advertising	2,600,000
Radio advertising	100,000
Newspaper (including magazine advertising)	2,890,000
Other promotional activity (including printing, film/video, TV fillers, displays, exhibitions and market research)	3,680,000

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mr. Hurd: The information requested is given in the table. These figures are narrower in coverage than those given in the White Paper on Government statistical services published in 1981 (Cmnd. 8236, page 4) which included some staff in other parts of the Home Office working on statistical projects. Also, since 1981 the responsibilities of the statistical department have been expanded and changed and the staff complement changed in consequence.

Number

Grade	*1979*	*1984*	*1988*
Statistical posts			
Grade 5	3	3	3
Grade 7	13	16	18·5
Assistant/Senior Assistant Statistician	8	7	7
	24	26	28·5
Other posts			
Senior Executive Officer	4	2	1
Higher Executive Officer	9	10	11
Executive Officer	18	21	25
Administrative Officer	69	67	57·5
Administrative Assistant	21	35	40·5
Other grades	11	10	10·5
	132	145	145·5
Total	156	171	174

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Hurd: There are at present 18 press officers and four supporting staff employed in the Home Office press office.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Hurd: The full cost of staff and other costs of the Home Office press office are estimated at £615,000 in 1988-89.

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors prevented the implementation of circular instruction 3/1978 at Risley remand centre during 1987; and what steps have been taken to ensure that future Home Office circular instructions will be fully implemented at Risley remand centre.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This was essentially a management failure exacerbated by local staffing and training difficulties.

The present governor is fully aware of his responsibility for implementing departmental instructions and the regional office will monitor their implementation in the normal course of management.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Sackville: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any new appointment has been made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Peter W. Moorhouse has accepted my invitation to serve as a member of the authority. He will take up his post on 25 July.

This appointment is being made to fill one of the vacancies created by the expiry of the terms of appointment of two authority members on 28 April. I hope to announce the further appointment shortly.

Unpaid Fines

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for each of the nine inner London petty sessional divisions, how many cases of unpaid fines still await collection; and at what time point unpaid fines are written off as uncollectable.

Mr. John Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 13 July 1988, c. 222]:* At 30 June 1988, the position was as follows:

	Number
South Westminster	14,107
North Westminster	10,958
West London	10,005
West Central	11,005
East Central	14,807
Thames	5,031
South Western	15,211
South Central	21,630
South Eastern	10,089

In addition, there were 520 cases of unpaid fines at the inner London juvenile court, and 220,882 cases of unpaid fixed penalty fines at the central processing unit. An unidentifiable number of these cases consist of fines in which the time allowed for payment has not expired. Fines are written off only after all appropriate enforcement action has been taken. There is no set time limit.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Privy Council Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

(a), *(b)*, and *(d)* Nil.

(c) None, other than an estimated £3,000 on items published in the official gazettes.

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Privy Council Office.

Mr. Wakeham: Nil.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Privy Council Office on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Wakeham: Approximately £1,250.

European Legislation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many proposals or other documents declared by the Select Committee on European Legislation to be of sufficient legal or political importance to be reported to the House have not yet been debated; and if he will publish a table showing the dates on which the decisions were made by the Select Committee and the nature of the issues concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: Ninety-three documents recommended by the Select Committee on European Legislation for further consideration by the House have not yet been debated. Details have been placed in the Library of the House. Of these 93 documents, 38 are not at present under active consideration in the Community and 11 are awaiting further documents so that Parliament can have the opportunity to debate the up-to-date position. Of the remaining 44 documents several have been linked by the Select Committee and it is expected that, in accordance with the Committee's recommendations, these would require no more than 24 debates. Four of these debates, covering seven documents, have been arranged for next week.

South African Wines

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, he will set out in full the approved procedures followed to remedy the situation and prevent further contravention of the rules regarding the use of the facilities of the House by an hon. Member for the stocking and sale of wines from South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: Under the rules governing use of House of Commons stationery, the approved procedures invoked in such cases require financial reimbursement by the individual concerned of the cost of the stationery and any post-paid envelopes used, together with a written undertaking to respect the rules in future. There are no rules governing commercial transactions or storage of items in Members' rooms. These are matters for the individual concerned.

PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY

Mr. Dobson: To ask (1) the Lord President of the Council how many press officers from his office have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(2) the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many press officers from the Department of Trade and Industry have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(3) the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many press officers from the Duchy office have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(4) the Secretary of State for Defence how many press officers from the armed forces have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(5) the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(6) the Secretary of State for Wales how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(7) the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(8) the Secretary of State for Transport how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(9) the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(10) the Secretary of State for Employment how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(11) the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many press officers from the Duchy office and the Department of Trade and Industry, respectively, have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(12) the Attorney-General how many press officers from the Law Officers' Department and that of the Lord Chancellor have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(13) the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(14) the Prime Minister how many press officers from her office have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(15) the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(16) the Secretary of State for Defence how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(17) the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(18) the Secretary of State for Energy how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(19) the Secretary of State for the Environment how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(20) the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery;

(21) the Secretary of State for Social Services how many press officers from his Department have passes giving them access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

A total of six press officers, from the Prime Minister's Office, the Central Office of Information, the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence have access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery on a permanent basis. All Departments, other than the Law Officers' Department, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Duchy Office and the Privy Council Office, have press officers who apply on a day-to-day basis for a pass to admit them to the Parliamentary Press Gallery when their official duties require it. The total of such press officers is 156. No officials from the Law Officers' Department, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Duchy Office or the Privy Council Office have access to the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Amstrad Computers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* the British content of Amstrad computers measured on the standard used by the European Economic Community for imposing anti-dumping duties on screwdriver-assembled products; and what are the differences in the standard for this computer as set by each European Economic Comunity country.

Mr. Alan Clark: The sourcing of Amstrad's computers is a matter for the company. As there are no anti-dumping duties on computers, the criteria used by the Commission of the European Communities to assess whether assembly operations are designed to circumvent such duties are not relevant. Computers must comply with the national safety standards set by EC member states which differ from each other to varying degrees.

Manufacturing

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the quality of statistics compiled by his Department on trends in the manufacturing industry; and what plans he has to improve the comprehensiveness and accuracy of those statistics.

Mr. Atkins: To complement the recently announced central review of Government economic statistics, we have established a review of the DTI's business surveys. Both reviews include an examination of the statistics for manufacturing industry, and will make recommendations for changes where this is thought necessary. The departmental review will look in particular at the balance between the burdens that DTI surveys impose on industry and the quality and value of the resulting statistics. This follows comments which my Department receives from time to time on both aspects of the problem.

STRIDE Programme

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress made to implement the European Commission's proposed STRIDE programme; and if he is now able to list the regions of the United Kingdom which are expected to benefit from this programme.

Mr. Atkins: We continue to await proposals for this programme from the European Commission.

Rover Group

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what date he was first told of Rover's intention to reduce the work force at Cowley and Llanelli; whether that information is contained in the 1988 corporate plan; and whether he will now place a copy of that plan in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I was aware before the opening of negotiations with British Aerospace for the Government's shareholding in Rover Group that there was a prospect of work force and capacity reductions at Cowley and Llanelli. Details of Rover's plans for industrial facilities have always been treated as commercially confidential. I do not intend to place a copy of the 1988 plan in the Library of the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement setting out the nature and extent of the controls available to the EEC Commission over the future plans for Rover Group in consequence of the recent discussions in Brussels.

Mr. Kenneth Clark: The Commission will monitor the implementation of the Rover Group corporate plan on the basis of half-yearly reports on Rover Group's performance provided by the Government. The Commission's interest in the corporate plan is limited to considering whether under certain circumstances, there should be any repayment of state aid as provided by article 93(2) of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the permission of the EEC Commission will be required, in terms of the recent agreement, if British Aerospace adjusts its corporate plan for the Rover Group to increase capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Commission's interest in the corporate plan is limited to considering whether under certain circumstances, there should be any repayment of state aid as provided by article 93(2) of the treaty of Rome. A condition of the Commission's approval for the cash injection into Rover Group was that British Aerospace should follow the investment and restructuring envisaged in the Rover Group management's existing plans for the period 1988 to 1992. In the case of significant departure from those plans it would, as a first step, raise the matter with the Government, in accordance with its established practice, and seek clarification as to the justification for the changes in the light of circumstances at the time.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the aid provided to British Aerospace to purchase the Rover Group was conditional on the capacity reductions in the corporate plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A condition of the Commission's approval for the cash injection into Rover Group was that British Aerospace should follow the investment and restructuring envisaged in the Rover Group management's existing plans for the period 1988 to 1922.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if Commissioner Sutherland required capacity reductions at Rover Group before agreeing to the aid given to British Aerospace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The EC Commission regard excess capacity in the European vehicle industry as a sensitive matter. The Commission therefore take account of prospective restructuring of a company's facilities when considering cases of proposed state aid to that company. The Government notified to the EC Commission the restructuring of capacity in component manufacturing and vehicle assembly which the Rover Group had undertaken in recent years, and the existing plans of the Rover Group's management for investment and restructuring in the period 1988-1992. On the basis of this information, the Commission decided that the aid proposed was compatible with the Common Market.

Steel-jawed Leghold Traps

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the companies in the United Kingdom which manufacture steel-jawed leghold traps;

(2) if he will list the main countries to which steel-jawed leghold traps, manufactured in the United Kingdom, are presently exported; and what is the total annual value of such trade;

(3) how many steel-jawed leghold traps are manufactured annually in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: As far as is known, steel-jawed leghold traps are not manufactured in the United Kingdom.

"Biotechnology in Focus"

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the cash contribution by his Department to the production of "Biotechnology in Focus"; how many copies have been generally distributed; what charge has been made *(a)* generally and *(b)* to the Science in Society Intergroup of the EEC assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The DTI's cash contribution was £24,000. A copy was distributed free to all the 8,000 secondary schools in the United Kingdom. None, so far as the Department is aware, have been distributed to the science in society intergroup of the EEC Assembly.

Fertilisers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals have been advanced by the Commission for restrictions on imports from eastern Europe of nitrogenous fertilisers; what is the purpose of the proposed restrictions; if the issue has been notified by the Commission as falling to be considered by majority vote; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Commission proposal to which my hon. Friend refers would replace existing national measures, under which certain states restrict the import from Eastern Europe of nitrogenous fertilisers, by a single community measure. The quota would be divided into two instalments, the first to be allocated to member states and the second to constitute a reserve. For adoption of this proposal by the Council a qualified majority is needed.

Portugal

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the proposal

for financial support, under the European Community budget, for a specific industrial development programme for Portugal.

Mr. Atkins: The European Council in Brussels in February agreed to the provision of 500 mecu (about £340 million) to contribute towards the implementation of a special industrial development programme for Portugal (PEDIP).

The funding, which is distinct from support from the structural funds and Community loans, will last for five years to 1992 and will be used to contribute to financing productive investments and to the improvement of basic infrastructure, industrial efficiency and vocational training.

While supporting the proposal in principle, the Government had to object to one of the proposed legal bases cited for it, namely the use of article 128, which the Commission insisted was necessary to cover the vocational training elements of the programme.

Consideration of the proposal seemed deadlocked on this point, but shortly before the Foreign Affairs Council on 14 June, all other member states joined in objecting to the inclusion of article 128. As a result of this there was no further reason for the United Kingdom to delay adoption of the regulation.

Unfortunately this unexpectedly early agreement to the text of the proposal, which we had otherwise been unable to accept, gave us insufficient time to give early warning to the Select Committee on European Legislation. I therefore wrote to the Chairman of the Committee to explain this unexpected advance and to request that it considers the proposal only at the point when it was likely to be adopted. I would therefore wish to restate my apologies that it had not been possible for the House to undertake and complete scrutiny of the proposal before it was adopted.

International Commodity Agreements

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the Government's policy towards endorsing international commodity agreements; and how this is reflected in United Kingdom policy towards developing countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: Experience with the tin agreement and other commodity agreements has shown that market intervention provisions such as buffer stocks and quota arrangements have severe defects: at best they are of doubtful benefit to producers and consumers and at worst they distort markets fundamentally and carry the risk of disastrous failure. In general, therefore, we are strongly opposed to proposals for new agreements with market intevention provisions and are determined that any renewal of existing ones must be fully justified. Where there are such agreements, our view is that they should be managed under stringent conditions regarding accountability and financing, and operated in conformity with the underlying trends in the market.

The Government's general policy towards commodities is based upon the premise that the best way to assist producers and consumers is to enable markets to work efficiently. We therefore support liberal arrangements and deregulation. We seek to work with our European Community partners to put these principles into practice both in relation to commodity agreements and in the current round of multilateral trade negotiations in GATT which will have an important bearing on wider commodity trade questions of interest to both developed and developing countries.

The Government recognise the economic difficulties of a number of developing countries arising from their heavy dependence on the production of primary commodities. Experience shows that the most effective way of tackling these difficulties is by strengthening and restructuring the economies of the countries concerned. We are contributing to this through our own aid programme and our support for the work of international financial institutions in this field as well as though improving market opportunities for developing countries' goods.

Ironstone Mining

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to whether the British Steel Corporation intends to reinstate the Roxby Gullet opencast ironstone mine to its former state now that mining has ceased.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* I understand that at present the British Steel Corporation is considering various options regarding the future of the area. The British Steel Corporation is not required by the conditions of the original planning permissions to restore the land to its former state. These conditions do, however, require restoration of such levels and configurations as would facilitate natural drainage and permit the resumption of normal agricultural operations. The planning permissions recognise that the last gullet may have to be left open either to facilitate future mining operations or because of the expense of obtaining filling materials. The restoration conditions do not apply to such areas. Apparently the present configuration would need to remain were mining to recommence.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from Glanford borough council on the subject of opencast ironstone mining.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* I am aware of no representations from Glanford borough council on the subject of opencast ironstone mining.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many former ironstone mines the British Steel Corporation either owns or retains the lease of *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Glanford and Scunthorpe constituency.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* I understand that the British Steel Corporation either owns or retains the lease of 12 former ironstone quarries nationally. The British Steel Corporation owns four former opencast quarries in the Scunthorpe area. Of the remaining eight, six are in Northamptonshire, one in Leicestershire and one in Oxfordshire. Of these eight, the British Steel Corporation owns the mineral rights of two.

Research Establishments

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answers of 14 July and 28 June, *Official Report*, column 169, why he is unwilling to list the specific organisations consulted in the recent review of his Department's research establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* My right hon. and learned Friend explained to the House the conclusions of the review of the Department's research establishments in the answer he gave on 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *431-32*. I do not propose to publish the review in full or give details of the process followed in producing it since it constituted my Department's advice on policy to Ministers.

Electronic Data Interchange

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to introduce electronic data interchange to his Department.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* Electronic data interchange is not at present used by the Department for trading purposes, but it will be introduced into selected business areas when legal constraints and legislative considerations have been addressed.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Businesses (Venture Capital)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *695*, what steps he plans to take to encourage venture capital investment in smaller businesses.

Mr. Cope: The Government's economic policies have created a climate in which enterprise is encouraged and rewarded and people are willing to invest in the wide range of opportunities that now exist. There has been significant growth in venture capital investment: from about £110 million in 1982 to £894 million in 1987.

The business expansion scheme facilitates the supply of equity by offering tax relief to individuals investing in unquoted companies. The proposed limit of £500,000 which can be invested per year per company will encourage those who are seeking the tax advantage of BES relief to examine smaller companies and gives a clear indication to investors and advisers that the BES is aimed at providing equity finance for smaller companies.

I will continue to encourage further funds for small firms through my regular contacts with venture capital organisations.

Homeless Persons (Training)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what funds he has made available for each year since 1983 to provide the single homeless with training and employment incentives.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available. Provided they are eligible, single homeless people may participate in employment and training programmes on the same terms as apply generally and may therefore receive training or other allowances in accordance with the terms of each programme.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the United Kingdom have two or more jobs.

Mr. Lee: The regular work force in employment series does not identify persons with two or more jobs.

The labour force survey (LFS) provides information on a different basis but identifies persons with a second job. It is estimated that in spring 1987 there were 853,000 persons in the United Kingdom with a second job.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the number of unemployed in the borough of Sunderland *(a)* in May 1979, and *(b)* in May 1988 if calculated on the same basis as in 1979.

Mr. Lee: The requested information is not available. Unemployment statistics for local authority districts are available only from June 1983. My Department does not estimate unemployment on any previous definition as it is impossible to estimate what the various effects of changes in coverage of the unemployment count would now be.

Redundancies (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the redundancies notified in the textile industry in the Bradford travel-to-work area for each month in 1988 to the most recent practicable date, stating the cause of the redundancies in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Information regarding individual firms given to the Department under the redundancy handling provisions of the Employment Protection Act 1975 is given in confidence. So far in 1988, 13 firms have submitted notifications in the Bradford area involving 587 proposed dismissals. The monthly incidence is:

	Number of firms	*Number of employees*
January	—	—
February	1	33
March	2	37
April	2	123
May	1	15
June	4	304
July	[1]3	75

[1] To date.

The grounds given for the redundancies (more than one in some cases) were:

	Number
Liquidation	5
Plant closure	2
Reduced product demand	7
New equipment	1
Organisational changes	2

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give separate figures for the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available as requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the number of permanent staff in the

Department of Employment statistics division was 330 in April 1979, 268 in April 1984 and 229 in April 1988 (of whom 29 are professional statisticians). The total numbers of staff employed on statistics services in the Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission was 1,404 in May 1979 and 849 in April 1984.

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Cope: Sixty people are presently employed in the information division of this Department.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Cope: Estimated expenditure by this Department on press and public relations for 1988-89 is £1·46 million. This includes an estimated £199,616 for staff transferred from the Manpower Services Commission (now the Training Commission) on the creation of the employment service.

Note: The above figure represents general administrative expenditure relating to costs for staff, accommodation and for regional services.

Hospitals (Inspections)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how regularly hospitals and health centres are inspected by the Health and Safety Executive as an average, on a national scale.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when each of the hospitals and health centres in the Southport and Formby district health authority was last inspected by the Health and Safety Executive; and what was the outcome in each case.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average percentage of disposable income spent on housing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: The average proportion of household disposable income spent on housing in Northern Ireland in 1985-86, the most recent years for which information is available, was 13·3 per cent.

Prisoners

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on the review of prisoners detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement shortly.

Integrated School Places

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to make available integrated school places for all the children who would like to attend such a school.

Dr. Mawhinney: The recent consultation document on education reform in Northern Ireland contains proposals which would offer a further avenue for the expression of parental wishes for integrated education, in the form of grant-maintained integrated schools. In addition, I recently approved grant-aided voluntary maintained status, from 1 August 1988, for Hazelwood college, Belfast, All Children's integrated primary school, Newcastle, and Bridge primary school, Banbridge; I have also approved an extension to four-form entry for Lagan college, Belfast.

Farmers (Statistics)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify the number of farmers engaged in *(a)* lamb, *(b)* beef and *(c)* cereal production in Northern Ireland during each year since 1979.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 20 July 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However, the numbers of farms returning *(a)* sheep, *(b)* cattle of one year old and over for slaughter, and *(c)* cereals, in the agricultural census in June of each year, are as follows:—

June Census	*Sheep*	*Slaughter cattle one year old and over*	*Cereals*
1979	8,243	25,209	10,473
1980	8,398	25,014	10,026
1981	8,369	22,413	9,417
1982	8,607	21,498	8,216
1983	8,837	21,721	7,807
1984	8,986	22,090	7,873
1985	9,372	21,885	7,793
1986	9,650	21,995	7,390
1987	9,971	20,881	6,972

Notes:

1. Between 1980 and 1981, 6,690 very small holdings were excluded from the main census as a result of a change in the threshold for inclusion.
2. Some farms may have returned a combination of the categories.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Reconstruction Projects

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if will give the reasons for delaying the start of work on some of the motorway reconstruction projects announced on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *61;* if he will list those schemes announced then on which tenders have not yet been invited; if he will list those schemes announced then on what tenders have been invited but contracts not yet issued; and if he will estimate the backlog of motorway reconstruction that will be outstanding on 31 March 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The general situation was explained in answer to a question by my hon. Friend on 20

June 1988, at column 455. The reasons for delaying some capital maintenance works is the need to keep spending on the road programme as a whole within financial provision. We are currently reviewing what further works can go ahead in this financial year. Pending completion of the review it is not possible to estimate the implication of the delay for the backlog of motorway renewals.

The following are the details sought of individual schemes:

Motorway Major Maintenance Schemes Announced on 22 March, not including Reserve Schemes.

Rescheduled for local reasons

(a) *Tenders not yet invited*
M1 (J12-13)
M5 (J1-M6)
M6 (J13-14)
M11 (J5)
M25 (J24)

(b) *Tenders invited but contracts not let*—Nil
Under review

(a) *Tenders not yet arrived*
M1 (J25)
M1 (J40-41)
M3 (J5-6A)
M4 (J16-18)
M5 (J20)
M6/M56 Lymm Interchange
M50 (J3-4)
M56 (J6-8)
M62 (J37-38)
M64 (M6-J1)

(b) *Tenders invited but contracts not yet let*
A1(M) Barton-Birtree
A102(M) Blackwall Tunnel (part)
M62 (J35)

British Rail

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about British Rail's intentions with regard to reinvesting the £290 million operating surplus for 1987-88.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail's 1988 corporate plan, which was published on 19 July, forecasts investment of approximately £3·8 billion (at 1988-89 prices) over the next five years. This investment is in a variety of projects including new locomotives, new rolling stock, electrification, signalling modernisation, and so on.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are just over 4,000 work stations in the Department of Transport including terminals, microcomputers and word processors, giving a ratio of one work station to every 3·5 members of staff. It is not possible to give a figure for the overall increase planned over the next five years: this is dependent on the outcome of work currently in progress.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The members of the senior level information technology steering committee for the Department of Transport are:

Deputy Secretary, Road Safety and Licensing, Principal Finance Officer (Chairman)
Under Secretary, Road and Vehicle Safety
Under Secretary, Freight
Under Secretary, Marine and Ports
Director of Administrative Resources
Director of Personnel Management and Training
Director of Driver and Vehicle Licensing
Director of Statistics
Director (Transport), West Midland Regional Office
Director, Drivers, Vehicles and Operators IT Directorate
Head of Business Efficiency Services
Director of Financial Management
Deputy Chief Highway Engineer
Assistant Director, TRRL
Head of IT strategic Planning Division
CCTA representative

None of its meetings over the past year has been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the financial year 1987-88 one person at grade 2 and three people at grade 3 attended courses or training on information technology awareness or information technology management. In addition, three people at grade 3 attended management courses which had an information technology component.

Also, two of the people at grade 3 referred to by the Secretary of State for the Environment in his answer to my hon. Friend of 12 July have common service responsibilities covering this Department.

Boatmasters' Certificates

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals for the mutual recognition of boatmasters' certificates have been proposed by the Commission in a directive; what is the purpose of these proposals; which rivers would require other forms of recognition under the proposals; if the United Kingdom has a practice of awarding boatmasters' certificates; what will be the impact on United Kingdom boats of the proposed directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The proposed directive concerns boats carrying goods on major continental waterways, other than the Rhine. It would require national boatmasters' certificates to be reciprocally recognised. There are no comparable United Kingdom waterways and thus no equivalent qualifications. The proposal does not affect United Kingdom shipping.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when, at the present rate of increase in traffic flow, he expects the Severn bridge to reach design traffic capacity, as modified by current technical assessment of the safety load for the bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not ascribe design capacity to any type of road. The practical capacity of the Severn bridge varies according to the mix of traffic, driving conditions and the time of day and year.

The present strengthening work will ensure that safety considerations will not restrict the amount of traffic using the bridge.

Shipping Accidents

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what incidents have been reported to him involving vessels lost in unexplained circumstances, collision, snagging of nets, damage to fishing, pleasure or service craft in United Kingdom waters in the past two years; and if he will list each with the names of the vessels involved, any fatalities or injuries sustained, compensation paid and inquiries instituted in each case.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is as follows:

	1986	*1987*
Vessels lost in unexplained circumstances	0	0
Vessels involved in collisions	40	37
Vessels lost due to collision	3	0
Fishing vessels lost due to snagging of nets	1	0
Fishing vessels involved in snagging of nets	0	3
Fishing vessels damaged	200	305
Fatalities in United Kingdom waters	16	7

Further information or a detailed breakdown for the above figures is not readily available and the cost of providing it would be disproportionate. However, all accidents reported to my Department are reviewed and inquiries instituted as appropriate.

Aire Valley Trunk Road

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he opens the Aire Valley trunk road on 2 August, he will make public reference to those people who have faced difficulties due to the blighting of property over the 20-year period since the construction of the Aire Valley motorway and the Aire Valley trunk road were proposed by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect to do so.

The Department's procedures are designed to limit the effects of uncertainty created by road proposals. Some blight on property is unavoidable.

In Airedale we are promoting a major new road in a narrow, developed and well populated valley.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure on advertising totalled £2,741,000. Expenditure on running the information division press and public relations services totalled £373,000. It is not possible to disaggregate the latter figure.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest estimate for information division press and public relation services costs for 1988-89 is £434,000. This figure covers the overall cost of running the press office, calculated using Her Majesty's HM Treasury simplified ready reckoner for staff and other costs.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what it the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising, and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Estimated spending by the Department of Transport in 1988-89 on publicity and advertising is £5,490,000—broken down as follows:

	£
Television advertising	1,800,000
Radio advertising	70,000
Newspaper advertising	160,000
Other promotional material (posters, pamphlets etc)	3,460,000
Total	5,490,000

Departmental Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in the administrative posts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following table gives data for the permanent staff (including supernumeraries) in the directorate of statistics (DST) in the Department of Transport on 1 April 1984 and 1988, together with figures for the corresponding directorate (DESB) of the DOE-DTp common services structure in April 1979. There have been a number of changes in function in the nine years covered. For example, between 1979 and 1984, statistical work that had been carried out by 8½ staff in the National Ports Council was taken over; and between 1984 and 1988 10 posts were taken over from DTI for work on shipping and aviation statistics, and seven posts were added for work taken over following the abolition of the GLC. Statistical posts filled by members of the statistician group are shown at the top of the table. There are also three members of the group in statistical posts elsewhere in the Department and another is filling a basically administrative post.

	Complement			*Staff in post*		
	1 April 1979	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1988*	*1 April 1979*	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1988*
Statistician group						
Director of statistics (grade 3)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chief statistician (grade 5)	3	4	4	3	4	4
Statistician (grade 7)	13	16	20	13	17	20
(Senior) assistant statistician	4	6	8	4	4	7

	Complement			Staff in post		
	1 April 1979	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1988*	*1 April 1979*	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1988*
Sub-total	21	27	33	21	26	32
Other staff						
Economic adviser (grade 7)	—	1	1	—	1	1
Principal scientific officer (grade 7)	—	—	1	—	1	1
Senior information officer (SSSO)	—	—	1	—	—	—
Higher P and TO (PTOII)	—	2	2	—	—	1
P and TO (PTOIII)	—	2	[illegible]	—	2	2
Senior executive officer	2	—	1	2	—	1
Higher executive officer	8	6	10	7	7	8
Executive officer	19	18	29	20	18	27
Administrative officer (CO)	44	36	26	42	34	26
Administrative assistant (CA)	16	6	5	13	6	5
Typographer	—	—	—	—	—	1
(Senior) personal secretary	4	5	5	3	5	4
Senior data processor	3	—	—	3	—	—
Data processor	15	—	—	13	—	—
Messenger	1	—	—	1	—	—
Grand total	133	103	116	125	100	109

The question asks about staff in the statistical divisions of the Department, and has been answered in those terms. This means that the staff figures do not correspond to those used in the 1980 Rayner review, quoted (for DTp and DOE combined) in the White Paper "Government Statistical Services" [Cmnd. 8236 of April 1981], which included some staff engaged on statistical work in other divisions in the Department.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Eighteen staff are presently employed in the Department of Transport's infomation division, press and public relations services.

Piper Alpha

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the reasons why assistance from a helicopter aboard the emergency support vessel Iolair was declined following the explosion on the Piper Alpha oil rig and as to how many minutes' flying time the Iolair helicopter was from the rig; if he will refer all the evidence available to his Department on this subject to the official inquiry investigating the disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The search and rescue operation in response to the Piper Alpha disaster was initiated and co-ordinated by HM Coastguard, Aberdeen.

Although the Iolair helicopter is a declared SAR resource, because of its equipment at night it has only a limited capability and is available to become airborne only after 60 minutes notice. At the time of the disaster Iolair was 20 minutes helicopter flying time away from Piper Alpha. For these reasons and because other more capable aircraft were available, this helicopter was not summoned by HM Coastguard.

The first helicopter arrived on scene within 10 minutes of the disaster but because of the intense heat was unable to get close enough to be able to assist in the recovery of survivors from either the platform or the sea. This applied to all helicopters which arrived thereafter. There was no shortage of aircraft and steps had to be taken to ensure flight safety, but on this occasion helicopters could be used only to transfer survivors from rescue ships into hospital.

In the small and congested area of airspace involved in any disaster an excess of helicopters can constitute a flight safety hazard and be detrimental to the conduct of SAR operations.

For this reason many offers of helicopter assistance made after the initiation of SAR operations had to be declined because of airspace congestion. However, as far as is known, no specific offer of the Iolair aircraft was made to Aberdeen Coastguard.

Department of Transport records will be made available to the official inquiry as required.

Railway Stations (Staffing)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many railway stations have become unstaffed in the last five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a management matter for the British Railways Board.

London Assessment Studies

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any recent communication from the Association of London Authorities about the London assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I received yesterday afternoon a letter from the chair of the ALA Planning and Transport Committee, copies of which had been issued widely.

The letter appears to be based on a number of misconceptions about the nature and content of the consultants' reports and does not reflect the discussions which have been held with the boroughs in each of the four study areas.

The reports, copies of which are available in the Library, contain a wide range of options including better management of existing facilities and major investment in public transport as well as road investment—which the letter greatly exaggerates.

I discussed the term of reference for this stage of the studies with the chair of the ALA Planning and Transport Committee last year and offered to meet him at any time if he was concerned at the way the studies were being conducted.

I am writing to him again to renew my invitation so that we can clear up any misconceptions about the studies and the way they are to be continued.

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations have been held with the boroughs and associations involved in the London assessment studies about the consultant's progress reports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport has chaired fruitful meetings with the authorities and the consultants involved in each of the four studies to discuss the consultants reports which were circulated beforehand.

The Department also meets the LBA, ALA and others concerned on a regular basis to discuss topics common to all four studies. The most recent meeting was held yesterday.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Ministry currently has approximately 1,250 work stations in use, giving an overall ratio of one work station to eight civil servants. The Ministry's IT strategy plan for the next five years indicates that the number of work stations in use will grow to around 4,500 giving a ratio of 1:2.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry's senior information technology strategy committee consists of eight grade 3 officers providing a cross-section of the various business interests. The Central Computers and Telecommunications Agency is also represented and the committee is chaired by a member of the Ministry's management board. It has not been necessary for Ministers to attend personally any of the committee's meetings during the last year.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Ministry arranges comprehensive senior management training for all staff entering grade 3 level or above including appropriate attention to information technology awareness. During the last 12 months three officers have received such training.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Ward: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that all milk produced by cows treated with bovine somatotropin during the trial period is clearly marked as such at the point of sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Before field trials of veterinary medicines may be undertaken they must be authorised by means of an animal test certificate issued under the Medicines Act 1968. Certificates are issued only after a thorough evaluation of the data available relating to safety of the product. The Veterinary Products Committee, an independent committee of experts in veterinary and human health established under the Medicines Act, considered the evidence and advised that it was satisfied that the trials should proceed. Had there been any doubts the trials would not have been authorised.

As there is no safety hazard from the milk from treated cows there is no reason to impose any conditions on the disposal of milk from the trials.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The total spending by my Department in 1987-88 as shown in Minim was as follows:

	£
Press liaison and information policy	700,000
Advertising	655,000

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figures for estimated spending by my Department in 1988-89 are as follows:

	£
(a) Television advertising	Nil
(b) Radio advertising	Nil
(c) Newspaper advertising (in the trade press only)	30,000
(d) Other promotional material	775,000

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figure for estimated spending by my Department on press liaison and information policy during 1988-89 as shown in Minim is £600,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of staff presently employed in my Department's press liaison and information policy section is 20.

Farmers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will specify the number of farmers engaged in *(a)* lamb, *(b)* beef and *(c)* cereal production in each of the English regions, and in England as a whole during each year since 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 20 July 1988]:* I regret that information in precisely the form requested is not available. The tables, however, give results from the agricultural census for England at June each year for holdings with sheep and lambs, beef cattle and calves, and cereals.

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Number of holdings with sheep and lambs									
Northern	13,279	12,963	12,847	13,010	13,108	13,112	13,285	13,554	13,718
Midlands and Western	12,564	12,187	12,239	12,432	12,702	12,769	12,887	13,330	13,691
Eastern	3,182	3,063	3,027	3,113	3,224	3,269	3,338	3,436	3,596
South Eastern	4,030	3,992	4,143	4,332	4,505	4,657	4,877	5,055	5,248
South Western	11,032	10,889	10,941	11,041	11,205	11,347	11,490	11,784	12,138
All England	44,087	43,094	43,197	43,928	44,744	45,154	45,877	47,159	48,391
Number of holdings with beef cattle and calves									
Northern	21,364	20,348	19,944	19,849	19,655	19,389	18,965	18,687	18,299
Midlands and Western	28,180	26,426	25,966	25,579	25,665	25,427	24,767	24,268	23,773
Eastern	10,196	9,757	9,361	9,186	9,096	8,950	8,591	8,182	7,909
South Eastern	10,129	9,758	9,529	9,485	9,419	9,384	9,163	8,831	8,576
South Western	26,657	25,384	25,117	25,040	24,737	24,431	23,855	23,351	23,164
All England	96,526	91,673	89,917	89,319	88,572	87,581	85,341	83,319	81,721
Number of holdings with cereals									
Northern	14,204	13,862	13,563	13,348	12,905	12,885	12,853	12,532	12,295
Midlands and Western	16,049	15,725	15,374	15,085	14,592	14,525	14,538	14,283	14,105
Eastern	20,960	19,925	19,747	19,465	19,237	18,873	18,603	18,240	18,031
South Eastern	7,611	7,500	7,327	7,200	7,067	7,099	7,012	6,863	6,722
South Western	12,980	12,679	12,394	12,014	11,371	11,484	11,606	11,361	11,167
All England	71,804	69,691	68,405	67,112	65,172	64,866	64,612	63,279	62,320

Source: June agricultural censuses for England 1979 to 1987.
Note: The figures for 1979 are not directly comparable with those for later years because of changes in census coverage.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many full-time jobs in agriculture have been lost, by county, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 12 July 1988, c. 133-34]:* Information from the June agricultural censuses in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on the numbers of full-time farmers, partners and directors, family workers, hired workers and salaried managers working on agricultural holdings is set out in the tables. These figures reflect the levels of employment at June in each year. A comparison between the figures for any two years does not, however, measure the change in the number of full-time jobs, as information on the number of vacancies is not recorded.

Table 1
Numbers of regular whole-time hired workers engaged in agriculture in England 1982-87

County	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Cleveland	300	285	266	262	232	216
Cumbria	1,928	1,948	1,854	1,801	1,603	1,481
Durham	1,009	953	875	849	760	657
Northumberland	2,013	2,008	1,898	1,822	1,719	1,585
Tyne and Wear	267	237	231	226	181	170
Humberside	4,314	4,298	4,161	3,988	3,814	3,672
North Yorkshire—(Northallerton)	4,334	1,498	4,153	4,025	3,786	3,708
North Yorkshire—(Beverley)	1,051	1,001	960	890	825	891
South Yorkshire	690	654	634	604	602	574
West Yorkshire	1,224	1,213	1,176	1,136	997	1,111
Derbyshire	1,158	1,093	1,041	990	917	900
Leicestershire	1,779	1,765	1,638	1,589	1,469	1,391
Lincolnshire	8,515	8,372	7,976	7,583	7,155	6,763
Northamptonshire	1,556	1,485	1,392	1,320	1,244	1,230
Nottinghamshire	1,802	1,748	1,644	1,770	1,626	1,554
Cambridgeshire	4,250	4,225	4,025	3,859	3,523	3,361
Norfolk	7,915	7,593	7,309	6,985	6,566	6,148
Suffolk	5,089	4,975	4,740	4,694	4,420	4,153
Bedfordshire	1,426	1,403	1,302	1,238	1,156	1,090
Berkshire	1,274	1,258	1,227	1,155	1,117	1,073
Buckinghamshire	1,488	1,518	1,427	1,366	1,308	1,194
East Sussex	1,476	1,427	1,340	1,281	1,126	1,100

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Essex	4,242	4,143	3,924	3,846	3,624	3,326
Greater London (East)	236	228	224	275	249	243
Greater London (South East)	438	422	425	319	295	260
Hampshire	3,957	3,772	3,726	3,585	3,442	3,398
Hertfordshire	1,725	1,675	1,561	1,370	1,273	1,140
Isle of Wight	420	389	368	346	333	309
Kent	5,393	5,431	5,327	5,079	4,781	4,575
Oxfordshire	2,482	2,485	2,389	2,318	2,091	1,952
Surrey	2,129	2,111	2,101	1,991	1,822	1,634
West Sussex	3,953	3,706	3,733	3,683	3,301	2,754
Avon	1,354	1,323	1,242	1,148	1,098	1,060
Cornwall	2,048	2,046	1,925	1,875	1,697	1,647
Devon	3,573	3,504	3,313	3,169	2,869	2,737
Dorset	2,578	2,562	2,412	2,336	2,192	2,052
Gloucestershire	2,174	2,194	2,139	2,041	1,853	1,754
Isles of Scilly	17	13	15	16	15	14
Somerset	2,981	2,979	2,806	2,659	2,508	2,396
Wiltshire	3,317	3,269	3,101	3,006	2,763	2,551
Hereford and Worcester	3,857	3,714	3,519	3,467	3,165	2,992
Shropshire	3,034	2,986	2,934	2,823	2,498	2,393
Staffordshire	1,959	2,019	1,862	1,776	1,616	1,548
Warwickshire	1,532	1,568	1,509	1,512	1,355	1,330
West Midlands	265	256	255	234	215	220
Cheshire	2,719	2,787	2,564	2,473	2,358	2,219
Greater Manchester	526	526	507	478	469	413
Lancashire	2,410	2,452	2,417	2,346	2,255	2,226
Merseyside	422	399	415	386	333	320
England	114,599	109,916	107,982	103,990	96,616	91,485

Numbers of salaried managers engaged in agriculture in England 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cleveland	28	26	30	32	31	27
Cumbria	76	78	79	83	85	83
Durham	34	31	33	33	32	31
Northumberland	82	81	80	92	85	80
Tyne and Wear	3	4	3	10	9	8
Humberside	195	200	198	223	233	234
North Yorkshire-(North Allerton)	223	210	224	233	234	224
North Yorkshire-(Beverley)	57	58	51	93	93	62
South Yorkshire	26	26	23	27	32	31
West Yorkshire	68	62	66	57	62	71
Derbyshire	52	44	47	50	52	50
Leicestershire	83	84	100	104	92	108
Lincolnshire	466	469	462	479	481	447
Northamptonshire	102	107	108	114	111	121
Nottinghamshire	94	96	101	135	120	121
Cambridgeshire	240	244	259	262	254	244
Norfolk	316	317	343	369	365	368
Suffolk	307	300	299	320	312	314
Bedfordshire	73	68	71	84	88	90
Berkshire	117	117	119	126	110	109
Buckinghamshire	154	156	151	155	150	154
East Sussex	131	135	130	133	129	124
Essex	291	286	255	276	274	189
Greater London (East)	23	19	20	20	26	22
Greater London (South East)	40	43	44	34	37	29
Hampshire	357	339	340	347	345	349
Hertfordshire	167	152	148	136	138	141
Isle of Wight	26	20	20	22	22	19
Kent	363	379	371	388	433	376
Oxfordshire	178	183	174	196	196	198
Surrey	206	201	197	197	187	192
West Sussex	284	271	279	300	303	283
Avon	58	67	104	108	107	113
Cornwall	65	69	67	63	69	68
Devon	152	142	142	166	168	151
Dorset	164	162	158	155	161	149
Gloucestershire	174	169	170	190	187	180
Isles of Scilly	1	1	1	1	1	2
Somerset	141	130	143	146	154	142
Wiltshire	235	224	229	244	261	249
Hereford and Worcester	259	253	229	243	257	247
Shropshire	122	117	125	123	123	121
Staffordshire	68	75	75	89	76	79
Warwickshire	96	94	99	109	101	120

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
West Midlands	13	11	14	13	15	14
Cheshire	143	153	151	148	149	159
Greater Manchester	15	20	20	22	19	18
Lancashire	112	115	112	134	135	137
Merseyside	17	18	18	16	16	18
England	6,697	6,626	6,682	7,100	7,120	6,966

Table 3

Numbers of whole-time farmers, partners and directors engaged in agriculture in England 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cleveland	455	452	444	442	439	430
Cumbria	6,400	6,383	6,294	6,241	6,190	6,141
Durham	2102	2,097	2,097	2,061	2,036	2,029
Northumberland	2,320	2,356	2,332	2,351	2,328	2,323
Tyne and Wear	287	289	283	274	260	246
Humberside	3,767	3,740	3,728	3,663	3,636	3,521
North Yorkshire—(North Allerton)	7,841	7,782	7,790	7679	7,669	7,508
North Yorkshire—(Beverley)	921	927	945	921	908	892
South Yorkshire	1,300	1,304	1,301	1,292	1,287	1,270
West Yorkshire	2,256	2,233	2,228	2,232	2,202	2,222
Derbyshire	3,301	3,300	3,271	3,221	3,219	3,150
Leicestershire	2,624	2,573	2,573	2,554	2,499	2,473
Lincolnshire	5,966	5,845	5,873	5,737	5,713	5,642
Northamptonshire	1,741	1,720	1,744	1,715	1,695	1,663
Nottinghamshire	1,967	1,939	1,925	1,887	1,881	1,863
Cambridgeshire	3,680	3,638	3,604	3,566	3,494	3,418
Norfolk	4,603	4,517	4,502	4,417	4,378	4,271
Suffolk	3,356	3,281	3,241	3,210	3,187	3,112
Bedfordshire	1,179	1,216	1,222	1,245	1,209	1,190
Berkshire	622	627	606	606	596	596
Buckinghamshire	1,503	1,529	1,530	1,487	1,439	1,411
East Sussex	1,612	1,592	1,568	1,571	1,533	1,500
Essex	3,201	3,135	3,151	3,091	3,059	3,023
Greater London (East)	128	135	139	131	125	125
Greater London (South East)	260	254	265	281	241	236
Hampshire	2,306	2,285	2,291	2,247	2,241	2,183
Hertfordshire	1,074	1,054	1,072	1,031	993	988
Isle of Wight	376	383	394	394	399	407
Kent	3,299	3,297	3,282	3,160	3,120	3,030
Oxfordshire	1,775	1,785	1,769	1,720	1,710	1,691
Surrey	1,106	1,066	1,086	1,052	1,052	1,023
West Sussex	1,596	1,560	1,582	1,523	1,506	1,510
Avon	1,756	1,737	1,752	1,723	1,686	1,665
Cornwall	5,857	5,802	5,841	5,711	5,649	5,516
Devon	9,520	9,531	9,502	9,437	9,297	9,169
Dorset	2,442	2,433	2,464	2,367	2,317	2,318
Gloucestershire	2,553	2,534	2,471	2,566	2,495	2,479
Isles of Scilly	59	57	56	55	57	53
Somerset	4,867	4818	4,862	4,809	4,728	4,691
Wiltshire	2,578	2,538	2,532	2,509	2,481	2,408
Hereford and Worcester	5,660	5,633	5,663	5,586	5,509	5,424
Shropshire	4,547	4,529	4,542	4,482	4,396	4,333
Staffordshire	4,033	4,003	4,000	3,939	3,890	3,810
Warwickshire	2,048	2,007	2,027	1,999	2,002	1,965
West Midlands	403	398	398	392	391	389
Cheshire	4,014	3,938	3,959	3,852	3,810	3,769
Greater Manchester	1,306	1,274	1,309	1,268	1,237	1,228
Lancashire	5,490	5,368	5,359	5,230	5,201	5,114
Merseyside	497	490	509	510	493	467
England	132,554	131,384	131,478	129,437	127,883	125,885

Numbers of whole-time family workers engaged in agriculture in England 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cleveland	71	64	65	70	84	80
Cumbria	1,013	985	1,052	1,089	1,124	1,139
Durham	295	302	315	324	333	332
Northumberland	363	375	370	385	379	379
Tyne and Wear	48	38	42	49	57	47
Humberside	586	571	595	614	681	646
North Yorkshire—(Northallerton)	1,153	1,152	1,153	1,249	1,360	1,271
North Yorkshire—(Beverley)	164	156	138	149	152	131
South Yorkshire	196	214	198	206	227	248
West Yorkshire	402	351	360	396	469	405

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Derbyshire	499	510	496	546	557	579
Leicestershire	372	389	419	438	459	447
Lincolnshire	770	779	742	831	935	922
Northamptonshire	277	260	275	279	286	270
Nottinghamshire	329	313	332	350	401	362
Cambridgeshire	511	531	469	501	535	533
Norfolk	559	540	579	648	705	640
Suffolk	460	427	419	419	475	489
Bedfordshire	176	172	183	194	202	172
Berkshire	100	98	95	97	120	121
Buckinghamshire	234	231	216	206	280	289
East Sussex	236	230	223	226	247	226
Essex	443	436	441	417	510	516
Greater London (East)	20	24	24	26	18	18
Greater London (South-East)	52	63	63	71	61	58
Hampshire	327	339	322	369	376	370
Hertfordshire	167	182	165	171	214	216
Isle of Wight	62	57	56	65	73	70
Kent	503	441	470	493	516	530
Oxfordshire	231	239	239	246	280	245
Surrey	167	185	193	186	198	266
West Sussex	184	185	195	192	249	251
Avon	297	289	272	301	310	279
Cornwall	838	814	813	817	911	844
Devon	1,456	1,399	1,434	1,484	1,516	1,438
Dorset	350	352	385	424	463	454
Gloucestershire	367	394	370	390	442	451
Isles of Scilly	7	4	5	5	7	9
Somerset	742	733	749	764	865	823
Wiltshire	398	410	432	433	505	501
Hereford and Worcester	728	689	752	788	859	836
Shropshire	703	714	710	746	859	785
Staffordshire	648	597	635	672	655	659
Warwickshire	312	324	340	295	350	310
West Midlands	54	58	72	77	74	72
Cheshire	668	679	712	734	781	775
Greater Manchester	245	233	236	229	215	229
Lancashire	946	935	940	977	1,023	967
Merseyside	89	90	87	97	99	93
England	19,818	19,553	19,848	20,735	22,497	21,793

Table 5

Numbers of regular whole-time workers engaged in agriculture in Wales 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Clwyd	1,017	1,020	827	745	726	695
Dyfed	1,653	1,388	1,332	1,247	1,151	1,061
Gwent	422	413	394	349	325	298
Gwynedd	592	591	546	547	516	471
Mid Glamorgan	126	114	112	115	96	88
Powys	765	807	717	724	655	600
South Glamorgan	171	191	221	227	193	192
West Glamorgan	92	97	96	89	79	77
Wales	4,838	4,621	4,245	4,043	3,741	3,482

Table 6

Numbers of salaried managers engaged in agriculture in Wales 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Clwyd	81	79	54	56	60	57
Dyfed	59	61	68	73	80	72
Gwent	23	24	31	29	32	33
Gwynedd	57	51	46	45	48	49
Mid Glamorgan	5	6	5	7	9	10
Powys	25	26	36	35	39	42
South Glamorgan	10	16	18	18	18	18
West Glamorgan	12	10	9	9	8	8
Wales	272	273	267	272	294	289

Table 7
Numbers of whole-time farmers, partners and directors engaged in agriculture in Wales 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Clwyd	3,250	3,154	3,330	3,215	3,197	3,094
Dyfed	9,256	8,972	9,505	9,166	9,129	8,847
Gwent	1,708	1,648	1,741	1,678	1,685	1,615
Gwynedd	3,591	3,444	3,763	3,608	3,544	3,433
Mid Glamorgan	704	702	754	721	745	687
Powys	5,012	4,866	5,147	4,995	5,034	4,829
South Glamorgan	462	450	443	438	418	409
West Glamorgan	634	627	676	640	651	632
Wales	24,617	23,863	25,359	24,461	24,403	23,546

Table 8
Numbers of whole-time family workers engaged in agriculture in Wales 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Clwyd	498	486	454	515	499	467
Dyfed	1,244	1,264	1,154	1,256	1,309	1,273
Gwent	228	241	228	243	260	246
Gwynedd	474	448	443	446	479	478
Mid Glamorgan	80	75	74	73	68	78
Powys	703	683	642	673	704	690
South Glamorgan	75	68	61	63	69	69
West Glamorgan	94	65	47	56	76	82
Wales	3,396	3,330	3,103	3,325	3,464	3,383

Table 9
Number of regular whole-time workers engaged in agriculture in Northern Ireland 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Antrim	538	548	506	455	464	434
Armagh	256	236	246	232	218	226
Down	716	699	671	623	572	601
Fermanagh	169	178	147	164	136	132
Londonderry	381	337	315	318	318	297
Tyrone	409	419	411	383	372	376
Northern Ireland	2,469	2,417	2,296	2,175	2,080	2,066

Table 10
Number of whole-time farmers, partners and directors engaged in agriculture in Northern Ireland 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Antrim	5,140	5,091	5,060	4,912	4,876	4,828
Armagh	3,274	3,217	3,198	3,112	3,096	3,060
Down	5,284	5,209	5,169	5,054	4,990	4,905
Fermanagh	3,051	3,011	3,014	2,919	2,888	2,802
Londonderry	3,618	3,510	3,534	3,455	3,443	3,357
Tyrone	5,956	5,979	5,950	5,872	5,789	5,631
Northern Ireland	26,323	26,017	25,925	25,324	25,082	24,583

Table 11
Numbers of whole-time family workers engaged in agriculture in Northern Ireland 1982-87

County	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Antrim	921	903	894	903	841	816
Armagh	540	515	473	467	459	474
Down	952	913	892	836	817	732
Fermanagh	509	471	448	420	368	400
Londonderry	626	617	615	575	499	494
Tyrone	1,060	1,003	978	886	918	841
Northern Ireland	4,608	4,422	4,300	4,087	3,902	3,757

Note: Data on the number of salaried managers in Northern Ireland are not collected.

Table 12
Numbers of regular whole-time hired workers engaged in agriculture in Scotland 1982-87

Region	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Highlands and Islands	1,480	1,485	1,422	1,394	1,261	1,177
Grampian	3,930	3,869	3,633	3,536	3,305	3,035
Tayside	3,076	2,946	2,836	2,717	2,512	2,344

Region	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Fife	1,279	1,242	1,165	1,205	1,059	1,039
Lothian	1,677	1,583	1,373	1,421	1,242	1,182
Borders	2,169	2,133	2,057	1,977	1,825	1,727
Central	591	549	517	501	445	435
Strathclyde	2,624	2,624	2,561	2,434	2,267	2,176
Dumfries and Galloway	2,738	2,669	2,597	2,506	2,362	2,197
Scotland	19,564	19,100	18,161	17,691	16,278	15,312

Table 13

Numbers of regular whole-time family workers engaged in agriculture in Scotland 1982-87

Region	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Highland and Islands	896	838	814	796	756	705
Grampian	1,501	1,485	1,464	1,405	1,368	1,316
Tayside	726	724	705	726	679	682
Fife	332	355	340	342	324	304
Lothian	286	315	319	291	307	280
Borders	482	494	492	491	498	480
Central	298	314	319	320	315	303
Strathclyde	1,859	1,878	1,852	1,843	1,810	1,792
Dumfries and Galloway	1,072	1,107	1,104	1,115	1,097	1,071
Scotland	7,452	7,510	7,409	7,329	7,154	6,933

Table 14

Numbers of occupiers engaged in agriculture in Scotland 1982-87

Region	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Highland and Islands	2,304	2,351	2,312	2,336	2,294	2,259
Grampian	3,286	3,199	3,161	3,128	3,036	3,046
Tayside	1,434	1,426	1,388	1,417	1,365	1,406
Fife	546	538	525	522	500	516
Lothian	517	510	488	475	478	475
Borders	792	773	786	798	783	809
Central	522	522	524	520	509	504
Strathclyde	3,091	3,024	2,974	3,020	2,931	2,888
Dumfries and Galloway	1,721	1,711	1,665	1,668	1,638	1,650
Scotland	14,213	14,054	13,823	13,884	13,534	13,553

Notes: (i) Occupiers only include the principal farmer partner or director.
Data on the number of salaried managers in Scotland are not collected.

SCOTLAND

Sheriffs' Courts

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of, and how many, defendants who have pleaded not guilty to offences tried in the sheriffs' courts were convicted in the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Persons proceeded against for crimes and offences in sheriffs[1] courts, Scotland

	1985	1986	1987
Persons pleading not guilty	26,267	27,402	23,802
Persons pleading not guilty but against whom a charge was proved	14,335	14,960	11,558
Percentage	54·6	54·6	48·6

Supply Estimates (Class XVI, Vote 14)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what he estimates will be the reduction in the number of research projects funded by his Department resulting from the provisional reduction in research expenditure for 1988-89, class XVI, vote 14.01.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Planned expenditure on health research projects funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department in 1988-89 has not been reduced compared with 1987-88. The provisional figure for expenditure outturn for 1987-88 was £4·764 million, and £4·795 million has been provided for 1988-89.

Skiing

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's level of support for skiing.

Mr. Lang: It is the Government's policy to encourage ski development where this is consistent with planning requirements and to provide assistance to viable proposals. Over the past five years the Government, through their various agencies, has provided support of over £1·2 million.

Care and Protection

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number of people who have been removed from their houses under section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948 and under the National Assistance (Amendment) Act 1951 for the years 1982 to 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Prisoners

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of visits made to prisoners serving sentence, and the average number of sentenced prisoners held, during each of the last six months at each of the following prisons: *(a)* Peterhead, *(b)* Shotts, *(c)* Glenochil, *(d)* Perth and *(e)* Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the tables for the latest six-month periods for which figures are available.

Table 1—Total number of visits made to sentenced prisoners

	Peterhead	*Shotts*	*Glenochil*[1]	*Perth*	*Edinburgh*
January 1988	94	807	1,169	780	676
February 1988	111	850	1,236	863	646
March 1988	133	847	1,202	980	667
April 1988	102	907	1,209	876	709
May 1988	153	878	649	690	648
June 1988	160	1,079	638	830	630

[1] Prior to serious disturbances at Glenochil prison in April 1988 the number of visits allowed to prisoners was substantially in excess of the normal entitlement.

Table 2—Total number of sentenced prisoners held

	Peterhead	*Shotts*	*Glenochil*	*Perth*	*Edinburgh*
December 1987	130	341	441	418	496
January 1988	125	346	444	411	498
February 1988	120	356	460	420	512
March 1988	119	360	457	433	510
April 1988	111	365	455	414	479
May 1988	119	386	445	373	471

AIDS

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information on HIV infection and AIDS is made available to prisoners and young offenders in Scottish institutions; and what services for help and advice are available to them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A range of information on HIV infections and AIDS is generally available in the form of leaflets, posters, videos and talks by specialists. More specific help and advice is available for those who request or need it, from prison medical officers, from nursing staff who are increasingly being trained in appropriate counselling methods, from social workers and from a number of outside agencies which are involved in providing such services within penal establishments.

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for how long it is normal practice in Scottish prisons to confine prisoners to their cells every day; for what offences confinement for 23 hours is carried out as a punishment; and if any prisoners in Scottish prisons are currently undergoing such punishment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not normal practice in Scottish prisons to confine prisoners to their cells every day. Rule 55(3) of the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1952 provides that as far as practicable, arrangements shall be made for prisoners to work for at least eight hours outside their cells in association with other prisoners. Rule 100(1) further provides that all prisoners not employed on outside work shall take exercise daily for one hour, in the open air except in inclement weather. The above periods are additional to whatever periods of association—for example, at recreation, mealtimes, visits etc—a prisoner may be allowed as a privilege.

Cellular confinement for a period not exceeding three days is one of the range of punishments laid down in rule 43 of the same rules which may be awarded by a governor to a prisoner found guilty of any of the offences laid down in rule 42. No prisoners in Scottish prisons are currently undergoing such punishment, although at any one time a very small number of Scottish prisoners may effectively be confined to cell as a result of having been awarded a combination of punishments including exclusion from associated work and forfeiture of the privileges of association at other times of the day.

Prisoners (Glenochil Prison)

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why nine prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Glenochil, were placed in handcuffs at 6 am on Friday 11 December 1987 from which they were not released until their arrival in cells at Her Majesty's prison Peterhead; and why this was done without any information on where they were being taken.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The inmates were transferred to Peterhead in the interests of discipline and good order. They were given minimal advance notice of their transfer to reduce the possibility of disruption. The degree of security required by an inmate being transferred is a matter for the governor, who decided in this case that mechanical restraints were required. The inmates were informed at the time of transfer of their destination.

Abortion

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the numbers of legal abortions performed in Great Britain on women resident in each health board area in Scotland in 1987, the numbers of National Health Service abortions performed in Scotland on women resident in each health board area in 1987 and the estimated numbers of women aged 15 to 44 years resident in each health board area in Scotland in mid-1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table.

Health board of residence	*Abortions performed in Great Britain on Scottish residents*	*NHS abortions performed in Scotland on Scottish residents*	*Women aged 15 to 44 resident in Scotland*[1]
Argyll and Clyde	682	563	96,946
Ayrshire and Arran	585	494	81,380
Borders	144	137	20,985
Dumfries and Galloway	254	212	30,179
Fife	733	718	75,388
Forth Valley	514	453	60,348
Grampian	1,136	1,062	113,094
Greater Glasgow	1,900	1,611	206,958
Highland	415	400	43,281
Lanarkshire	896	726	128,138
Lothian	1,777	1,730	171,261
Tayside	958	937	83,912
Islands[2]	88	81	14,669
Scotland	10,082	9,124	1,126,539

[1] Mid-year estimate.
[2] Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles.

Waste Disposal

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has as to how many local authorities in Scotland which are responsible for domestic waste disposal services separate such domestic waste into *(a)* glass, *(b)* metal, *(c)* plastic and *(d)* papers for recycling purposes;

(2) what information he has as to what proportion of the total number of local authorities responsible for domestic waste disposal in Scotland separate all or part of their domestic waste into different categories for recycling purposes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland the authorities responsible for collection and disposal of household waste are the 53 district and three islands councils. Forty-three authorities, just over three-quarters, last year undertook some separation of waste into one or more components for recycling. Thirty-seven authorities separated out glass, 10 separated out metal and 28 separated out paper. Information is not held centrally on whether these components originated from domestic or commercial waste streams nor on whether there is any separation of plastic.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers on hospital waiting lists by area and speciality for each year since 1974 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested for the years 1974 to 1977 is contained in Scottish Health Statistics (table 6.3 for 1974 and 1975; table 6.2 for 1976 and 1977) copies of which are in the Library of the House. I have arranged for the information for 1978 and later years to be placed in the Library of the House.

Health Boards (Staff)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each health board area the number of whole-time employed staff and number of hours worked of *(a)* hospital nurses, *(b)* midwives, *(c)* health visitors, *(d)* district nurses, *(e)* ancillary staff, *(f)* ambulance personnel and *(g)* adminstrative and clerical staff for each year from 1974 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No information is held centrally about actual numbers of hours worked by health board staff. Information about whole-time employed staff could be provided for each heallh board for the time period specified only at disproportionate cost. Information about whole-time employed staff in the country as a whole, along with whole-time equivalent staff numbers for each health board is to be found in Scottish Health Statistics, published annually by information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency in Scotland, copies of which are available in the Library.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* TV advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Rifkind: The planned expenditure of £3·1 million relates to a number of campaigns the detailed planning of which as is usual at this time of year is not yet complete, and it follows that no breakdown of the expenditure by media is possible.

Housing

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he will be making to the report of the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland on "Housing Standards for the 1990s—The Need for a Change in the Tolerable Standard," a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In May, my right hon. and learned Friend issued the consultation paper "Private Housing Renewal: the Government's Proposals for Scotland", which details proposals for the reform of the home improvement system, including a revision of the statutory tolerable standard. The institute's report will be taken into account in the Government's response to comments on the consultation paper.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people in employment in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between January 1987 and June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: Monthly estimates are not available. The table gives quarterly estimates of the civilian work force in employment, which comprises employees in employment, the self-employed, and participants[1] on work-related Government training programmes. These figures are available only for Scotland as a whole.

The civilian work force in employment

Scotland		*Thousands*
	Unadjusted for seasonal variation	[1] *Seasonally adjusted*
1986		
December	2,101	2,101
1987		
March	2,089	2,103
June	2,113	2,107
September	2,115	2,107
December	2,113	2,113
1988		
March	2,109	2,122

[1] The estimates of participants on work-related Government training programmes are not seasonally adjusted.

The latest estimates of the numbers of employees in employment in each travel-to-work area come from the 1984 census of employment: some results are given in the December 1987 "Scottish Economic Bulletin", which is available in the Library of the House. The latest estimates of self-employment by area within Scotland come from the 1981 census of population. The numbers of participants on work-related Government training programmes are not collected for individual travel-to-work areas.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the estimated total number of self-employed people in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between January 1987 and June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The only available estimates relate to Scotland and are as follows:

Self-employment in Scotland

	Thousands
1986	
December	200
1987	
March	197
June	194
September	196
December	198
1988	
March	200

These estimates are prepared by the Department of Employment on the basis of the 1981 census of population updated by the labour force surveys. The figures for June each year only are regularly published, and figures for other quarters are estimated by interpolation and projection: all figures are subject to sampling errors. The figures cannot be reliably broken down between travel-to-work areas.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds registered as unemployed in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between January 1987 and June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is available on a quarterly basis only.

The total number of unemployed claimants aged 16 and 17 in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each quarterly period between January 1987 and June 1988 inclusive is shown in the table.

Unemployed claimants Aged 16 and 17

Travel to work area	*January 1987*	*April 1987*	*July 1987*	*October 1987*	*January 1988*	*April 1988*
Aberdeen	921	894	793	840	871	703
Alloa	236	165	142	152	190	123
Annan	119	87	69	62	84	55
Arbroath	174	141	110	118	116	86
Ayr	561	440	361	401	375	326
Badenoch	32	19	12	20	25	17
Banff	90	79	77	80	82	56
Bathgate	866	702	590	650	678	527
Berwickshire	59	43	41	28	42	37
Blairgowrie and Pitlochry	108	81	59	70	89	57
Brechin and Montrose	211	195	132	151	127	108
Buckie	51	42	27	35	45	35
Campbeltown	47	41	39	43	47	35
Crieff	30	17	12	17	21	22
Cumnock and Sanquhar	437	348	308	332	327	242
Dumbarton	470	477	376	427	436	344
Dumfries	233	206	161	177	197	179
Dundee	1,026	802	630	770	750	575
Dunfermline	714	497	464	549	594	425
Dunoon and Bute	90	76	63	78	111	74
Edinburgh	2,212	1,998	1,715	2,014	2,045	1,660
Elgin	140	122	98	88	89	79
Falkirk	831	610	530	557	585	415
Forfar	122	99	79	67	68	62
Forres	52	36	30	27	41	34
Fraserburgh	55	50	41	38	42	35
Galashiels	108	83	64	76	80	48

Travel to work area	January 1987	April 1987	July 1987	October 1987	January 1988	April 1988
Girvan	81	56	46	51	64	51
Glasgow	9,394	7,943	6,601	7,545	7,685	6,303
Greenock	725	497	404	515	587	404
Haddington	110	89	65	83	93	72
Hawick	62	45	43	45	46	53
Huntly	24	21	24	22	27	14
Invergordon and Dingwall	190	163	120	143	137	115
Inverness	338	277	220	279	309	248
Irvine	1,002	804	712	730	760	599
Islay/Mid Argyll	58	38	25	36	49	35
Keith	52	46	32	36	55	36
Kelso and Jedburgh	32	37	36	30	23	33
Kilmarnock	478	384	323	382	382	348
Kirkcaldy	890	603	566	622	693	509
Lanarkshire	3,498	2,988	2,256	2,531	2,587	2,004
Lochaber	134	100	49	60	99	65
Lockerbie	52	40	32	34	40	33
Newton Stewart	53	35	34	39	40	35
North East Fife	141	87	65	82	85	68
Oban	86	57	36	53	79	38
Orkney Islands	47	32	24	27	41	28
Peebles	35	19	22	24	17	12
Perth	270	215	170	196	199	176
Peterhead	127	90	81	65	101	79
Shetland Islands	44	40	29	32	40	37
Skye and Wester Ross	61	44	27	47	66	42
Stewartry	77	72	68	57	70	45
Stirling	422	330	280	300	270	189
Stranraer	123	92	63	78	89	77
Sutherland	44	39	23	27	41	23
Thurso	34	18	25	22	17	19
Western Isles	150	112	93	82	83	73
Wick	39	21	23	15	14	15
Scotland	28,868	23,784	19,640	22,157	23,045	18,237

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were registered as unemployed in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between December 1987 and June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The total number of unemployed claimants in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between December 1987 and June 1988 inclusive is shown in the table.

Unemployed claimants (not adjusted for seasonal factors)

Travel-to-work area	December 1987	January 1988	February 1988	March 1988	April 1988	May 1988	June 1988
Aberdeen	12,021	12,624	12,426	12,020	11,349	10,832	10,491
Alloa	3,202	3,329	3,171	3,058	2,971	2,840	2,738
Annan	1,031	1,221	1,179	1,103	1,059	975	941
Arbroath	1,612	1,656	1,565	1,520	1,535	1,510	1,460
Ayr	6,061	6,275	6,147	5,911	5,780	5,423	5,179
Badenoch	656	670	579	514	463	468	399
Banff	945	1,042	1,038	1,003	928	855	845
Bathgate	8,042	8,476	8,182	7,813	7,671	7,280	6,954
Berwickshire	633	710	784	754	687	646	607
Blairgowrie and Pitlochry	1,421	1,457	1,383	1,315	1,103	1,061	1,005
Brechin and Montrose	1,657	1,725	1,777	1,697	1,671	1,516	1,448
Buckie	626	664	694	673	607	563	515
Campbeltown	763	804	763	713	707	644	596
Crieff	462	495	490	467	432	413	377
Cumnock and Sanquhar	4,240	4,323	4,264	4,195	4,031	3,867	3,798
Dumbarton	5,388	5,543	5,335	5,146	5,010	4,906	4,715
Dumfries	2,203	2,242	2,161	2,185	2,157	2,072	2,043
Dundee	13,978	14,198	13,766	13,330	13,027	12,752	12,616
Dunfermline	7,475	7,617	7,420	7,197	7,225	6,931	6,714
Dunoon and Bute	1,495	1,521	1,488	1,410	1,268	1,204	1,171
Edinburgh	32,861	33,706	32,890	31,759	31,074	29,887	29,200
Elgin	1,727	1,849	1,845	1,786	1,784	1,717	1,600
Falkirk	9,392	9,579	8,993	8,820	8,478	8,143	7,969
Forfar	1,126	1,202	1,164	1,102	1,116	1,055	966
Forres	647	691	682	649	652	643	610
Fraserburgh	750	807	810	789	765	700	683
Galashiels	1,066	1,113	1,072	1,026	700	677	637
Girvan	827	887	829	763	734	695	652
Glasgow	101,687	103,430	101,523	99,322	97,865	94,767	93,413
Greenock	9,168	9,612	9,395	9,087	9,116	8,797	8,625
Haddington	1,191	1,257	1,273	1,251	1,185	1,153	1,112
Hawick	710	715	704	658	725	691	655

Travel-to-work area	December 1987	January 1988	February 1988	March 1988	April 1988	May 1988	June 1988
Huntly	388	391	376	361	317	320	330
Invergordon and Dingwall	2,933	3,089	2,982	3,056	3,074	2,843	2,388
Inverness	4,796	4,992	4,932	4,828	4,937	4,530	4,154
Irvine	10,503	10,892	10,504	10,234	9,980	9,445	9,246
Islay/Mid Argyll	636	669	684	636	567	511	488
Keith	663	731	712	659	596	568	536
Kelso and Jedburgh	456	464	426	414	452	457	403
Kilmarnock	5,032	5,187	5,056	4,850	4,723	4,578	4,492
Kirkcaldy	10,591	10,902	10,542	10,332	10,632	10,220	9,912
Lanarkshire	28,635	29,637	29,039	27,998	27,400	26,424	25,740
Lochaber	1,457	1,526	1,547	1,445	1,210	1,107	1,027
Lockerbie	521	551	532	506	455	416	388
Newton Stewart	651	676	654	637	613	538	527
North East Fife	1,855	1,873	1,852	1,831	1,708	1,586	1,512
Oban	1,157	1,197	1,189	1,105	894	793	732
Orkney Islands	871	906	862	848	806	786	756
Peebles	433	458	459	440	460	427	421
Perth	2,926	3,040	3,001	2,860	2,803	2,636	2,551
Peterhead	1,645	1,747	1,745	1,618	1,584	1,541	1,429
Shetland Islands	712	740	715	673	669	646	631
Skye and Wester Ross	1,178	1,230	1,195	1,134	952	853	763
Stewartry	842	998	942	891	818	773	754
Stirling	4,258	4,385	4,232	4,082	3,884	3,678	3,592
Stranraer	1,277	1,333	1,322	1,346	1,230	1,214	1,192
Sutherland	844	890	894	842	772	698	627
Thurso	774	785	816	791	803	734	717
Western Isles	2,093	2,149	2,169	2,036	2,050	2,037	1,989
Wick	817	829	831	835	820	779	761
SCOTLAND	324,007	333,707	326,002	316,324	309,084	296,821	288,792

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of people on training schemes in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between January 1987 and June 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

Table 1 gives the number of filled places for YTS and the community programme, and table 2 the number of starts on adult training schemes from January 1987 to June 1988 (inclusive). YTS figures for June 1988 are not yet available.

Statistics are not collected on a travel-to-work area basis.

Table 1
YTS and community programme filled places: Scotland

	YTS	Community programme
1987		
January	37,254	31,272
February	37,944	31,268
March	37,837	30,672
April	36,805	30,006
May	35,813	30,076
June	39,341	29,921
July	40,330	29,828
August	43,568	30,403
September	45,658	30,826
October	45,486	30,687
November	45,034	30,443
December	43,706	30,147
1988		
January	46,197	30,209
February	46,658	30,971
March	46,065	31,052
April	45,103	31,344
May	43,269	31,033
June	n/a	30,406

Table 2
Adult training starts: Scotland

1987	Number
January	4,930
February	6,055
March	5,441
April-June	10,316
July	3,425
August	3,558
September	4,467
October	6,253
November	5,237
December	3,157
1988	
January	5,729
February	7,022
March	5,860
April	4,433
May	4,802
June	3,404

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide statistics concerning the designation of the unemployment claimants leaving the register in Scotland and in each travel-to-work area for each month between January 1987 and June 1988 inclusive for *(a)* training schemes, *(b)* retirement, *(c)* transferring to other benefits and *(d)* jobs.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available.

Scottish Chess Association

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has reviewed his decision to remove the international travel grant from the Scottish Chess Association.

Mr. Rifkind: In the special circumstances applying this year I have decided to offer the Scottish Chess Association a grant towards the cost of sending competitors to the World Olympiad and to the World Junior Championship.

Mental Handicap and Mental Illness Hospitals

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the staffing of mental handicap and mental illness hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I congratulate health boards on making considerable improvements in recent years in the staffing of mental handicap and mental illness hospitals. Between 1979 and 1987 the number of nursing staff increased by 25 per cent. in both mental handicap and mental illness hospitals. Within those figures the number of qualified nurses increased even more—by 36 per cent. in mental handicap hospitals and 32 per cent. in mental illness hospitals. At the same time the number of patients being cared for in the hospitals decreased by 16 per cent.—some 3,400 people—in accordance with the Government's policy that, whenever possible and appropriate to the needs of the person concerned, support should be provided in the community in preference to admission to hospital or continued residence in hospital.

Despite these improvements in the ratio of nurses to patients, my right hon. and learned Friend has, however, been concerned to note some continued criticism of staffing standards, and has therefore considered available evidence on ways of assessing staffing requirements. Some work on this has been carried out in the mental handicap field. In 1985 the Scottish Home and Health Department recommended to health boards that, until such time as a more appropriate system had been devised for assessing nurse staffing requirements generally, they should use the Telford consultative approach to assess, for planning purposes, the nurse staffing requirements in mental handicap hospitals. I have placed in the Library of the House a report of the results of that exercise.

This shows that in 1986 there was a gap between the number of staff in posts and the estimated number of staff required following the application of the Telford approach. By February this year, however, the ratio of staff to patients had improved both because of the increase in the number of staff, and because of the decrease in the number of patients. It is not possible to judge what the estimated nursing requirement would now be, in terms of the Telford approach, because the results depend on a judgment on the nursing needs of individual patients which are of course likely to have changed since 1986, and because the estimated requirement may have been affected by other changes in staffing and working practices.

The Telford approach was used as a first step towards estimating nursing requirements. There is a need for further study of other methods, and for a review of all approaches currently available in the field of mental illness. In these two fields of mental handicap and mental illness it is also important to take account of the contribution of other professions such as occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers, and to consider multi-disciplinary ways of assessing staffing requirements. I have therefore asked the Scottish Home and Health Department to set further work in hand on other available methods, with a view to giving health boards further guidance in due course.

Meantime I commend the report of the Telford exercise to health boards for use as an interim local planning tool in relation to their mental handicap hospitals. They will wish to look closely at the staffing levels in those hospitals where the 1986 exercise showed the largest gaps between staff in post and estimated requirement. They will also wish to inquire further where the reports shows major variation between one hospital and another. In many cases they will be able to point to improvements in the ratio of staff to patients since 1986 but they will wish to consider the extent to which they can make further improvements within the resources available to them.

Finally, I am concerned that the figures collected in February this year show that the funded establishment for qualified nurses in the 16 mental handicap hospitals studied was 7 per cent. higher than the number in post. This suggests that health boards are finding difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of qualified mental handicap nurses, although they are largely able to fill the vacancies with nursing assistants. The Scottish Home and Health Department has recently discussed with boards target figures for intakes to all branches of nurse training. I am glad to say that these discussions showed general recognition that increased recruitment to both mental illness and mental handicap training was required.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 20 July 1988]:* At present there are about 1,300 computer work stations in the Scottish Office, excluding the minor departments and the Scottish prison service. This represents one work station for every five members of staff. This figure includes linked terminals and both linked and stand-alone microcomputers including those used for word processing but excludes portable text processors. Within the next five years the number of work stations may, on current evidence, rise to approximately 1,700—a ratio of one to every three staff.

Information Technology Strategy Committee

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The senior information technology committee in the Scottish Office is the standing committee on information technology services which is chaired by the deputy secretary, Central Services. Its membership comprises, in addition to a representative of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, the director of information technology in the Scottish Office and representatives from each Scottish Office user department, and from relevant central service interests including finance, manpower, office management, computer services, telecommunications and statistical services. The committee meets three times a year. Ministers do not attend meetings but are consulted as appropriate.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: At 1 July 1988 the number of staff in the information officer grades employed in the Scottish information office was 29.

Tourism

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the promotion of tourism in Scotland in the 1990s; and what are his strategic objectives for that period.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, in close co-operation with the travel trade, will continue to promote Scotland as a quality destination for holiday and business visitors in the United Kingdom and selected overseas markets. The strategy will focus on expanding the domestic market outside the main holiday season, increasing the size of the North American and European markets, and developing long-haul markets particularly Japan and Australia. Marketing plans will be reviewed annually to take account of changing market opportunities.

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people he estimates are employed in the Scottish tourist industry.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Financial year	*Outturn £ million*
1979-80	4·2
1980-81	5·2
1981-82	6·1
1982-83	7·1
1983-84	8·1
1984-85	10·0
1985-86	8·7
1986-87	9·1
1987-88	9·0
1988-89	[1]9·9

[1] Provisional.

Empty Houses

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures showing both the numbers and percentage of empty houses in (i) the public sector and (ii) the private sector in each local housing authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 July 1988]:* The information requested for the public sector is given in the table. Comparable figures for the private sector are not collected centrally.

Agency	*Total vacant stock as at 31 March 1987*	*Vacant stock as at 31 March 1987*
Scotland	23,766	2·45
Borders		
Berwickshire	0	0·00
Ettrick and Lauderdale	82	1·95
Roxburgh	230	4·07
Tweeddale	0	0·00
Central		
Clackmannan	119	1·33
Falkirk	530	1·72
Stirling[1]	296	2·39
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	55	1·10
Nithsdale	249	3·21
Stewartry	19	0·79
Wigtown	0	0·00
Fife		
Dunfermline	241	1·20
Kirkcaldy	406	1·70
North East Fife	137	1·96
Grampian		
Aberdeen	894	2·36
Banff and Buchan	331	2·30
Gordon	181	3·36
Kincardine and Deeside	3	0·09
Moray	115	1·11
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	1	0·09
Caithness	67	1·73
Inverness	141	2·10
Lochaber	44	1·42
Nairn	3	0·26
Ross and Cromarty	56	0·92
Skye and Lochalsh	3	0·38

Agency	Total vacant stock as at 31 March 1987	Vacant stock as at 31 March 1987
Sutherland	0	0·00
Lothian		
East Lothian	218	1·48
Edinburgh	4,226	8·32
Midlothian	0	0·00
West Lothian[1]	143	0·68
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	84	1·06
Bearsden and Milngavie	24	1·37
Clydebank	265	2·31
Clydesdale	160	1·69
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	56	1·33
Cumnock and Doon Valley	124	1·26
Cunninghame	393	1·76
Dumbarton	243	1·94
East Kilbride	8	0·57
Eastwood	4	0·22
Glasgow	5,612	3·31
Hamilton	322	1·44
Inverclyde	507	2·73
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	429	2·50
Kyle and Carrick	198	1·16
Monklands	230	0·82
Motherwell	831	2·16
Renfrew	1,002	2·68
Strathkelvin	142	1·43
Tayside		
Angus	99	0·75
Dundee	1,354	3·46
Perth and Kinross	231	1·57
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	22	1·50
Shetland Islands	68	2·57
Western Isles	49	1·94
SSHA	1,225	1·47
New Towns		
Cumbernauld	268	3·26
East Kilbride	140	0·97
Glenrothes	139	1·87
Irvine	136	2·93
Livingston	611	6·21

[1] 1986 figures.

ENVIRONMENT

Commercial Leases

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to bring within the ambit of the criminal law the offer of unfair terms in commercial leases by corporate landlords.

Mr. Trippier: The terms of a commercial lease for business premises are a matter for free negotiation between potential landlord and tenant on the open market. If it were to be established by the courts that the law affords inadequate protection in this area we would need to look at the matter further.

Voluntary Organisations (Grant Aid)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific legislative powers currently exist for the provision of revenue grant aid to voluntary organisations providing emergency accommodation for the single homeless in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales.

Mrs. Roe: Section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 empowers my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales to give revenue deficit grants to voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness. These powers are also available to local authorities in England and Wales. In Scotland, section 39 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 gives similar powers to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and to Scottish local authorities. A revenue deficit grant, paid under section 55 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 may be paid to housing associations in Great Britain, registered with the Housing Corporation, which are managing hostels, including any providing emergency accommodation for the homeless. In the 57 eligible authorities in England, urban programme grants, paid under the Local Government Grants (Social Need) Act 1969, may be used to provide short-term revenue support for voluntary organisations carrying out projects for the single homeless. These powers may also be used to provide assistance in Scotland and Wales. In Wales, the Secretary of State is empowered under section 28(b) of the National Health Service Act 1977 as amended by section 1 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security

Adjudications Act 1983 to give grant aid to voluntary organisations providing emergency accommodation for single homeless persons who are elderly.

Under schedule 5 to the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services may make contributions to the funds of voluntary organisations providing temporary board and lodging for people without a settled way of life in Great Britain. He also has powers under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 which would enable him to make such grants.

By virtue of article 71 of the Health and Personal Services (NI) Order 1972, the Department of Health and Social Services and the four health and social service boards may make grants, including revenue grants, to voluntary organisations providing emergency accommodation for the single homeless in Northern Ireland. Article 140 of the Housing (NI) Order 1981 enables a revenue deficit grant to be paid to registered housing associations managing hostels for the homeless in Northern Ireland.

Hutchings Wharf

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is his policy to keep some industrial space at Hutchings wharf on the Isle of Dogs.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for the London docklands development corporation, the local planning authority for the area.

Rating Reform

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any plans for members of the police force to be exempted from paying the community charge.

Mr. Howard: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will seek to amend the Local Government Finance Bill, to limit the data to be given to the community charge officer to an individual's name and address.

Mr. Howard: No. The Bill limits the registration officer to requesting locally held information which he requires for the purpose of carrying out his functions.

Waste Disposal

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to what proportion of the total number of local authorities responsible for domestic waste disposal in England separate all or part of their domestic waste into different categories for recycling purposes;

(2) what information he has to how many local authorities in England which are responsible for domestic waste disposal services separate such domestic waste into *(a)* glass, *(b)* metal, *(c)* plastic and *(d)* papers for recycling purposes.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department does not collect information on the number of local authorities who separate their domestic waste into different categories. It is, however, known that a number of authorities operate mechanical separation plants and many others provide facilities for the public to separate their own waste for recycling.

Right to Buy (Camden)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), first wrote to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate informing him that she was going to meet the leader of Camden borough council to discuss the council's performance in respect of the right to buy legislation; and for what date the meeting has been arranged.

Mrs. Roe: 10 June and 25 July respectively.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the frequency with which applications to buy council-owned houses in the Hendon, South constituency have been delayed due to the inability of Camden council to define the boundaries of such properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend has recently drawn attention to one such case; the council's monthly statistical returns to the Department do not include addresses or the reasons for particular applications being delayed.

Rural Housing

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the closing date for responses to his consultative document entitled "Housing in Rural Areas: Village Housing and New Villages".

Mrs. Roe: We have asked for comments by 26 September 1988.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the obligations under the EEC protection of birds directive in so far as it applies to the proposed Cardiff bay barrage scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Cardiff bay is part of the area of the Severn estuary which has been identified by the nature conservancy council as meeting the criteria for designation as a special protection area under the EC birds directive. It is our policy that potential special protection areas such as the Severn estuary should be dealt with on the same basis as those which have been formally classified, when development proposals are being considered.

Article 4 of the EC birds directive, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, requires member states to take specific steps for the conservation of the habitats of:

(a) species in danger of extinction;
(b) species vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat;
(c) species considered rare because of small populations or restricted local distribution;
(d) other species requiring particular attention for reasons for the specific nature of their habitat;
(e) regularly occurring migratory species.

We shall have careful regard to these obligations in examining the Cardiff bay barrage proposals and will ensure that Parliament is fully advised of the relevant requirements of the directive in considering the private Bill being promoted by South Glamorgan county council.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material;

(3) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: The total spend for paid publicity and associated staff costs for my Department, including PSA, was £4·8 million in 1987-88. The provision for 1988-89 is £7·1 million. As explained in my answer to the hon. Member on 18 December 1987 at columns *793-94*, figures giving a breakdown between advertising and promotion are no longer kept separately.

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mr. Ridley: The numbers and grades of staff in the statistical divisions[1] of DOE(C) at 1 April 1979, 1 April 1984 and 1 April 1988 are as follows:

	1 April 1979	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1988*
Chief Statistician	5	5	5
Statistician	23	20	19
Senior Assistant Statistician	7	4	3
Assistant Statistician	2	2	2
SEO	5	3	4
HEO	20	14	15
EO	52	29	37
AO	124	54	41
AA	20	18	20
Secretarial/Typist	6	7	4

[1] The statistical divisions in DOE(C) comprise Housing Data Statistics, Construction Industry Statistics, Local Authority Statistics, land and General Statistics, and Environmental Protection Statistics.

There are also statisticians employed throughout the Department in posts of a largely administrative nature; these numbered 22 at 1 April 1979, 9 at 1 April 1984 and 11 at 1 April 1988.

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Ridley: At 1 April 1988 a total of 40 people were employed in the information directorate of the Department of the Environment.

Water Privatisation

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to privatise the 10 regional water authorities in England and Wales simultaneously in a single flotation.

Mr. Ridley: Yes.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payments have been made to Kleinwort Benson for the consultancy work undertaken in connection with the proposed privatisation of the water authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Ridley: Since the consultancy was arranged by the water authorities, this information is not available to my Department.

Council House Sales

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will express in 1988 terms the maximum cash discounts offered in 1980 under the Housing Act 1980 indexed for house price inflation in Greater London.

Mrs. Roe: The maximum discount on council house sales would be £64,000, if the figure of £25,000 set in October 1980 were to be raised by the percentage increase in Greater London house prices between the fourth quarter 1980 and the first quarter 1988.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what each local authority would have received in 1988-89 from the national non-domestic rate pool based on a distribution of £245 per adult.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed the information requested in the Library.

Rain Forests

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list what information he has on the countries in which the destruction of rain forests is still allowed and taking place.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department does not hold details of the depletion of rain forests in individual countries. The Government share the worldwide concern caused by unsustainable exploitation of these forests and actively supports international initiatives to reverse their decline. During the recent meeting of the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) the United Kingdom delegation was instrumental in getting agreement that the

ITTO should give priority to encouraging the development of national policies aimed at sustainable forest management.

Richmond Yard

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what purpose the Property Services Agency made an estimate of the cost of carrying out an in-house valuation of the rental value of Richmond yard.

Mr. Chope: For its own internal management purposes.

Widdicombe Report

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have yet reached conclusions on the report of the Widdicombe committee.

Mr. Howard: The Government response to the report of the Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local authority business has been published today as a White Paper (Cm. 433).

The Widdicombe committee provided us with a comprehensive analysis of the way in which local authorities are operating. The Government have since conducted extensive consultations on the committee's report. We are grateful to the committee, to all who assisted it and to all who have commented on its report, for the quality of the analysis and contributions to the debate.

Matters have not, however, stood still since the committee was appointed. There have been significant changes, most recently in the legislation requiring competition for major services and the proposals for a community charge. The Government's response therefore takes account of the greater emphasis on efficiency, local accountability and meeting the needs of the customer which these changes in legislation and attitude are introducing, as well as of the views expressed in the consultation process.

The central conclusion of the Widdicombe report was that, as a result of increased politicisation, there was a need for a package of measures to strengthen local democracy and accountability. The Government accept this central conclusion. The White Paper sets out our proposed package. With one important exception it accepts the general approach recommended, but differs in emphasis and extent.

The most significant difference, which accords with the more or less unanimous views of local authorities, is that we do not accept the proposal for a statutory post of chief executive. The Widdicombe committee recommends that such a chief executive should have both overall management responsibility for the services of the authority, and the power, on certain matters, to control the decisions of the elected councillors. The Government do not consider that a requirement for such a post is appropriate.

We therefore propose a package with the following main elements: Council committees and sub-committees would be required to reflect the political composition of the council. Voting powers would be removed from co-opted members of decision-making committees. This would not apply to representatives on education committees of churches and other organisations providing voluntary schools. It would not affect the appointment of magistrates to police committees.

We accept the need for a core of standing orders which ensure a proper balance between the despatch of business and the rights of minorities. We propose that these should be developed in consultation with the local authority associations.

Turning to the position of councillors, we accept the proposed statutory register of councillors' pecuniary interests. We also accept the advantages of a basic flat-rate allowance for councillors in place of the present attendance and financial loss allowances. We propose discussions with the local authority associations over this, but we see no justification for increases in overall expenditure on councillors' remuneration.

We accept the need for measures, to ensure an efficient, expert and politically impartial local authority service.

We propose that chief and deputy chief officers and others who advise, or act on behalf of, local authorities should not be members of other local authorities or undertake public political activity. This prohibition would be analogous to the existing rules for civil servants. It would be more percisely targeted, and would apply to a more restricted class, than the corresponding proposal of the Widdicombe committee. It would be complemented by the proposed limit on paid leave for other council staff for activities as local authority members.

All local authority appointments outside the politically restricted group would be required to be delegated to the appropriate officer.

We also propose that officers should be appointed specifically to advise on the legality and propriety of the authority's activities, and on the management of the authority's services.

The Widdicombe committee also considered the powers of local authorities to undertake discretionary expenditure.

We propose a new, circumscribed power for local authorities to undertake economic development activity in place of existing powers.

In consequence, the limit on discretionary spending under sections 137 and 83 would be adjusted and restated in terms of an amount per head of the adult population. The Government propose that this should be £5 per head with a single tier of local government and £2·50 for each tier elsewhere. The current capacity for expenditure under this power by community and parish councils would also be redistributed on the basis of population.

The thorough work of the Widdicombe committee and the widespread consultation on its recommendations have provided the basis for an effective overhaul of the way in which local government operates. Coupled with existing legislative changes and with the changes in attitude which are becoming apparent, the proposals will help to keep the local government system in this country functioning on a secure basis, to enable it to carry on its essential work into the next century.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of polychlorinated biphenyls being processed by waste treatment plants not licensed to treat them.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The licensing and subsequent enforcement, of waste disposal facilities is a waste disposal authority function. The Department does not keep central records on this topic,

but I am aware of one successful prosecution, in 1981, for the illegal deposit of polychlorinated biphenyl contaminated oils at a treatment plant.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of the use of polychlorinated biphenyls in landfilling operations.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) will be found, at very low concentrations, in ordinary domestic refuse due to the presence of the occasional capacitor from old domestic appliances. Consequently, any landfill accepting domestic refuse will contain traces of PCBs—estimated at less than seven parts per million (ppm).

In 1985, the former hazardous waste inspectorate issued guidance, recommending that landfill disposal should be prohibited for large quantities of waste significantly contaminated with PCBs, apart from exceptional and occasional circumstances.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has regarding imported consignments of toxic waste not remaining on the dockside for the three days required by law to give waste disposal authorities time to check their contents.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The three-day period is intended to give notice to waste disposal authorities so that they can monitor and verify the arrival of a consignment at its intended disposal site. Records of special waste movements are not kept centrally. Waste disposal authorities, as part of their enforcement duties, may check on the composition of consignments at any time.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has regarding imported cargoes of toxic waste being stored among general cargoes in port areas.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* None. The Collection and Disposal of Wastes Regulations 1988, however, will bring into the site licensing regime storage areas involving prescribed quantities of special waste, including storage areas at ports. It will be for the local waste disposal authority to decide on any requirement for licensing once this part of the regulations comes into force on 3 October 1988.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on approaches to his Department in relation to the Crown Suppliers from *(a)* Sir Basil Feldman, *(b)* Mr. Robert Maxwell and *(c)* the management buy-out team.

Mr. Chope: All approaches relating sale of the Crown Suppliers, whether to my Department or to Samuel Montagu and Co, the merchant bankers advising the Government on the sale, are treated as having been made in confidence.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether it is intended to issue invitations to tender the purchase of the Crown Suppliers before legislation is enacted or after; and precisely what legislation is required to privatise that organisation;

(2) whether he will give the staff of the Crown Suppliers the option of remaining in the Civil Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I shall announce further details of our proposals for privatisation as soon as possible.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on whose authority Mr. John Cross of the Crown Suppliers has asked all staff in procurement division for details of their experience, length of service, and so on; and in what capacity and for what purpose he was acting.

Mr. Chope: The controller of the Crown Suppliers informs me that this was done in the course of the day-to-day management of the Crown Suppliers.

ENERGY

North Sea Installations

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many inspectors are directly employed by his Department to inspect offshore oil and gas installations in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea; and what are their duties.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department currently employs 37 professional inspectors, eight of whom are full-time field inspectors engaged in offshore installation inspections.

Their duties are to ensure that the requirements of offshore safety legislation, administered by my Department, are met.

Piper Alpha Rig

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the terms of reference of the public inquiry into the Piper Alpha accident; and when it will begin.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The terms of reference for the public inquiry are set out in the instrument of appointment for Lord Cullen, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. A date for the start of the inquiry has yet to be decided. There is much preparatory work to be done. I am also anxious that the results of the technical investigation into the cause of the accident should be available at an early stage of the proceedings of the inquiry.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now make available the recent inspector's safety report on the Piper Alpha rig to both the public and safety health commission inquiries.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The report has already been made available to the technical investigation team headed by the director of my safety directorate and will be available to the public inquiry.

Offshore Installations (Safety)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the dates since 1982 when his Department last met trade unions to discuss safety and working conditions on offshore installations; and what action he took.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since 1982 my officials have held quarterly meetings with union representatives to discuss

safety matters. We value these regular meetings and have taken follow up action on a number of points made by union representatives.

Mr. Prescott To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many gas leaks have been reported to his Department occurring on offshore installations in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information required could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the death and serious accident figures for each year since 1979 in the North sea offshore industry expressed as a proportion per 100,000 workers employed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details are set out in the table, but are expressed per 1,000 workers employed as this is more appropriate in relation to the number of workers offshore. Figures for 1979 are not directly comparable with those for later years, as the basis for calculating the numbers employed changed in 1980:

Dangerous occurrences

Per 1,000 employees

	Dangerous occurrences	*Deaths*
1979	8·9	0·95
1980	5·3	0·20
1981	6·3	0·30
1982	8·4	0·60
1983	5·6	0·30
1984	6·0	0·40
1985	7·2	0·30
1986	7·5	0·10
1987	6·2	0·20

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what requirement there is for workers in the offshore industry to have a survival certificate; how much they cost to acquire; how much the industry contributed to safety and health training for each year since 1979; and how many employees have the certificate.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There is no requirement for offshore workers to obtain a survival certificate. The Offshore Installations (Operational Safety, Health and Welfare) Regulations 1976 (SI 1976 1019) require operators to appoint competent personnel and to ensure that they have experience of equipment they are required to use for the operations they are required to carry out. The cost of safety and health training is a matter for the industry.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many installations there are in the British sector section of the North sea offshore industries; and how many safety inspections have been conducted on them for each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Two hundred and seventeen. Each installation is generally inspected at least once a year.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the estimated numbers of people employed in the offshore oil industry used in the accident figures for the years 1979 and 1980; how these calculations were arrived at; what difference it made to the death and serious accident figures for each of those years; and what steps are taken to ensure that these figures produced each year accurately reflect the extent of accidents in the North sea offshore industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Employment figures for 1979 were obtained from a survey carried out by my Department over a period of two weeks in September 1979 to cover all shifts on offshore installations. The total employed came to 10,500. Figures for 1980 were higher (22,000) reflecting a significant increase in activity offshore and a more comprehensive survey based on information collected by my Department and others which included, for example, people employed on service vessels, survey teams and construction support barges, who had not been included in the 1979 survey. The number of deaths included in the statistics for each of these years was unaffected by the changed basis for the numbers employed since companies are required by the Offshore Installations (Inspectors and Casualties) Regulations 1973 (SI 1973/1842) to report all accidents offshore.

JET Programme

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the purpose of the JET programme; and how much it has so far cost the EEC.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The JET experiment forms part of the European fusion programme which aims to establish fusion as a major energy source. The essential objective of JET is to obtain and study a high temperature plasma in conditions and dimensions approaching those needed in a fusion reactor. To the end of 1987, expenditure on JET totalled some 750 MioECU (£500 million at current rates of exchange).

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Parkinson: The provisional figure for expenditure in 1987-88 by my Department on press and public relations is £460,000 and on advertising is £1·5 million. The figures include:

(i) expenditure by the Press Office;

(ii) staff costs (salaries, accommodation and common services) for all permanent information service and support staff in post in the Press Office, including the public inquiry point, on 31 March 1988.

(iii) expenditure on advertising by the Energy Efficiency Office and the Offshore Supplies Office, and in respect of publicity in connection with the collection of the second call on British Gas shares.

Statistical Divisions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list for 1979, 1984 and the most recent year the numbers of staff by grade in the statistical divisions in his Department; and if he will differentiate between staff in the statistical posts and staff in administrative posts.

Mr. Parkinson: The table gives the numbers of staff in post at the relevant dates, in the Department's economics and statistics division.

Grade	1 April 1979	1 April 1984	1 April 1988
Statistical grades			
Chief Statistician	2	1	1
Statistician	10	8	4
Senior Assistant Statistician	2	1	—
Assistant Statistician	1	1	3
Sub Total	15	11	8
Economist grades			
Senior Economic Adviser	3	3	2
Economic Adviser	11	8	10
Senior Economic Assistant	3	1	2
Economic Assistant	2	3	—
Sub Total	19	15	14
Administration grades			
Grade 3	1	1	1
Grade 7	2	1	1
Senior Executive Officer	4	3	3
Higher Executive Officer	8	8	9
Executive Officer	14	15	12
Administrative Officer	16	13	10
Administrative Assistant	5	2	—
Data Processor	2	—	—
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1	1
Personal Secretary	5	4	4
Sub Total	58	48	41
Grand Total	92	74	63

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Parkinson: The staffing of my Department's press office, including the public inquiry point and support staff, was 13 at 1 July 1988.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to his reply, 17 December 1987, c. 638.]:* The estimated expenditure by my Department on press and public relations for 1987-88 is £456,000. Within this corrected figure common services are estimated at £97,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department of press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: The estimated expenditure for 1988-89 is £515,000.

This figure includes:

(i) forecast expenditure by the Press Office;

(ii) staff costs (salaries, accommodation and common services) for all permanent information service and support staff currently in post in the Press Office including the public inquiry point.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Parkinson: Provisional figures for expenditure by my Department in 1988-89 in the following areas are:

	£ million
Television advertising	nil
Radio advertising	nil
Press advertising, including newspapers	2·1
Other promotional material	1·7

CEGB

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of the CEGB to discuss all aspects of the electricity supply industry.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements he intends to make to meet the costs of the public inquiry he has announced into the Piper Alpha disaster.

Mr. Parkinson: Parliamentary approval for this new service will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the Department of Energy's Class VI, Vote 3. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure incurred by my Department in connection with the public inquiry of up to £500,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Children (Needs)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many district health authorities have set up liaison committees to consider the multiple needs of children across health, education and social services;

(2) if he will issue a circular instructing all district health authorities to set up liaison committees to consider the multiple needs of children across health, education and social services.

Mrs. Currie: Circular HC(78)5 asked health and local authorities to establish district handicap teams to bring together health, education and social service professionals to provide a co-ordinated assessment and support service for handicapped children and their families. We are currently undertaking a project in four health districts to examine the organisation and management of community child health services and involving all the relevant authorities. The aim is to issue a guidance document to authorities with examples of good practice, in due course. The other information requested is not available centrally.

Consultant Community Paediatricians

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many district health authorities have appointed consultant community paediatricians; and if he will list those which have and those which have not;

(2) what steps he is taking to require those district health authorities which have not appointed consultant community paediatricians to do so.

Mrs. Currie: The Court report in 1974 recommended the appointment of consultant community paediatricians to help provide a better co-ordinated and integrated service for children. A recent report from the faculty of Community Medicine also recommends such appointments. The responsibility for the appointment of consultants rests with individual health authorities. Allthough information on the number of districts that have consultant community paediatricians in post is not collected centrally, we do know that, in recent years, many districts have made such appointments and there are now at least 100 in post. Job descriptions and titles vary from district to district reflecting differing local circumstances.

Child Health

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about progress towards implementing the proposals of the Committee on Child Health Services 1976 (Cmnd. 6684).

Mrs. Currie: Circular HC(78)5 advised authorities of the Government's conclusions on the recommendations of the Court committee and asked authorities to review services in the light of the Government's decisions. Subsequently, this Government reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of the committee's findings in a debate in the other place on 28 October 1987, at columns 540-77. There has been considerable progress since the report was published, including two major projects; a departmental funded project studying the organisation and management of child health services in four health districts and a joint professional working party looking at the content and timing of these services. Both are expected to be completed in 1989. But, as everyone agreed in 1976, full implementation of the proposals would be achieved only in the longer rather than the shorter term. That remains the position.

Family Credit

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families are in receipt of family credit in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency.

Mr. Portillo: Family credit claims are dealt with centrally, and no information is available about claims from particular areas.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time which elapses before a claimant renewing a family credit claim receives the new book *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Preston.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on 7 July at column *725*. Separate information about renewal claims is not available.

To facilitate the continuation of payment without a break, family credit renewal claims can be made up to four weeks before the end of the previous award.

Family Income Supplement

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families were in receipt of family income supplement during each financial year from 1982-83 to 1986-87.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to table 15.6 in the public expenditure White Paper 1988 (Cm. 288).

Community Care

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been paid out by his Department's local Doncaster office since 11 April on community care grants; to how many claimants; and what was the sum paid for comparable purposes up to 11 April.

Mr. Portillo: There are two Doncaster offices, Doncaster East and Doncaster West. Details of the numbers and financial amounts of social fund applications and payments for all local offices are placed in the Library at monthly intervals. Information about the number of applicants could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Prior to 11 April, single payments were given in a variety of circumstances. There are no figures available that are directly comparable with community care grants.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis the May figures for community care grants and budgeting loans were compiled in the light of the widespread delays in processing applications.

Mr. Portillo: The May figures comprise applications processed and awards made in that month. Applications processed comprise those where there has been a payment and those where a social fund officer has decided not to make a payment. Some offices do have arrears of applications awaiting processing which are not included in these figures, but there is no indication of widespread delays.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the payment of community care grants paid by offices of his Department covering Peckham.

Mr. Portillo: It is for social fund officers to determine the applications they receive, in accordance with the law and the Secretary of State's directions, taking account of the Secretary of State's guidance and any guidance on local priorities.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the social fund community care grants budget allocated to Peckham for the current financial year was spent in May and June in the offices of his Department covering Peckham.

Mr. Portillo: Details of local office social fund budgets and expenditure are in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of whether the present funding and staff provisions for the social fund in Scotland are adequate to meet the urgent needs of Scottish claimants.

Mr. Portillo: For information on funding, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 6 July at columns *631-33*. As far as the staffing provisions for the social fund are concerned, the Department's aim is to match staffing to work loads. The social fund entailed new procedures and assumptions had to be made about the required time for and frequency of component activities. A review of social fund staffing has been undertaken in order to establish whether proper staffing resources have been allocated.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether, in the statistics on the operation of the social fund which he places in the Library, he will include *(a)* totals for each region, *(b)* the percentage of applications for community care grants processed during the month that receive an award, *(c)* the percentage of applications for budgeting loans processed during the month which receive an offer of a loan and *(d)* the percentage of applications for crisis loans processed during the month that receive an offer of a loan;

(2) whether, when he places statistics on the operation of the social fund in the Library, he will express these as cumulative totals for the year to date, including revisions to previous months' data and late returns.

Mr. Portillo: No. This would add considerably to the amount of information we have undertaken to provide, and for the most part these can be calculated from the data already provided.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, when he places statistics on the operation of the social fund in the Library, he will also provide the data on $5\frac{1}{4}$ in DOS compatible floppy disk.

Mr. Portillo: We are looking into that.

Pensioners (Christmas Bonus)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the change in the real value of the pensioners' Christmas bonus for each year since 1972.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Decrease in real terms since previous bonus

Year	*Per cent.*
1972	—
1973	9·6
1974	16·1
1975	not paid
1976	not paid
1977	38·0
1978	7·7
1979	14·7
1980	13·1
1981	10·8
1982	5·2
1983	5·0
1984	4·4
1985	5·5
1986	3·5
1987	3·6

Benefits

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring up to date the reply given to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 2 February 1987, *Official Report*, column 542, in respect of the value of major social security benefits, so as to include benefits payable from November 1987 under the earlier, and the new and now current arrangements.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table. It is not possible to make direct comparisons of rates of family income supplement and supplementary benefit with rates of family credit and income support, nor rates of housing benefit under the previous scheme with those under the revised scheme.

Benefit rates: Increases in real terms

Benefit	*(a) November 1979 actual*	*(b) November 1979 at April 1988 prices*	*(c) April 1988 actual*	*(d) Percentage increase (c) over (b)*
1. Retirement Pension				
Single	23·30	40·91	41·15	0·6
Couple	37·30	65·50	65·90	0·6
2. Non-Contributory Over 80's Pension				
Single	14·50	24·58	24·75	0·7
Couple	22·40	39·33	39·55	0·6

Benefit	*(a) November 1979 actual*	*(b) November 1979 at April 1988 prices*	*(c) April 1988 actual*	*(d) Percentage increase (c) over (b)*
3. Widows Benefit				
Widows allowance	32·60	57·25	57·65	0·7
Widowed Mother's allowance	23·30	40·91	41·15	0·6
Widow's pension	23·30	40·91	41·15	0·6
4. Ivalidity Pension				
Single	23·30	40·91	41·15	0·6
Couple	37·30	65·50	65·90	0·6
5. Unemployment Benefit				
Single	18·50	32·49	32·75	0·8
Couple	29·95	52·59	52·95	0·7
6. Sickness Benefit				
Single	18·50	32·49	31·30	−3·7
Couple	29·95	52·59	50·70	−3·6
7. Maternity Allowance				
Single	18·50	32·49	31·30	−3·7
Couple	29·95	52·59	50·70	−3·6
8. Severe Disablement Allowance[1]				
Single	14.00	24·58	24·75	0·7
Couple	22·40	39·33	39·55	0·6
9. Attendance Allowance				
Higher rate	18·60	32·66	32·95	0·9
Lower rate	12·40	21·77	22·00	1·1
10. Invalid Care Allowance				
Single	14·00	24·58	24·75	0·7
Couple	22·40	39·33	39·55	0·6
11. Mobility Allowance	12·00	21·07	23·05	9·4
12. Child Benefit[2]	4·00	7·79	7·25	−6·9
13. One Parent Benefit	2·50	4·39	4·90	11·6
14. Industrial Disablement Pension				
Over 18	38·00	66·73	67·20	0·7
Under 18	23·30	40·91	41·15	0·6
Reduced rates—10 per cent. 90 per cent. of basic rate				
Maximum Disablement Gratuity (lump sum)	2,530·00	442·67	4,470·00	0·6
Unemployability Supplement	23·30	40·91	41·15	0·6
Maximum Special Hardship Allowance	15·20	26·69	26·88	0·7
Industrial Death Benefit				
Initial rate	32·60	57·25	57·65	0·7
Higher permanent rate	23·85	41·88	41·15	−1·7
Lower permanent rate	6·99	12·27	12·35	0·7
Constant Attendance Allowance				
Normal maximum rate	15·20	26·69	26·90	0·8
Part-time rate	7·60	13·35	13·45	0·7
Intermediate rate	22·80	40·04	40·35	0·8
Exceptional rate	30·40	53·38	53·80	0·8
15. Child Dependency Addition				
With short-term benefits[3]	1·70	2·99	—	—
With long-term benefits	7·10	12·47	8·40	−32·6

[1] Replaced non-contributory invalidity pension and housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension.
[2] April 1979 rates.
[3] Child dependency additions with short-term benefits were abolished in 1984.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 5 May, *Official Report*, columns *550-51*, if he will give details of how transitional payments for housing benefit will be recalculated following a change in the claimant's circumstances or in housing benefit entitlement; and if it will be the responsibility of the local authority either to send the relevant information to the central unit or to do the necessary recalculation.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 July 1988]:* Transitional payments will be withdrawn if an applicant becomes entitled to income support or stops being responsible for rent, or rates, or both. Benefit will also stop if a single applicant dies or both of a couple die. Any other changes in circumstances that occur during the currency of an award will not affect the rate of benefit in payment. Applicants, or someone acting on their behalf, are asked to notify these changes directly to the transitional payments

unit in Glasgow. The unit will then be responsible for adjusting benefit and normally local authorities will not be involved in the process.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1), pursuant to the answer of 5 May, *Official Report*, columns *550-51*, in respect of transitional payments, if he is yet in a position to state when people can start making claims; if he will explain how the central unit will obtain the necessary information and documentation that will allow the calculation of the transitional payment for housing benefit claimants; and what information claimants should submit with their claims;

(2) if, pursuant to the answer of 5 May, *Official Report*, columns *550-51*, in respect of the administration of transitional protection for housing benefit claimants, he will specify where claims for transitional payments can be made; and if claims will be accepted at both local Department of Health and Social Security offices and housing benefit offices, as well as at the central unit in Glasgow.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 July 1988]:* Leaflet RR4 (Housing Benefit—New Rules), which contains an application form for transitional payments, has been available for several weeks from DHSS local offices, local authorities, post offices and through our Freepost and Freeline services. Completed application forms should be returned by Freepost to the transitional payments unit in Glasgow. Any that are received incorrectly at the Department's local offices or in local authorities will be forwarded to their correct destination. Normally nothing will be required from the applicant other than a completed application form RR4. Once application forms have been received by the transitional payments unit inquiry forms are issued to local authorities to obtain information necessary to establish eligibility for transitional payments.

Private Residential Care

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state for the latest available date the total payments in supplementary benefit to residents in private residential care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. However, I am able to provide figures for the combined supplementary benefit payments to claimants in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes. In November 1987 total expenditure on all such claimants was £772 million, based on average payments of £114·1 per week.

Health Service Commissioner (Report)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the annual report of the Health Service Commissioner for 1987-88.

Mrs. Currie: The Health Service Commissioner has, as in previous years, made a report on the performance of his functions in England, Scotland and Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales presented the report to the House on Wednesday 13 July. It was published on 14 July (House of Commons paper No. 524) and copies are available from the Vote Office.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest year for which he has obtained data from local authority social services departments concerning the services they provide for people with disabilities; and how many local authorities failed to provide information.

Mr. Scott: The latest year for which data have been collected is the year ended 31 March 1987. Seven local authorities failed to provide returns.

Single Payments

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of supplementary benefit single payments for each of his Department's local offices in the counties of Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Northumbria, and Tyne and Wear, in May 1985, May 1986 and May 1987.

Mr. Portillo: Figures for the month of May are not readily available and would be disproportionately costly to obtain. However, the value of single payments made in the four-week periods ending 4 June 1985, 3 June 1986 and 2 June 1987 are given in the table. The local offices shown are those situated within the counties requested but office and county boundaries are not conterminous.

County	*Period Ending* 4 June 1985 £	3 June 1986 £	2 June 1987 £
Cleveland			
Eston	69,360	93,495	34,606
Harlepool	145,063	99,366	43,488
Middlesborough	236,973	299,987	85,925
Redcar	52,397	77,485	37,671
Stockton	184,447	161,471	68,799
Durham			
Bishop Auckland	86,991	96,718	46,178
Chester-le-Street	30,201	66,124	22,559
Darlington	68,080	114,289	56,149
Durham	22,854	25,277	16,014
Peterlee	36,613	32,049	21,801
Seaham	14,143	21,879	8,981
Stanley	63,216	85,635	30,563
Northumberland			
Ashington	30,792	30,082	25,631

County	Period Ending 4 June 1985 £	3 June 1986 £	2 June 1987 £
Berwick	2,200	4,718	2,810
Blyth	32,976	35,967	22,741
Hexham	7,040	10,560	3,263
Tyne and Wear			
Gateshead	110,828	145,414	66,758
Houghton-le-Spring	33,610	37,526	20,019
Jarrow	46,351	77,743	38,183
Newcastle St. James	103,505	148,687	53,843
Newcastle East	87,871	101,016	28,430
Newcastle West	84,763	120,648	47,492
North Shields	47,652	107,472	35,260
South Shields	79,397	140,261	47,281
Sunderland North	154,056	203,636	77,500
Sunderland South	89,479	183,856	57,757
Wallsend	68,725	71,706	28,381
Cumbria			
Carlisle	25,648	37,028	23,046
Kendal	2,665	5,859	3,493
Workington	25,667	27,782	11,022
Whitehaven	33,361	35,230	14,934
Penrith	26,553	39,438	14,617
Barrow	5,846	4,723	4,679

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to give a substantive reply to the question from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, on single payment claims, for which a holding answer was given on Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Portillo: I replied to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 16 June, when he will be in a position to give the national outstanding total of single payment claims as at 31 May.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply, 21 June 1988, c. 549]:* The number of cases awaiting action on single payment claims at 31 May 1988 was 210,014. This figure is provisional and subject to amendment.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of maternal deaths in England and Wales in *(a)* 1986, and *(b)* 1987 which were attributed to abortive outcomes and showing for each year the numbers which were attributed to *(a)* high hydatidiform mole, *(b)* other abnormal products of conception, *(c)* missed abortions, *(d)* ectopic pregnancies, *(e)* spontaneous abortions, *(f)* legally induced abortions, *(g)* illegally induced abortions, *(h)* unspecified abortions, *(i)* failed attempted abortions, and *(j)* complications following abortions and ectopic and molar pregnancies.

Mrs. Currie: Available information from the registration of deaths in England and Wales in 1986 and 1987 is shown in the table.

Number of maternal deaths registered in England and Wales, by selected underlying cause of death—1986-87

ICD[1] No.	Underlying cause of death	Number of deaths 1986	1987
630	Hydatidiform mole	—	—
631	Other abnormal product of conception	—	—
632	Missed abortion	—	—
633	Ectopic pregnancy	2	4
634	Spontaneous abortion	1	—
635	Legally induced abortion	—	1
636	Illegally induced abortion	—	—
637	Unspecified abortion	—	—
638	Failed attempted abortion	—	—
639	Complications following abortion and ectopic and molar pregnancies	Not used for underlying cause	

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of *(a)* direct maternal deaths, *(b)* indirect maternal deaths, and *(c)* associated maternal deaths in England and Wales in 1986 and 1987.

Mrs. Currie: Available information from the registration of deaths in England and Wales in 1986 and 1987 is shown in the table.

Number of (a) direct maternal deaths, (b) indirect maternal deaths, and (c) associated maternal deaths registered in England and Wales, by selected underlying cause of death—1986-87

	Number of deaths 1986	1987
Direct[1]	34	42
Indirect[2]	11	4
Associated[3]	3	6

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision code 630-676 (complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium) excluding 647 and 648.

[2] ICD (9) 647: Infective and parasitic conditions in the mother classifiable elsewhere but complicating pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium.
648: Other current conditions in the mother classifiable elsewhere but complicating pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium.

[3] Deaths certified as associated with pregnancy or childbirth but not assigned to those causes.

Overpayments (Reclaims)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by what legal authority his Department reclaims overpayments made as a result of errors by his Department's staff.

Mr. Portillo: Overpayments of benefit made to a claimant are not recoverable if the independent adjudicating authorities determine that they result from official error.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of sets of *(a)* twins, *(b)* triplets, *(c)* quadruplets, *(d)* quintuplets, *(e)* sextuplets, and *(f)* septuplets born in England and Wales in 1987; and what was the total number of maternities in that year.

Mrs. Currie: In 1987, there were 677,467 maternities in England and Wales, including:

	Number
Twins	7,186
Triplets	125
Quadruplets	7
Quintuplets	1
Sextuplets	0
Septuplets	1
All multiple maternities	7,320

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secetary of State for Social Services if he will give the number on waiting lists by region and specialty for each year since 1974 to date.

Mr. Newton: Summaries of hospital waiting lists by region for 1979 onwards have been placed in the Library. I am arranging for copies from 1975, the first year these figures were collected on a comparable basis, to 1978 to be similarly placed.

Health and Safety Executive (Reports)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what monitoring role his Department plays in ensuring that the reports of the Health and Safety Executive are implemented in relation to buildings for which he has responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Since the National Health Service is no longer a Crown body for the purposes of health and safety legislation, the Health and Safety Executive has the same legal powers to enforce health authorities to comply with its statutory notices as apply to employers generally. The Department is informed of all improvement and prohibition notices issued to health authorities in order that any new problem areas are incorporated into central guidance, and, where appropriate, covered in training. As part of the annual review process, regional health authorities are to be held to account for their monitoring of district health authorities' observance of statutory requirements for the health and safety of their staff and patients.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answers of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 551, he will set out in detail the cervical smear checking procedure used in the Christie hospital in respect of the smears from north Staffordshire; if the same procedure is used in respect of all samples; who carries out the routine checks referred to; and if the checks by independent advisers from other regions on the suspect slides have been completed.

Mrs. Currie: All cervical cancer smear tests carried out by Christie hospital, including those which came from Staffordshire and other districts from outside the region, are subject to two separate quality control procedures.

The first requires re-reading of one in seven of all negative readings; the second involves a continuous computerised monitoring of all smear test results to check whether an individual screener is recording more positive or negative results than would normally be expected.

The consultant pathologist in charge of the laboratory is responsible for all quality control checks which are applied to all smea. tests referred to Christie hospital. The checks currently being carried out by independent advisers on a number of slides submitted by North Staffordshire district health authority are being undertaken as a matter of urgency and are likely to be completed in five to six weeks.

Nursing and Residential Homes

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce guidelines, with clear advice to those called upon to inspect nursing and residential homes, to the effect that they are required to make specific checks to ensure that the personal liberties of residents have not been infringed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The code of practice for residential care, "Home Life", and the "Handbook for Health Authorities: Registration and Inspection of Nursing Homes", which complement the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the associated regulations give registration authorities detailed guidance including advice on the rights of residents and on respect for residents' dignity and autonomy.

In his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) on 12 July, at columns *169-70*, my right hon. Friend announced further steps being taken to strengthen the registration process including the rights of residents.

We have commissioned distance-learning material for the training of the registration and inspection staff of local authorities and health authorities, which will deal with these issues.

Individual registration authorities are statutorily responsible for deciding within the general guidance precisely how the various aspects of care are examined in individual establishments.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the impact on adult family placement schemes of restrictions on the operation of unregistered residential homes.

Mr. Portillo: Regulations were introduced in July 1987 with respect to small unregistered residential care homes.

This was aimed at ensuring that the higher limits of income support applicable to registered residential care homes were payable only where the small home or placement provides, at increased cost, standards of care clearly equivalent to those to be found in registered homes.

We have received a number of inquiries including approximately 25 from hon. Members.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average annual cost to the local authority of *(a)* registering, and *(b)* inspecting a private or voluntary residential home under the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mrs. Currie: A study during 1987 by the Department's social services inspectorate and the social work service of the Welsh Office found it impracticable to calculate the average annual cost of registering or inspecting a home. The study team calculated the unit cost of the principal activities involved in this work for the authorities in the field work sample as follows:

	£
Initial registration application[1]	539
Change of owner	528
Registration of manager	147
Inspection	26·23

[1] Excluding inquiries prior to application.

A copy of the study team's report, entitled "The Registered Homes Act 1984: Study of Local Authority Costs 1987" is in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average annual cost to a health authority of *(a)* registering and *(b)* inspecting a private nursing home under the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mrs. Currie: The estimated average cost of registering and inspecting private nursing homes is broadly reflected in the annual charges levied by health authorities. I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) on 12 July, at columns *169-70* for details of revised charges from 1 August 1988.

Child Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that all local authorities are identifying those children in their care in need of long-term substitute family care and those who might benefit from being adopted in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption Act 1976.

Mrs. Currie: In reaching any decision relating to a child in their care, local authorities have a statutory duty to give first consideration to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child throughout childhood; and to consider the child's wishes and feelings about any decision, having regard to age and understanding.

Sections 1 and 2 of the Adoption Act 1976 which came into force in January 1988 require all local authorities to establish and maintain an adoption service and to provide the necessary facilities or arrange for them to be provided by approved adoption societies. Adoption services are to be provided in conjunction with approved adoption societies and with the local authority's other social services for children and families. This full integration of adoption into the mainstream of services for children should help to ensure that adoption is properly considered where it would be in the best interests of a child and that the necessary facilities are available so that the best choice can be made for each child and family, whether this is support for the natural family, long term foster care or adoption.

Since December 1985 custodianship has offered a further option for children needing the security of a permanent substitute family.

Charitable Fund Raising

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate for the annual sum contributed to the National Health Service as a result of charitable fund raising.

Mr. Newton: In 1986-87, the latest available year for which information is available, the total income received by health authorities in England from subscriptions, donations and fund raising efforts was £55 million.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material;

(3) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89;

(4) what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Moore: My Department has no section which can be separately identified as public relations. Functions which are commonly associated with public relations are carried out by the Department's information division.

On 1 July 1988 Information Division had the following staff in post:

	Number
Professional Staff	33
Administrative Staff	42
Total	75

Provisional figures for spending by information division in the year 1987-88 as follows:

	£
Manpower	1,084,000
Advertising and other paid publicity activities	21,148,000

Estimated expenditure in the 1988-89 financial year is as follows:

	£
Manpower	1,123,000
Publicity	20,466,000

Estimated expenditure on publicity is broken down as follows:

	£
Television Advertising	3,465,000
Radio Advertising	None
Newspaper Advertising	1,603,000
Other promotional material	15,398,000

Homeless People

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the numbers of single homeless who have applied for and received a crisis loan payment since April 1988; and if he will estimate how many of the single homeless received an urgent needs payment in the three months prior to April.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce a system of guaranteed payments to ensure that hostels providing accommodation for the single homeless receive the lodging charge promptly and direct rather than owed to them in arrears.

Mr. Portillo: We are continuing to monitor the operation of the reformed scheme, but have no plans to introduce a system of guaranteed payments of income support. Entitlement is based on a detailed examination of each claimant's circumstances.

Provisions already exist to pay income support in respect of accommodation charges automatically to hostels run by voluntary organisations which provide facilities for alcoholics or drug addicts or which are akin to DHSS resettlement units.

Direct payments can also be made where there is evidence that the claimant has failed to budget for accommodation charges and in the opinion of the adjudication officer it is in the best interest of his family.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 July 1988

WALES

Conwy Tunnel Road Scheme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is now being made on the Conwy tunnel road scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Work on the four and a half year Conwy crossing contract commenced in November 1986 and is generally progressing satisfactorily. Major excavations and earthworks are well advanced and construction of the concrete tunnel units has begun. Some variation to expected ground conditions has been encountered, but it is not expected that this will delay the scheme unduly.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the perinatal mortality rate for each year since 1968, by area authority.

Mr. Grist: Perinatal mortality rates for *(a)* the Welsh hospital board area (that is Wales) 1968 to 1973, for *(b)* area health authorities 1974 to 1981 and for *(c)* district health authorities 1982 to 1987 are given in the tables:

Perinatal mortality rates[1]

(a) Wales: Welsh hospital board area

Year	*Number*
1968	28
1969	27
1970	25
1971	24
1972	22
1973	21

[1] Perinatal mortality rate: still births and deaths of infants under one week per 1,000 live and still births.

(b) Area health authorities and Wales

	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*
Clwyd	19·9	14·8	21·5	15·8	15·2	14·5	15·0	16·5
Dyfed	24·8	22·4	14·5	16·6	13·8	15·2	11·9	13·8
Gwent	18·8	20·7	21·3	20·5	18·0	16·6	11·3	15·2
Gwynedd	16·8	19·2	13·6	17·8	17·3	12·0	13·3	12·6
Mid Glamorgan	22·7	23·2	18·7	19·9	16·8	15·6	13·3	13·3
Powys	25·0	17·2	[1]14·0	[1]13·6	19·8	[1]14·0	[1]9·7	[1]11·5
South Glamorgan	21·8	15·6	18·4	15·2	18·4	16·0	12·2	12·9
West Glamorgan	21·5	21·2	23·1	19·3	17·0	18·0	13·8	14·5
Wales	21·2	19·7	19·0	17·9	16·8	15·6	12·8	14·1

[1] Denotes a rate calculated from less than 20 events.
Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

(c) District health authorities and Wales

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*
Clwyd	9·5	11·1	11·0	10·9	10·2	8·8
East Dyfed	[2]7·2	[2]7·7	11·2	8·0	12·5	10·1
Pembrokeshire	[2]10·5	[2]14·6	[2]8·0	[2]8·7	[2]8·0	[2]8·2
Gwent	9·6	12·1	10·9	10·2	9·6	10·7
Gwynedd	7·9	10·9	9·6	10·3	13·1	10·2
Mid Glamorgan	14·8	13·8	12·2	8·0	10·0	7·2
Powys	[2]7·7	16·5	[2]14·2	[2]9·3	[2]9·5	14·9
South Glamorgan	14·4	8·6	8·5	13·8	10·1	8·6
West Glamorgan	10·4	9·6	9·2	10·7	10·1	9·5
Wales	11·1	11·3	10·5	10·2	10·3	9·2

[1] Provisional.
[2] Denotes a rate calculated from less than 20 events.

Hernia Repairs and Hip Replacements

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of hernia repairs and hip replacement operations performed in each area, in each year since 1974 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the tables:

	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Hernia operations														
Clwyd	707	564	733	691	644	577	593	654	521	700	702	714	709	757
East Dyfed	384	333	480	450	450	453	501	448	379	450	463	464	528	468
Gwent	783	642	727	749	723	661	743	803	681	750	791	766	812	829
Gwynedd	398	341	401	474	392	406	415	407	344	482	449	442	454	394
Mid Glamorgan	680	499	533	589	528	547	776	833	475	674	629	667	816	838
Powys	48	50	60	43	46	56	57	53	46	57	81	86	71	80
South Glamorgan	871	789	833	897	854	645	630	840	560	821	811	799	828	745

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
West Glamorgan	711	589	666	666	556	480	626	701	551	676	649	482	476	440
Pembrokeshire	155	102	104	141	147	140	192	158	145	157	123	176	190	178
Hip replacement operations														
Clwyd	104	96	153	184	168	154	149	174	197	253	323	370	301	370
East Dyfed	100	123	115	157	202	248	255	229	189	269	259	224	283	312
Gwent	41	97	116	167	137	168	189	200	131	189	151	180	226	212
Gwynedd	76	42	70	66	61	80	124	148	111	176	163	153	179	176
Mid Glamorgan	110	153	143	171	210	223	182	197	137	219	221	236	259	231
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Glamorgan	208	369	407	400	392	427	392	439	370	422	411	352	386	429
West Glamorgan	194	170	195	252	245	227	262	268	252	265	310	264	235	217
Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0	1	14	44	58	65	58	65	79	92	61

Taff Estuary Barrage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology's report entitled "The Effect of the Taff Estuary Barrage on Over-Wintering Shorebirds."

Mr. Grist: A copy of the report is already available in the Library of the House.

ADAS

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the present state of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service at Trawscoed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* Trawsgoed is the headquarters of the farm and countryside service in Wales. I have no plans to review that situation.

Organic Farming

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on support for organic farming in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* Those farming organically benefit from the various agricultural support measures in the same way as other farmers, including the practical assistance given by various bodies to improve the marketing of Welsh food. In addition, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service is equipping itself to respond to demands for specialised advice. The board of the United Kingdom register of organic food standards is also getting our full support in the task of setting standards for organic production, which is essential if organic production is to achieve its potential.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices open in each year from 1979 to the latest available date, indicating the number of full-time and part-time offices and where mergers have taken place, along with the relevant year's official unemployment count.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Unemployment benefit offices*			*Jobcentres*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
1979	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1980	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1981	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1982	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—	1,008
1983	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1984	809	336	1,145	[2]—	[2]—	991
1985	829	329	1,158	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1986	838	341	1,179	[2]—	[2]—	1,009
1987	845	334	1,179	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1988	841	317	1,158	924	109	1,033

[1] Information not available in the form requested.
[2] Information not available.
Note: Information on unemployment benefit offices for earlier years is not available in the form requested because records were only kept on premises occupied.

No unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres have been merged. In just over 70 locations new working arrangements are being piloted to determine the most effective way to bring together services offered by jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices.

Details of the official unemployment count for each year are published in the Department of Employment's "Employment Gazette", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total spending by his Department on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Thursday 21 July]:* The total spending on press and public relations by my Department in 1987-88 was £1·16 million. The total spending on advertising by my Department to promote departmental objectives in 1987-88 was £13·1 million.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Thursday 21 July]:* The total estimated expenditure by my Department in 1988-89 on publicity is £17·8 million. It includes publicity expenditure on behalf of the employment service. It is not possible at the present time to provide the detailed breakdown by the media groups requested.

Manpower Services Commission (Advertising)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total spending by the Manpower Services Commission on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Thursday 21 July]:* The total expenditure for 1987-88 by the Training Commission—formerly Manpower Services Commission—on press and public relations was £1,138,200. Total expenditure on advertising was £24,298,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Manpower Services Commission on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Thursday 21 July]:* The latest estimated spending 1988-89 by the Training Commission —formerly Manpower Services Commission—is as follows:

	£ million
Advertising	
Television	8·4
Radio	—
Press	[1]4·4
Other promotional activities	6·4
TOTAL	19·2

[1] Includes a small amount of radio advertising. This cannot be separately identified.

Manpower Services Commission (Public Relations)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Thursday 21 July]:* There are 71 members of staff currently employed in the information services branch (including the press office) of the Training Commission (formerly the Manpower Services Commission).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Manpower Services Commission on press and public relations during 1988-89.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Thursday 21 July]:* The estimated expenditure for 1988-89 by the Training Commission (formerly MSC) on press and public relations is £1,135,200. This figure represents general administrative expenditure relating to costs for staff, running costs and for regional services.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the extent to which Customs controls at Waterloo station will cause significant delays to Channel tunnel passengers.

Mr. Lilley: It is envisaged that Customs controls at Waterloo will be based on the quick and effective red/green channel system used currently at major airports. The vast majority of passengers will pass through Customs without stopping.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Customs controls will not be carried out on board Channel tunnel trains bound for Waterloo.

Mr. Brooke: It is intended that Customs controls should be carried out at Waterloo for trains terminating there because this would be less costly and more effective than on-train controls and less disruptive to passengers who might be separated from their baggage on the train. In practice the vast majority of passengers will pass straight through the Waterloo Customs clearance hall without any delay at all.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table on the functional analysis of United Kingdom public expenditure, modelled on table 2.7 of Cm. 288-I, showing charges netted against each line for each of the years 1982-83 to 1990-91.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the departmental breakdown of charges in respect of programme expenditure that I gave him on 27 May 1988, at columns 375-76. The detailed functional analysis requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Net Overseas Assets

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to his reply of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *198*, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) he will estimate the sterling value of the United Kingdom's net overseas assets at *(a)* 30 June 1987 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Estimates of the value of the United Kingdom's net overseas assets are available only for the end of each year. The latest CSO Pink book (United Kingdom Balance of Payments), published in August 1987, included a figure for the end-1986 of £114·4 billion. The 1988-89 Financial Statement and Budget Report included a provisional estimate for end-1987 of some £90 billion.

COI (Advertising)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total expenditure on advertising by the Central Office of Information in 1987-88; and what is the estimated expenditure for the current year.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* Expenditure by the Central Office of Information on advertising on behalf of other Government Departments in 1987-88 was £87·7 million. Estimated expenditure on advertising through the COI for 1988-89 is a matter for departmental Ministers.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received a report from the Anglian water authority regarding the effect of the extension of the Southend on Sea sewage outfall in the quality of river water generally; and which river has seen any increase in levels of pollution off Canvey Island's beaches.

Mr. Moynihan: Anglian water authority submitted to the Department in 1986 a consultant's report describing the effects of the Southend outfall extension on water quality, as part of its application under the Control of Pollution Act for discharge consent. The studies which were carried out showed that the waters at the eastern end of Canvey Island would not be significantly affected by extending the outfall. However, Anglian water authority has undertaken to monitor the effects on Canvey beach of extending the outfall and will make the results available to the local authority.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the arrangements for continuous monitoring of all sewage outfalls and beaches in the Thames estuary.

Mr. Moynihan: The arrangements for continuous monitoring of all sewage outfalls and bathing waters in the Thames estuary are matters for the respective water authorities. Records are not kept centrally, but the individual results are available through the public registers.

Harassment of Tenants (Warrington-Runcorn)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the Warrington-Runcorn development corporation of harassment of new town tenants by certain Warrington borough councillors; and if he will make a statement on the implications for his housing policy.

Mrs. Roe: I understand that the local authority has campaigned against the decision by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation to make an agency agreement with a group of housing associations.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the number of extra houses he considers the city of Durham will need as a result of economic development in the next few years.

Mrs. Roe: The Secretary of State has made no such estimate. In May 1986 Durham county council submitted proposals for alterations to the county structure plan to the Secretary of State, and these included provision for 3,000 new dwellings in the city of Durham district between 1983 and 1996.

The Secretary of State's proposed modifications to the alterations were published on 22 July 1988 and he does not propose to make any changes to this level of provision.

Council House Sales

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many of the cases under the right-to-buy legislation referred to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate since June 1987 the London borough of Camden has been in default of compliance with the time limits set down in legislation.

Mrs. Roe: Since June 1987 my hon. Friend has referred to me some 90 cases of delay being experienced by tenants of the London borough of Camden seeking to exercise their right to buy. It is likely that the council failed in most of these cases to meet the statutory time limits for serving notices admitting or denying the right to buy or setting out the terms of sale.

Water Charge

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the community water charge will be payable by *(a)* students, *(b)* student nurses, *(c)* families on income support and *(d)* senior citizens on retirement pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no proposal to introduce a community water charge in England.

Land (Maintenance)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to give new powers to local authorities to force landowners, public and private, to tidy up and maintain land they own.

Mr. Trippier: Section 65 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 (as substituted by the Housing and Planning Act 1986) enables local authorities to require owners and occupiers to remedy the condition of any land which is adversely affecting the amenity of the area.

Industrial Dereliction (Stoke on Trent)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent of industrial dereliction in Stoke-on-Trent; if he will increase resources accordingly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The last survey of derelict land in England carried out in 1982 showed there to be 312 hectares of derelict land in Stoke-on-Trent. Since then the city council has received derelict land grants totalling some £12·6 million towards schemes designed to bring derelict land back into use.

A new survey of derelict land in England is being undertaken which will show the current extent of dereliction in the city. This information will be taken into account when considering the future level of resources to be made available for the area.

Derelict Land

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase resources allocated to programmes such as derelict land grants and small clearance grants dedicated to bringing waste land into use and improving its appearance.

Mr. Trippier: The resources available for bringing derelict and other land back into use have already been greatly increased. Funds for derelict land grant have been

increased by 80 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80 and the urban development corporations have available further substantial resources for reclamation.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take action to reclaim waste land for green and soft end uses as a means of improving the image of run down areas; and if he can provide funds accordingly.

Mr. Trippier: Derelict land grant is available in England for the reclamation and improvement of derelict and neglected or unsightly land. Resources of £77·4 million have been made available for 1988-89. While the main priority for the use of derelict land grant will be schemes designed to reclaim inner-city land for private sector development, funds are available for schemes with green and soft end uses, particularly where such schemes will encourage investment and economic activity within areas of extensive or concentrated dereliction, through the creation of a more attractive environment.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make policies for the re-use of unused land a central feature of county development plans.

Mr. Trippier: We have long emphasised to local planning authorities that it is essential that the planning system, including development plans, should continue to identify and realise the development potential of unused, neglected or derelict land within existing urban areas. This helps to protect the countryside and assists in urban regeneration. The advice has been most recently set out in our planning policy guidance notes 3 and 4, published in January this year, which deal with housing and industrial and commercial development respectively.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is prepared to enlarge the registers of publicly owned unused land to include sites in the ownership of other public bodies and the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, county by county, the amount of land and the number of sites lying vacant, dormant, unused and derelict in total in Britain's urban areas and the proportion of this land in private ownership.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available exactly in the form requested. The tables list, county by county, the amount of derelict land in England's urban areas recorded in the derelict land survey of 1982, the proportion of this land in private ownership, and the amount of land on the registers of under used publicly owned land in urban programme districts. The Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales deal with derelict land in their respective countries. The land registers do not record land in private ownership. They cover 19 of the 37 districts in Wales, but the legislation does not apply to Scotland.

Statistics contained in survey of derelict land 1982

Counties	*Urban derelict land* (hectares)	*Proportion of urban derelict land in private ownership* (per cent.)
Cleveland	1,251	66
Cumbria	544	43
Durham	511	59
Northumberland	350	82
Tyne and Wear	905	30
Cheshire	668	40
Lancashire	973	45
Greater Manchester	2,502	28
Merseyside	1,480	39
Humberside	590	4
North Yorkshire	98	51
South Yorkshire	591	57
West Yorkshire	1,619	—
Hereford and Worcester[1]	104	—
Shropshire[1]	642	—
Staffordshire[1]	805	—
Warwickshire	226	60
West Midlands	1,782	58
Derbyshire	1,164	33
Leicestershire	255	32
Lincolnshire	13	67
Northamptonshire	152	4
Nottinghamshire	512	21
Cambridgeshire	44	48
Norfolk	30	10
Suffolk	39	54
Avon	118	39
Cornwall[2]	0	—
Devon	51	24
Dorset[1]	79	—
Gloucestershire	87	—
Somerset[1]	10	—
Wiltshire	29	7
Bedfordshire	11	0
Berkshire	6	100
Buckinghamshire	0	—
East Sussex	41	51
Essex	504	—
Hampshire	120	57
Hertfordshire	61	34
Isle of Wight	0	—
Kent	228	77
Oxfordshire[1]	36	—
Surrey	56	52
West Sussex	9	0
Greater London	1,710	15
ENGLAND	21,006	—

[1] The figures that relate to derelict land are based on incomplete returns.

[2] Cornish returns do not distinguish between urban and rural.

Note: Where no figures are given, there is no UP district within that county.

Land registers at 30 June 1988

Counties	Land in the 57 areas programme district by county	
	hectares	sites
Cleveland	1,417	211
Cumbria	—	—
Durham	—	—
Northumberland	—	—
Tyne and Wear	1,404	326
Cheshire	158	33
Lancashire	788	119
Greater Manchester	1,333	484
Merseyside	1,301	288
Humberside	490	86
North Yorkshire	—	—
South Yorkshire	1,428	303
West Yorkshire	1,429	361
Hereford and Worcester[1]	—	—
Shropshire[1]	836	127
Staffordshire[1]	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—
West Midlands	806	252
Derbyshire	114	32
Leicestershire	361	45
Lincolnshire	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—
Nottinghamshire	128	44
Cambridgeshire	—	—
Norfolk	—	—
Suffolk	—	—
Avon	318	59
Cornwall[2]	—	—
Devon	201	44
Dorset[1]	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—
Somerset[1]	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—
Berkshire	—	—
Buckinghamshire	—	—
East Sussex	—	—
Essex	—	—
Hampshire	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	—
Kent	—	—
Oxfordshire[1]	—	—
Surrey	—	—
West Sussex	—	—
Greater London	528	167
England	13,040	2,981

[1] The figures that relate to derelict land are based on incomplete returns.

[2] Cornish returns do not distinguish between urban and rural.

Note: Where no figures are given, there is no UP district within that county.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission research and institute a land audit to be carried out by local councils to produce comprehensive statistics on vacant and dormant land on a regular basis.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is mounting a series of pilot studies with Ordnance Survey to examine ways of identifying vacant land in urban areas, its size and its type. Any decision on the collection and publication of vacant land statistics on a regular basis must wait until these pilot studies have been completed.

A comprehensive land audit would place an unacceptable burden on local authorities.

World Commission on Environment and Development

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he intends to take in response to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

Mr. Ridley: We gave an immediate and warm response to the world commission's report, "Our Common Future", when it was launched in London in April 1987. Since then we have offered consistent support, particularly in the United Nations General Assembly debate last October, to the report's call for sustainable development.

At last month's economic summit in Toronto the Prime Minister and her summit colleagues formally endorsed this message. We have now prepared and published today a more detailed examination of the report's recommendations in what we are calling a United Kingdom perspective. This perspective, produced by my Department in full co-operation with other interested Departments of State, represents this Government's views on the many complex environmental issues analysed in the report.

In her foreword the Prime Minister writes:

"It is intended to inform interested organisations and individuals at home, and to stimulate further international consideration of the Report, notably within the OECD and the United Nations. I see it also as a contribution to the Ministerial Conference which the Norwegian Government will hold in 1990 to examine what progress we have all made to safeguard 'Our Common Future'".

Copies of the perspective have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Water Metering

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the water metering trial in the Isle of Wight division of the Southern water authority is to be financed.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* The approved costs of the Isle of Wight metering trial will be split equally between the Government and the Southern water authority, subject to a maximum figure, set annually, on the Government's contribution.

Urban Programme

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when submissions from Bradford college, concerning funding under the urban programme of community group courses, were received by his Department; when decisions will be taken on funding submissions; if he will make it his policy to ensure that approval is made earlier in subsequent years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* These submissions were received on 7 April as part of Bradford's inner area programme. This was unsatisfactory and a revised programme submission was received on 30 June. This is under consideration and I expect to be able to announce a decision in the near future. Early approval of inner area programme is dependent upon the timing and quality of submission by the local authority.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the class subjects specified in submissions made by Bradford for funds under the urban programme to support community training and education.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* The information requested is listed in the table:

Class subjects:

Access to Bilingual New Technology
Skills for today's Offices
Advance office skills
Return to secretarial work
Access to Information Technology
Introduction to Office Skills
Word Processing
Typing and Word Processing
Introduction to computing
Mobile Information Technology Unit
Introduction to typing for Asian Women
Computing, Word Processing Skills
Keyboard and Computing Skills
Computing Skills
Access to Computing
Catering Skills
Upholstery and French Polishing
Basic Machine Knitting
Advanced Machine Knitting
Typing Skills
Advanced Typing Skills
Garment Industries
Photographic Skills
Introduction to Creche Work
Multi-Skill with Language Support
Sports Leadership for Women
Bierley Skills Project (knitting/sewing/hairdressing/caring for children/elderly)
Vehicle Maintenance
Holmewood Educational Opportunities (typing, word processing, brickwork, machine knitting)
Cookery, Brickwork, Video
Creche Worker Training
Industrial sewing, pattern making, cutting with language support for Asian Women
Joinery with Life Skills and Language Skills
Multi DIY Skills
Communication on Interview and Job Search Skills (mainly for Asians)
Fashion and Design (for Asian Women)
Vocational Training (woodwork, photography, dressmaking, machine knitting and typing)
Skills Taster Programme (no details supplied)
Sewing/Woodwork
Job Search/Interview Skills (for Asians)
Building Trade Skills
Sewing and Typing with Language Support
Work with Under Fives
Wyke Manor Training Consortium (business - technology/motor mechanics/gardening/horticulture)
Education for the Unemployed (electronics typing/dressmaking)
Playwork Training
Job Search Communications (for Asian Women)
Fashion and Design Workshop (Asian and English)
Fresh Start Courses (photography/pottery, graphics, blacksmithing, woodwork, basic electrics
Working with the Young and Old in the Black Community
Merchanting Trades and DIY Retailing
Project Handy Woman (travel trades, wood trades, plumbing, electrical work and painting and decorating)
Access to Public Sector Catering
Tailoring Techniques and Processes
Supervisory and Management Skills
Preparation for Work in Garment and Making Up Trades
Using Your Skills for Teaching
Access to Employment in Motor Trades
Access for Disabled Adults (basic and group work skills)
Sewing Skills for Disabled Adults
Access to Art, Craft and Design (educational opportunities in the art, craft and design area, including painting, textile art, photography, pottery and screen printing)
Integrated Sewing and Craft Skills
Study of Educational Needs (research project to establish educational needs and knowledge of educational opportunities among unemployed on an isolated estate)
Self Development and Job Research (provide opportunities for single parents to develop skills and build confidence)
Helper Training (provides training in working with and supporting learning opportunities for mentally handicapped).
Return to Learn (study skills and educational guidance for unemployed adults to enable them to enter further and higher education)
Makaton Vocabulary learning (teach Makaton sign language to people who want to work with or support the hearing impaired)
Contact Club (educational activities to mentally handicapped adults, improve craft, social and communication skills)
Bridging Courses (hairdressing, construction skills, and computing—aim of moving unemployed adults into main college where more advanced qualifications available)
Sewing Skills and Language Support (Asian Women)
Basic Skills for Asian Women (help seek employment and further education)
Communication Skills for Asian Women (help in job search)
Opportunities for Women (help provide access to further and higher education)
Return to Learn (Study skills and learning opportunities for unemployed adults on an isolated estate)
Communication/Job Search Skills (mainly single parents)
Life Skills (redundant Asian textile workers)
Access for Women (return to learn aimed at women on run down inner city estate)
RSA Practical Skills Profile (certificated course covering communication, calculations and computing)
Life and Social Skills
Personal Development/Playwork Training (leads to a certificated "caring" course)
Asian Women's Crafts (Sewing and Craft Skills)
Springbound (Confidence building job search skills)
Basic Craft and Communications (Education for redundant Bengali textile workers)
Craft Skills for Self Employment
Bangra Dance Teacher Training and Traditional Asian Music
Development Skills for the Unemployed
Fashion, Design and Hairdressing (Afro-Caribbean women)
Communication skills for Bengali Men and Women
Indian Classical Music Training
Communication Interpretation and Life Skills (Muslims)
Girlington Project (typing, sewing, knitting, motor vehicle maintenance (Asians)
Music Project (Afro-Caribbean Club)
Finance Open Learning
Art and Design
Aspects of Community Work
Craft/Communications Workshop (Blenheim Project)
Islamic Art and Calligraphy
Feasibility Study of the Educational Needs of the Bangladeshi Community
Painting and Decorating (Afro-Caribbean residents)
Video for Women
Communication Skills (for Travellers)

Group Development and Guidance for Isolated Unemployed People
WEA Mental Health Project
Fresh Start (Asian and Afro-Caribbean Unemployed Adults)
Opportunities for Lone Parents (photography, woodwork, dressmaking, computing, return to learn)
Traditional Asian Dressmaking
Creche Worker Support
Multi-Media Open Skills
Keyboard Opportunities
Comtram Counselling
Access to Open Learning
Counselling

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much grant was approved for Bradford community education and training under the urban programme for the period January 1987 to March 1988; and how much grant was applied for the year April 1988 to March 1989.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* January 1987 to March 1988, £1,018,000. April 1988 to March 1989, £570,000.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many students are currently attending courses in Bradford funded under the urban programme; how many tutors are currently employed on these courses; how many centres are involved; how many centres provide creche facilities; how many creche workers are employed; and how many children use creche facilities.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* This information is not held by the Department.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about delays in his Department's approval under the urban programme of the Bradford college contact club; and when he intends to announce his decision on the funding of the club for the current year.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* I have received no representations. This project is being considered within the context of Bradford's inner area programme as a whole. I expect to be able to announce a decision in the near future.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The list of achievements provided to my hon. Friend last July can be updated as follows:

Published a new series of Planning Policy Guidance notes, and a parallel series of Minerals Planning Guidance notes which provide concise and practical guidance on planning policies, in clearer and more accessible form than in earlier Departmental circulars and other official publications. These include a Planning Policy Guidance note on industrial and commercial development and small firms.

Introduced revised enquiries procedure rules which should help to speed up planning appeals involving enquiries.

Simplified outdoor advertisement control.

Brought back into use or disposed of unused public land on the land registers. This increased to 12,100 acres in 1987 compared with the revised 1986 figure of 9,200 acres.

Enabled local authorities to provide financial assistance for privately let housing accommodation (Local Government Act 1988) and recently increased the maximum amount of assistance to between 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. depending on area.

The Housing Bill currently before Parliament proposes to deregulate rents on new lettings. This will allow landlords to obtain a competitive return on their investment.

Provided for increased competition in the provision of certain local authority services under the Local Government Act 1988.

Encouraged the more effective provision of assistance to small firms in rural areas through the creation of the Rural Development Commission (formerly the Development Commission and CoSIRA).

The Rural Development Commission spent £30 million in 1987-88, compared with Development Commission expenditure of £27·5 million in 1986-87, from which they funded provision of 177,443 square feet of factory space by English Estates (with a further 286,008 square feet under construction at the end of the year) and 63 factories built in partnership with local authorities. Approval was given for 336 redundant building grants, and other help and advice was given to over 19,000 client firms, who were thereby enabled to attract over £20 million in loans from the private sector. The Department uses these and a range of other performance indicators to monitor the Commission's operations.

Established three new Urban Development Corporations— Sheffield, Leeds and Central Manchester— and extended the Black Country Development Corporation. Subject to parliamentary approval a further UDC will be established in Bristol and the Merseyside Development Corporation extended.

Provided the following assistance under the Urban Programme:

In 1987-88 £19·6 million Urban Programme expenditure was allocated to the provision of new or converted industrial units for small firms. This compared with £11·6 million allocated in 1986-87. Many of these units are small (less than 2,500 square feet) and in areas where the private sector is unwilling to make such provision.

Support is also given to preparatory works such as reclamation and assembly of sites, intended to make land available for industrial development by the private sector. £9·3 million was allocated to this in 1987-88 compared to £6·6 million in 1986-87.

In addition, expenditure on highway access works to assist development accounted for £7·8 million in 1987-88 compared to £6·2 million in 1986-87.

Direct loans and grants to firms chiefly to help with high inner city land and building costs and to businesses in Commercial and Industrial Improvement Areas accounted for £12 million in 1987-88 compared to £9·8 million in 1986-87.

General environmental projects to improve physical conditions and raise private sector confidence accounted for £6·8 million in 1987-88 compared to £4·6 million in 1986-87.

Advisory services to small businesses accounted for £3·9 million in 1987-88 compared to £5·1 million in 1986-87, and additional miscellaneous expenditure on business promotion, trade fairs, tourism, etc. accounted for £6·1 million in 1987-88 compared to £5 million in 1986-87.

The Department monitors this expenditure through a range of performance indicators. Performance against these measures is set out in detail in the annual reports on the urban programme published by this Department. The annual report on urban programme expenditure in 1986-87 is currently available free of charge from my Department. The annual report for 1987-88 is due to be published towards the end of this year.

The effect of urban programme assistance on small firms cannot always be separately identified. However, research evidence shows assistance is targeted closely on small firms, particularly those employing less than ten people.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Santiago regarding *(a)* the medical student Mauricio Guyaley, arrested and tortured, *(b)* Maria Elena Valeuzuela student of obstetrics, arrested and tortured, and *(c)* Cristiau Banaza, student of occupational therapy, arrested by the police in Santiago on 12 July.

Mr. Mellor: We understand from Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago that all three students were arrested during a violent demonstration on 11 July. They have been seen by the dean of the faculty of medicine at Santiago university, who has reported that they are in good health. We understand that there have been no allegations of torture.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago has joined the Spanish and French embassies in making representations to the Government in Chile about the arrest and torture of university students.

Mr. Mellor: We understand from Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago, which we asked to make urgent inquiries, that the French and Spanish embassies have made no representations about these arrests. We understand that there have been no allegations of torture.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will approach other European Community Governments in order to discuss a common approach to the future elections in Chile after the events of last week in Santiago.

Mr. Mellor: On 18 July 1988 the Foreign Ministers of the 12 members of the European Community issued the following statement:

"The Twelve reiterate their hope for an early and orderly restoration of democracy in Chile and recall their attachment to free and democratic elections in that country, as expressed in their declaration of 9 October 1987. They are convinced that restoration of democracy in Chile would contribute to strengthening civilian rule and stability in Latin America.

Taking note of the forthcoming plebiscite, the Twelve wish to stress the need for all measures to be taken so that the campaign be conducted and the vote take place in a way guaranteeing the free expression of the people's will and in a climate free of violence and intimidation.

In particular, the Twelve believe that for the proper conduct of the plebiscite it is essential that the Chilean Government without delay lifts the states of exception, restores political liberties, respects human rights and ensures freedom of information and opinion.

South Africa

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column 618, if Her Majesty's ambassador in South Africa is intending to try to visit Mr. Nelson Mandela in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to urge the South African Government to release Mr. Nelson Mandela immediately and unconditionally. All our efforts are designed to secure that objective. The South African Government are well aware of our views.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what urgent action is to be taken to repatriate to the United Kingdom the British citizens Carol Ann Roberts and her daughter Julie Rota Boyd who are stranded in Sekunda, South Africa without funds.

Mr. Mellor: Repatriation is not a statutory right and Mrs. Roberts and her daughter do not meet the normal criteria under which it is granted. Mr. Roberts left his wife and step-daughter in South Africa when he decided, for his own reasons, to return to the United Kingdom with his son in June. He has now recognised his obligations to his family and is in the process of raising funds for their return to this country.

Burmah Endeavour

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department received any direct warning from Iraq that the British registered vessel, the Burmah Endeavour, was liable to attack in the Gulf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. A report in a French newspaper about four British registered ships, including the Burmah Endeavour, operating in the Iranian advice zone as ferries and storage vessels for Iranian oil was drawn to the attention of officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 10 May by the Iraqi ambassador. It was also raised with the British ambassador in Baghdad on 12 May.

The Iraqi approaches did not constitute a warning of imminent attack. Nor did we have any indication from other sources of such an attack.

The MOD and the Department of Transport were informed of the Iraqi approaches. They in turn, contacted the General Council of British Shipping, the established channel of communication in such circumstances, and through it the owners of the vessels concerned.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Birmingham Polytechnic (Graphic Design)

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to graphic design, Birmingham polytechnic to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 21 November to Friday 25 November.

Student Unions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those student unions which will be investigated by his Department during the current review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those *(a)* colleges and *(b)* universities which will be investigated by his Department during the current review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the estimated cost of his Department's review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will outline his Department's programme concerning the current review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have written to my hon. Friend.

Cayley and Flight (Exhibition)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Cayley and Flight" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 14 November to Friday 18 November.

Interim Holding Committee

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions will be asked to continue for a second year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Yes. I shall in the autumn invite the Interim Advisory Committee to make recommendations on school teachers' pay and conditions for the year beginning 1 April 1989. I am glad to say that Lord Chilver has agreed to chair the committee for a second year.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Pending Trials

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases are currently awaiting trial in *(a)* the Court of Appeal and *(b)* the Divisional Court; and what were the equivalent figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987.

The Attorney-General: The available information is summarised in the table:

	Court of Appeal		
	Criminal Division	*Civil Division*	*Queen's Bench Divisional Court*
End—June 1988	2,963	800	973
End—Year 1987	2,943	827	1,164
End—Year 1986	2,841	891	—
End—Year 1985	2,657	878	—

Notes:
Figures for the Court of Appeal Criminal Division include both applications for leave to appeal and appeals.
Figures for the Court of Appeal Civil Division include both final and interlocutory appeals.
Figures for the Divisional Court include applications for leave and cases to be determined by a single judge or by the full court. Such figures are not available for 1985 and 1986.

Gazumping

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, *Official Report*, 30 June, column *295*, what evidence he has of the level of support from solicitors and other professional advisers for the changes in conveyancing practice identified by the Law Commission's standing committee to help reduce the practice of gazumping.

The Attorney-General: There are no available figures to indicate the level of support for these changes in conveyancing practice. These changes were identified by the conveyancing standing committee only last year, and it is too early to judge their effect.

Legal Aid Board

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many times the new Legal Aid Board has met.

The Attorney-General: I understand that there have been three board meetings so far, and that the board is also working through sub-committees, which meet approximately weekly.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Service Posts (Privatisation)

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Prime Minister whether, at the meeting held on 18 February with the general secretaries of the Civil Service trade unions, Government plans for the privatisation of civil service posts were discussed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The purpose of the meeting of Civil Service trade union leaders with the head of the Home Civil Service and senior colleagues on 18 February was to tell them of the Government's decision, which I announced to the House that day, to accept the main recommendations of the efficiency unit's report "Improving Management in Government: The Next Steps".

It was made clear at the meeting that the "Next Steps" initiative is separate from privatisation. The Government will maintain their privatisation policy, but "Next Steps" is primarily about those activities which are carried out within Government.

Sir Alan Walters

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with Sir Alan Walters about his possible reappointment as her economic adviser and as to the salary and terms of any such appointment.

The Prime Minister: There have been discussions with Sir Alan Walters about his returning as my economic adviser, but the details have not been settled.

Economic Advisers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list *(a)* her economic advisers and *(b)* the heads of her policy unit since 1979, and the salary and terms under which they were appointed.

The Prime Minister: The salaries payable on appointment from public funds of the officials concerned were as follows:

	£
Economic adviser	
Professor Alan Walters	28,500
Heads of the policy unit	
Mr. J. Hoskyns	16,780
Mr. W. F. R. Mount	23,022
Mr. J. Redwood	[1]
Professor B. Griffiths	48,500

[1] On secondment.

Apart from the one secondment from the private sector, all were appointed under the terms which apply to special advisers.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Estate Agents Act

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action has been taken since the Office of Fair Trading report, in February 1987, to deal with problems arising out of the operation of the Estate Agents Act.

Mr. Butcher: The major problem identified by the Office of Fair Trading in the course of its monitoring of the Estate Agents Act has been section 18 of the Act, on which I continue to await with interest the outcome of legal proceedings between the office and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

I shall consider the other issues identified by the OFT in the light of discussions which I am currently having with the major estate agency bodies.

Quality Assurance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report*, from the register of quality assessed United Kingdom companies held by his Department *(a)* companies on the register with an address in Coventry, *(b)* the quality assurance defence standard, or standards, to which they have been assessed, *(c)* the months in which they were last assessed and *(d)* the respective product area assessed.

Mr. Butcher: I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. A copy of the register is in the Library of the House.

Research Establishments

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet Civil Service trade unions to discuss the review of his Department's research establishments.

Mr. Butcher: DTI officials met the departmental trade union side on 20 June to discuss the review. A decision on the proposal to develop the National Engineering Laboratory within the private sector will be taken once bids have been appraised. Until then there are no plans to meet the Civil Service trade unions.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the total spending by the Duchy and Department of Trade and Industry, respectively, on press, public relations and advertising, respectively, in 1987-88;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Duchy office and Department of Trade and Industry, respectively, on press and public relations during 1988-89;

(3) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Duchy office and Department of Trade and Industry, respectively, on *(a)* television advertising *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising, and *(d)* other promotional material.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* The latest estimated expenditure by my Department on press and public relations in 1987-88 and 1988-89 is as follows. There is no separate expenditure on behalf of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

	1987-88 £	*1988-89* £
Press and public relations	1,155,000	1,425,000

Expenditure by my Department on advertising in 1987-88 was £9,139,000. The latest expenditure to date in 1988-89 by my Department on advertising and other promotional material is as follows. There has been no expenditure on radio advertising since 1 April. Detailed decisions on expenditure for the remainder of the year have yet to be taken. There is no separate expenditure on behalf of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

	1988-89 Expenditure to end June 1988 £
Television advertising	6,708,000
Newspaper advertising	1,745,000
Other promotional material including posters	2,277,000
Total	10,730,000

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Duchy office and Department of Trade and Industry, respectively.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* The latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of my Department is 41 (including 16 on clerical and other support duties). There are no separate staff employed on behalf of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Textile Imports

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is yet in a position to invoke the safeguard clause in the EEC/Turkey agreement governing textile imports due to the effects on the West Yorkshire textile industry arising from imports of acrylic fibre yarn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* Imports of Turkish acrylic yarn have fallen sharply in the first five

months of this year compared with the same period last year, and the safeguard clause is not applicable. However, an anti-dumping application from the industry is under consideration by the EC Commission.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Short Brothers plc

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans are being made for the privatisation of Short Brothers plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made to the House on 21 July.

MacBride Principles

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those whom his Department has directly or indirectly assisted, including representatives from the Fair Employment Agency, trades unions and other individuals or agencies, including Government Departments, to give evidence to legislatures in the United States of America considering adopting or who have adopted the MacBride principles; what was the overall financial cost and number of separate visits in each case; and if he will place in the Library copies of any transcripts or evidence submitted by the Fair Employment Agency or other officials in each case.

Mr. Viggers: Since June 1985 to date the overall cost of assistance to individuals to give evidence has been £86,856. I do not propose to identify the individuals concerned.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 19 July 1988]:* The principal Northern Ireland vehicle for strengthening the small firm sector is the Local Enterprise Development Unit, Northern Ireland's small business agency. The unit can offer a wide range of selective assistance by grants and loans to new and expanding firms with up to 50 employees. During 1987-88 offers were made to 873 projects promoting 4,570 jobs, a small increase on the previous year's level of 4,543 jobs. In addition to the number of jobs assisted, the unit's main performance indicators are cost per job and percentage contribution to total project costs. Over the past three years these have shown the following trends:

	Cost per job (£)	*Contribution (per cent.)*
1985-86	4,890	38
1986-87	4,532	36
1987-88	4,520	35

A most encouraging initiative is the local enterprise programme, under which more than 30 community-based, business-led groups are being assisted to contribute to the economic regeneration of their areas. At present, 18 local enterprise centres are operational, providing accommodation and common services to over 500 new small businesses employing nearly 1,000 people. When complete, the network of centres will have the potential to accommodate businesses with up to 3,000 employees in total.

The stimulation of enterprise is being greatly assisted by the work of the Northern Ireland small business institute based at the University of Ulster, a successful marriage of academia, the private and public sectors, providing a range of training and developmental services to new and existing entrepreneurs. The institute's programmes include two aimed specifically at harnessing the talents of young graduates—the graduates enterprise programme encouraging graduates to establish their own businesses and the graduate attachment programme encouraging small firms to utilise the skills of those with good qualifications in developing their businesses. Both programmes are successful in terms of those who go on to set up their own enterprises or are employed in key positions by small firms. The Government have also recognised the need for greater awareness among small companies of the opportunities that exist both in export markets and as suppliers to public authorities and major private sector undertakings.

A series of exhibitions and seminars are being held involving the central unit of purchasing (Northern Ireland), LEDU; the Industrial Development Board and national and local undertakings; to date some 2,500 local companies have attended. In the export field the Industrial Development Board's trade mission and fairs programme attracted a record 223 participants in overseas missions and trade fairs during 1988. The structure of Northern Ireland industry is such that the greater majority of firms employ fewer than 200 people, so that the effect of national policies for stimulating enterprise and reducing the burdens upon business will be enjoyed mainly by smaller businesses.

ACE Funds

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on the withdrawal of ACE funds to community projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* A number of organisations and individuals have made representations regarding the withdrawal of ACE funding to community groups, and full consideration has been given to the individual circumstances of each case. I remain satisfied that the present arrangements ensure that ACE funding goes to those bodies that are in the best position to provide services for disadvantaged groups.

Tyrone Crystal Ltd.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total grants received by Tyrone Crystal since its inception, detailing how much grants were received in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* The amount paid in selective assistance and standard capital grants to Tyrone Crystal Ltd. since it was acquired by the Dungannon and District Co-operative Enterprises Ltd. in 1980 is £774,009.

In the years 1985, 1986 and 1987, the amounts were:

	£
1985	232,004
1986	168,372
1987	263,755

In addition, the company has received assistance under various training grants schemes operated by the Department.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Jamaican Citizens

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of Jamaica *(a)* have sought entry to the United Kingdom as passengers since January 1987, *(b)* were refused entry on arrival in each month since January 1987 and *(c)* made applications in Jamaica for entry certificates in each month since January 1987; and what proportions of applications at *(c)* were granted or refused entry.

Mr. Renton: The following table gives, for each month from January 1987 to the latest available, the numbers of citizens of Jamaica admitted to the United Kingdom and the numbers refused entry and removed. In 1987 a total of 3,099 applications in Jamaica for entry clearance to the United Kingdom were granted (initially or on appeal) and 710 were refused initially; monthly data and the other information requested are not available centrally.

Jamaican citizens (a) given leave to enter the United Kingdom and (b) refused leave to enter and removed

Number

Month	*Given leave to enter*	*Refused entry and removed*
1987		
January	2,290	17
February	1,740	27
March	1,880	10
April	1,850	14
May	2,490	19
June	2,670	12
July	4,370	15
August	4,510	27
September	3,390	19
October	2,290	28
November	2,010	38
December	2,110	43
Total	31,600	269
1988		
January	2,490	24
February	1,620	26
March	n/a	32

Staff-prisoner Ratios

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the ratios of *(a)* governor and prison officer grades, and *(b)* other civilian grades, per inmate; what were the equivalent figures 10 years ago; and what corresponding information he has for equivalent services in other European Community countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 1 January 1988 the ratios were *(a)* 1:2·27 and *(b)* 1:5·49 taking into account all prison service staff including those at headquarters and regional offices. The equivalent figures on 1 January 1978 were *(a)* 1:2·50 and *(b)* 1:6·74. We have no corresponding information for equivalent services in other European Community countries.

Fire Fighting (Prisons)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often practice of fire-fighting procedures takes place in prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Governors have been advised that subject to any overriding security or control considerations, a fire practice should be held at least once in six months. Procedures are also practised ad hoc as part of the training of those allocated to fire duties.

Death Penalty

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received concerning the re-introduction of the death penalty since June 1987; how many supported restoration and how many were opposed; what percentage the latter is to the former; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We receive many letters about capital punishment and most of those who write to us are in favour of restoring the death penalty. Precise figures are not available.

Offences by Children

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to allow the courts to require parents to bear financial responsibility for offences committed by their children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from him on 24 March, at column *183*.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received concerning parents being financially responsible for offences committed by their children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: So far in 1988 the Home Office has received about 30 letters suggesting that parents should be made responsible for offences committed by their children.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many children and young persons were found guilty of *(a)* vandalism, *(b)* offences against the person and *(c)* public order offences in each year since 1983;

(2) how many children and young persons were cautioned by a senior police officer for *(a)* vandalism, *(b)* offences against the person and *(c)* public order offences in each year since 1983.

Mr. John Patten: Such information is published annually in volume 4 of the supplementary tables to "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library. The information is at tables S4.1(A) and S4.1(B) for persons found guilty and tables S4.1(C) and S4.1(D) for persons cautioned.

Crime Circular

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish the Home Office consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters;

(2) if he will make available to all public libraries the Home Office consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters.

Mr. Douglas Hogg We have no plans to publish the consolidated circular or to make it more widely available than it is at present. It is a compendium of unclassified guidance already issued in individual numbered Home Office circulars, which are routinely distributed to a number of libraries and academic institutions. Copies of these circulars and a list of current circulars are also distributed to local authorities, which are responsible for the management of public libraries.

The codes of practice made under section 66 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which are incorporated in the consolidated circular, are separately published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Copies are in the Library.

Badgers

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning greater protection for badgers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to outlaw badger baiting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government share the widely expressed public abhorrence against cruelty to badgers. In the last four to six weeks we have received about 150 letters from hon. Members and about 200 letters from members of the public about it. We are considering those representations, but I must make it clear that cruelty to badgers is already prohibited by law. The baiting of any animal is expressly prohibited by the Protection of Animals Act 1911. The penalty for the offence was doubled, under the Protection of Animals (Penalties) Act 1987, to a fine of up to £2,000 or six months' imprisonment, or both. Further specific protection to the badger was given in the Badgers Act 1973, which was greatly strengthened by amendments made in the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, which provide that if, in any proceedings for an offence of attempting to kill, injure, or take a badger, there is evidence from which it could reasonably be concluded that at the material time the accused was attempting to kill, injure or take a badger, he shall be presumed to have been attempting to kill, injure or take a badger unless the contrary is shown.

Sentencing Policy

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to monitor the sentencing of black people in each magistrates court and Crown court throughout England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 July 1988]:* We are considering ad hoc studies.

DEFENCE

Royal Army Veterinary Corps

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps.

Mr. Freeman: The corps has a viable future and will continue to develop in accordance with defence needs.

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated cost of the Trident programme, inclusive of all associated capital works costs; and if he will make it his policy to include the cost of such works in all future statements of expenditure on the Trident programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 January this year, the current estimate for the Trident programme is £9,043 million, at 1987-88 prices and an exchange rate of £1=$1.62. This figure includes the proportion of costs of capital works properly attributable to Trident, as have all total programme cost estimates which have been announced in the past.

Burmah Endeavour

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department received any warning from Iraq that the British registered vessel, the Burmah Endeavour, was liable to attack in the Gulf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No specific warning of the attack on the Burmah Endeavour off Larak island on 14 May was ever given. However, ships at Larak island have frequently been attacked and Iraq has consistently claimed the right, in defiance of international law, to attack any shipping helping to sustain Iranian economic activity. The Iraqi ambassador in London reiterated this claim at a meeting with Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials on 10 May, mentioning four British ships, including the Burmah Endeavour, which were being used as storage vessels for Iranian oil. His views were firmly rebutted at that meeting. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office passed details of the discussion to my Department, which informed the General Council of British Shipping, the established channel of communication in such cases, before the attack took place.

Home Defence Exercises

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military home defence exercises will be held in the autumn of 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Nine separate military home defence exercises will be held this autumn. The details are as follows:

7 to 11 September: Exercise Autumn Tiger in South East District.

9 to 17 September: Exercise Eastern Shield in Eastern District.

9 to 17 September: Exercise Strong Link in North West District.

23 to 28 September: Exercise Northern Crusade in North East District.

1 to 9 October: Exercise Drake's Drum in South West District.

1 to 9 October: Exercise Capital Guard in London District.

1 to 9 October: Exercise Triple Crown in Wales District.

8 to 15 October: Exercise Western Encounter in Western District.

22 October to 2 November: Exercise Bonnie Dundee in Scotland District.

I have asked the general officers commanding these exercises to ensure that full information about them is made available locally and that hon. Members whose constituencies are involved are invited to watch them. I have also asked the Army district commanders to ensure that there will be minimal disruption to the public. The majority of activities planned to take place outside military establishments and training areas will normally be held in remote areas and with the co-operation of the civil police.

The purpose of these exercises will be to test our current plans for a wide range of home defence operations. It is useful to exercise these plans at a period when international tension in Europe is low, so as to maintain effectiveness and to ensure that, if the need arose, they could be operated successfully in transition to war or war, when home defence would be an essential element of our overall defence capability. The military personnel involved in each exercise will be practising their task of defending installations in the United Kingdom—including, in a few cases, ports, airfields and other operational facilities—that are vital to our defence and to the reinforcement of NATO.

Serving alongside Regular Army personnel, elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force and members of the United States forces based in this country will be volunteers from the Territorial Army, the home service force and individual reservists. I particularly welcome their participation and I am grateful to their employers for releasing them for these important exercises. Their role in tension or war would be a vital one.

I also very much welcome the participation, at various times in these exercises, of a number of non-military organisations, including the police, fire and ambulance services and voluntary aid societies. They, too, would have a vital role in tension or war, and I am most grateful to them for finding the time and resources to take part in these exercises.

These exercises will be the first significant home defence field training since 1985. In that year we held a single, nationally based home defence exercise, Brave Defender. This autumn's exercise will be very different, taking place under separate district command arrangements and designed to test our plans and procedures at a more local level. I hope that all participants, however, will find them a valuable preparation for the next national home defence exercise, Brave Defender 2, which is due to take place in the early 1990s.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

East Craigs Seed Testing Station

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from the trade union movement and local representatives about the future of East Craigs seed testing station, Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Following publication of the report on the plant variety testing and seed certification systems in the United Kingdom for comment, representations have been received from the Institution of Professional Civil Servants at national and local level. Officials have also met the Scottish Office trade union side to discuss the report. The future of East Craigs seed testing station is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the competent authority responsible for assessing the environmental implications of any new afforestation proposals from the Forestry Commission; who decides whether an environmental statement is required; what arrangements will be made for independent scrutiny and what consultations will take place with *(a)* statutory bodies, *(b)* non-statutory bodies and *(c)* Government Departments.

Mr. MacGregor: The Forestry Commission is the competent authority for assessing the environmental implications of afforestation proposals and for deciding whether an environmental statement is required in respect of its own proposals as well as those relating to private land. When an environmental statement is prepared by the Forestry Commission on its own account, it will publicise it and enter into consultations in the same way as for private forestry cases.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Chess Association

Mr. Steel To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of his decision to remove the international travel grant from the Scottish Chess Association, he has received any information about other countries, apart from Scotland, having to withdraw from the world olympiad.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer which I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). I have received no information about countries which have withdrawn from the world olympiad.

Traffic Flow Statistics

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest available traffic flow figures for *(a)* the M74 junctions 4-5, *(b)* the M74 junctions 5-6, *(c)* the M8 junctions 4-5, *(d)* the M90 junctions 5-6 and *(e)* the M80 junctions 4-5.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1987 the annual average daily traffic flows, based on factored traffic counts, were:

	Vehicles per day
M74 junctions 4-5	44,637
M74 junctions 5-6	42,336
M8 junctions 4-5	29,128
M90 junctions 5-6	17,944
M80 junctions 4-5	38,115

Children Act 1975

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review section 53 of the Children Act 1975 in so far as it causes a natural parent who has remarried to become an adoptive parent if the new spouse seeks to become an adoptive parent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Section 53 of the 1975 Act came into force in Scotland on 1 April 1986 and there are at present no plans to review its operation. The requirement that, in these circumstances, a natural parent must become an adoptive parent for the purposes of the adoption process is well established and is designed to safeguard the interests of the child.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the perinatal mortality rate for each health board in each year since 1968.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is as follows:

Perinatal mortality rates, per 1,000 births (live and still), to health board area, Scotland, 1974 to 1987

Health board area	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Borders	30	13	13	16	10	18	18	9	10	8	13	5	8	3
Forth Valley	26	25	22	16	14	14	12	15	16	13	9	10	10	8
Dumfries and Galloway	19	23	21	16	16	13	15	12	7	13	10	10	7	7
Fife	23	19	15	14	15	15	13	11	13	10	11	10	11	13
Grampian	18	18	14	14	17	13	8	11	11	10	12	11	11	9
Highland	20	23	19	17	9	14	12	12	10	9	11	7	8	7
Lothian	19	20	17	16	17	14	12	11	12	11	13	11	8	8
Argyll and Clyde	22	24	24	22	14	16	13	12	11	11	12	10	12	8
Ayrshire and Arran	25	23	22	19	18	19	19	11	14	16	12	9	13	12
Greater Glasgow	23	23	20	20	16	13	14	12	11	9	10	10	9	10
Lanarkshire	29	22	18	25	18	15	14	13	14	12	10	9	14	9
Tayside	21	16	14	16	13	10	13	8	7	8	8	7	8	6
Orkney	27	8	4	—	4	20	8	4	8	13	16	21	9	11
Shetland	27	17	13	14	11	11	16	9	17	22	9	13	11	14
Western Isles	25	20	21	23	17	2	8	24	13	6	12	5	—	11
Scotland	23	21	18	18	15	14	13	12	12	11	11	10	10	9

Notes:
(1) 1987 figures are provisional.
(2) Comparable information prior to 1974 is not available.
(3) Figures for the smaller health board areas, in particular Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles, are based on small numbers of births and therefore rates vary considerably with small changes in the number of deaths.

Forests

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the anticipated rates of return in each forest district in Scotland for *(a)* existing Forestry Commission commercial forests and *(b)* Forestry Commission forests planted between 1987 and 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 July 1988]:* The anticipated rate of return on existing forests is not measured by forest districts, because a calculation on that basis would require identifying all past expenditures on each of the existing crops within each district, going back in some cases to the 1920s. However, each forest district is subject to a periodic valuation of existing forests by discounting anticipated expenditure and revenue up to the time of final felling at 3 per cent.

For new planting between 1987 and 1990 the information is as follows:

Forest district	*Anticipated rate of return in real terms*	*Comparative rate of return if only conifers were to be planted*
Wester Ross	2·2	2·4
Moray	—	—
Speyside	2·8	2·9
Buchan	2·5	2·7
Kincardine	3·2	3·4
Easter Ross	2·5	2·7
Dornoch	2·4	2·7
Inverness	1·7	1·9
Fort Augustus	2·1	2·4
Lochaber	2·1	2·3
Mull	2·8	3·0
Strontian	3·0	3·2
Aberfoyle	2·6	2·8
Angus	3·2	3·4
Cowal	3·0	3·2
Fife	—	—
Kintyre	2·6	2·8
Lochawe	3·2	3·4
Lorne	2·9	3·1
Perth	2·8	3·1
Newton Stewart	2·3	2·7
Castle Douglas	—	—
Ayr and Arran	2·3	2·8
Lothian and Tweed	—	—
Nithsdale	1·9	2·3
Borders	2·7	3·0
Lockerbie	—	—

Note: Where no figures are quoted this is because either no new planting is taking place or the amount of new planting is insignificant.

ENERGY

Deregulation and Enterprise

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report on progress made towards the establishment of a deregulation and enterprise section within his Department.

Mr. Parkinson: Since 1985 one section of my Department has had among its responsibilities the general implementation of the proposals in the White Paper

"Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571), published in July of that year. Its aim is to ensure that those in the Department concerned with regulatory activities take appropriate account of the burdens those activities may place on business. But it is not concerned with policy decisions in the area of safety including, for example, offshore safety regulation.

Petroleum Engineering (Safety)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the annual budget of the safety directorate with the petroleum engineering division of his Department in each year from 1979 to date, detailing expenditure on safety engineering inspection and operations, pipelines inspectorate, diving inspectorate, research and development and the safety policy unit.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The safety directorate's staff costs are not separately identifiable. The directorate's budget for reseach and development on offshore safety in 1988-89 is some £6·6 million. Expenditure in previous years is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	4·2
1980-81	4·4
1981-82	5·0
1982-83	4·8
1983-84	4·6
1984-85	4·1
1985-86	6·0
1986-87	6·4
1987-88	5·8

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the annual staffing complement of the safety directorate within the petroleum engineering division of his Department in each year from 1979 to date, detailing personnel levels in the following branches *(a)* 5A safety engineering, *(b)* 5B inspection and operations, *(c)* 6 pipelines inspectorate, *(d)* 7 diving inspectorate, *(e)* 8 research and development and *(f)* safety policy unit.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of technical staff in my safety directorate from 1980 to 1988 is set out in the table. Operations and safety are grouped together:

	July 1988	*March 1987*	*October 1985*	*March 1982*	*July 1981*	*June 1980*
Operations and Safety	22	23	16	20	19	14
Pipelines inspectorate	9	8	7	7	7	6
Diving inspectorate	6	5	4	5	5	5
Research and Development	7	5	5	4	5	3

The safety policy unit is staffed by three administrative staff. Figures are available only for the dates shown.

Oil Rigs (Safety)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* those safety regulations from which offshore installations are exempt;

(2) what procedures are adopted when consideration is given to exemptions from safety regulations for offshore installations by his Department; and under what statutory authority such exemptions are granted.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Offshore safety regulations apply to all offshore installations. Both the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 confer powers to exempt installations from all or part of such regulations.

Exemptions are issued only when I am fully satisfied that alternative adequate safety arrangements will be in operation and the companies have fully justified their request. Requests for individual exemptions are carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* his formal responsibilities for health and safety on offshore oil installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend's responsibilities are set out, or provided for, in the following Acts:

(1) The Petroleum (Production) Act 1934.
(2) The Continental Shelf Act 1964.
(3) The Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971.
(4) The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (as extended offshore by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Application outside Great Britain) Order 1977 (S.I. 1977/1232)).
(5) The Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines Act 1975.
(6) The Petroleum Act 1987.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make regulations requiring any company operating offshore installations to ensure that all its employees who work on such installations have a basic minimum swimming proficiency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes duties on employers to provide the necessary training for the health and safety of the work force.

Given the hostile environment of the North sea, experience has shown that emphasis must be placed on the use of survival systems, including life boats, life rafts, life jackets, immersion suits and standby vessels.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Morning Sittings

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list in the *Official Report* the dates when the House sat in the morning under Standing Order No. 10 for each session since 1967.

Mr. Wakeham: Under the provisions of a temporary Order of the House of 12 December 1967, and of Standing Order No. 10 (first made on 12 November 1968), sittings of the House were suspended until 10 am on the following occasions:

1967-68
26 February 1968
20 May 1968
27 May 1968
28 May 1968
29 May 1968
23 July 1968

1968-69
25 November 1968
16 December 1968
18 February 1969
19 February 1969
18 March 1969
24 March 1969
1 April 1969
29 April 1969
14 July 1969

The Standing Order has not been used on any subsequent occasions.

Private Members' Bills

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list in the *Official Report* those private Members' Bills which received the Royal Assent, and which have not yet come into operation, since 1958.

Mr. Wakeham: No. This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

Airports (Traffic Congestion)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking with regard to the traffic congestion at Britain's airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Congestion has largely arisen from industrial action by overseas air traffic controllers, but some stems from inefficiencies in operating air traffic flow management across Europe. These are not matters within the control of the United Kingdom Government.

We have secured the following:

—Under the presidency of my noble Friend, the Minister for Aviation, Eurocontrol has accepted a package of measures to tackle European air congestion.

—With our strong encouragement, the Civil Aviation Authority has introduced equipment to make flow management work better, and continues to seek improvements in the system.

—We have changed the traffic distribution rules so charter operators have the opportunity to use spare capacity at Heathrow for their own or subchartered aircraft where that will help holidaymakers who would otherwise face hardship.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also asked the CAA to report to him by November on strategies for making good use of air traffic control capacity in the LTMA in the period to 1995; and asked the CAA to advise him by July 1989 on the adequacy of airport capacity, taking account of air traffic control requirements in the period to 2005. We are keeping in close contact with the CAA on these matters.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest information he has regarding the building of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: From the frequent contacts between my Department and Eurotunnel conerning safety and other regulatory aspects of the construction of the tunnel and the recent receipt of Eurotunnel's first annual report submitted to the intergovernmental commission I understand that, although recent progress has been somewhat slower than earlier expected, Eurotunnel and the contractors continue to plan for commencement of operation in May 1993.

Copies of the annual report mentioned will shortly be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Driving Tests (Wrexham)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the Gatewen Department of Transport training centre, Llay, Wrexham is given sufficient driving test appointments for its trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Gatewen Training Ltd. has applied for block booking facilities for its trainees taking HGV driving tests at the Department's Wrexham test centre. The north-western traffic area office is making arrangements to meet Gatewen Training Ltd.'s requirements.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many examiners were in post at Gatewen training in 1980; what is the total currently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Gatewen Training Ltd. is a private HGV driver training organisation which presents trainees for driving tests at the Department of Transport's Wrexham test centre. The Wrexham test centre is now—and was in 1980—staffed by one examiner, who also occasionally conducts tests at Caernarfon. Additional examiners are made available from time to time as necessary to meet demand.

Driver Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of *(a)* training heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle drivers and *(b)* training an instructor to RTITB standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I cannot say. The Department of Transport does not train HGV/PSV drivers or driving instructors. The hon. Member may wish to contact the RTITB.

Roads

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he plans the existing backlog in motorway and trunk road renewal to be eliminated.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our aim has been 1992. We will consider the effect of rephasing capital maintenance works.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will complete his current review of the national road construction and maintenance programme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall be keeping the programme under review throughout the year.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, on completion of his review of the national road construction and maintenance programme, he will publish a revised programme of work for both new construction and maintenance work for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall be keeping the programme under review throughout the year. For new construction, our aim remains to start all planned schemes which are ready.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends publishing a programme of new construction and maintenance work to be carried out on the motorway and trunk road network in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. In the normal way.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of his review of the national road construction and maintenance programme, he intends to maintain the commitment set out in his announcement of 22 March that 80 miles of motorway and over 200 miles of trunk roads will be renewed in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member of Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 21 July.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the performance figures are for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in recent years; and what its targets are for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The DVLC has recently issued to all its staff a statement of its performance in a booklet entitled "The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre and its local offices—Facts and Figures 1987-88". I am placing copies in the Library.

The DVLC's performance record between 1984-85 and 1987-88 shows:

(i) an 11·5 per cent. growth in the volume of business handled with an 8·5 per cent. (5,571 to 5,107) reduction in numbers of staff employed;

(ii) a 10 per cent. reduction in unit costs per transaction (£1·49 to £1·34);

(iii) an improved turnround time for work at the centre—turnround has been reduced from 10 days to clear 90 per cent. of the driver and vehicle transactions received to six days for drivers and eight days over three quarters of the year for vehicles;

(iv) an improved record on the enforcement of vehicle excise duty—a 22 per cent. increase (290,000 to 355,000) in the number of effectively completed cases against evaders with an improved yield to cost ratio from 2·6:1 to 2·9:1.

The DVLC's main performance target for 1988-89 is to improve customer service while absorbing a continued 4 per cent. annual increase in workload and reducing unit costs still further by 2 per cent. in real terms. Turnround performance targets are to maintain drivers system performance at six days to clear 90 per cent. of the transactions received and to improve the vehicles system to eight days over the whole year.

Drivers, vehicle owners and taxpayers will wish to join me in congratulating all concerned on achievements in recent years.

Rear Seat Belts

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Rear Seat Belts by Children) Act 1988 will be brought into operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Act requires that the regulations which will give effect to the legislation have first to be approved by Parliament. We are drafting them. We shall consult widely in doing so.

No responsible parent would wait for the law before fitting and using child restraints. Advice, and a copy of the Department's leaflet "Protect your child in the Car", which we have recently revised, can be obtained by ringing our road safety hotline (Freephone 0800 234888). The Department will continue to press home to parents the message that the use of restraints saves children's lives.

Bus Levies (Germany)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what levies per metre are required to be paid by British passenger buses travelling in Germany; what is the purpose of these levies; to which authority they are paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 21 July 1988]:* British coaches have to pay a levy of 0.7007 pfennigs per passenger kilometre for journeys made in the Federal Republic of Germany. The tax is collected by customs officials at the border. The aim is to impose on foreign operators a charge equivalent to the VAT levied on domestic passenger services.

Motorways (Traffic Flows)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the latest available 24-hour traffic flow data for each link of *(a)* the M1, *(b)* the M4 (in England), *(c)* the M6, *(d)* the M25 and *(e)* the M5.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to the Hon. Member.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Children

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will lay before Parliament a report on all aspects of responsibilities for children together with relevant reports from the Departments of Education and Environment and the Home Office every three years.

Mrs. Currie: There are already three statutory reports presented to Parliament on children's services. These are (with details of most recent report published):

an annual consolidated and classified statistical abstract (Children in Care in England and Wales—March 1985: DHSS publication, February 1988),

a triennial report on the exercise by local authorities of their functions in providing social services for children, and the provision by voluntary organisations of facilities for children (Social Services for Children in England and Wales 1982-84: December 1985—HoC 90), and

a quinquennial report on the operation of the provisions of the Children Act 1975 (Children Act 1975—second report to Parliament: November 1984—HoC 20).

All are in the Library.

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his Department's policy towards the provision of long-stay hospital care for elderly people;

(2) what guidelines his Department gives to district and regional health authorities relating to the provision of long-stay hospital care for elderly people.

Mrs. Currie: Our policy is that the NHS has a responsibility to meet elderly people's need for long-term nursing care, either through hospital or community health services. This was reflected in the 1981 White Paper "Growing Older" and in subsequent annual planning guidelines issued to health authorities. This year's guidelines were issued on Tuesday 19 July. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Children in Care

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government will bring forward proposals in new legislation about children in care to place local authorities under a duty to support young people leaving care in the manner of a good parent, following the changes in income support.

Mrs. Currie: Young people who are not living with their parents and who are in the care of a local authority immediately before they reach the age of 16 will be eligible to receive income support for a short period after leaving school. By the end of this period they will have been offered a YTS place. There is therefore no need to extend the duties of local authorities beyond the proposals on aftercare outlined in the White Paper "The Law on Child Care and Family Services" (Cm. 62) at paragraphs 32 and 33.

Social Fund Officers

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific training *(a)* social fund officers and *(b)* social fund inspectors are receiving to assist them in implementing paragraph 1017 of the manual; and what proportion of total training hours this represents.

Mr. Portillo: Social fund officers receive formal training amounting to just over three weeks in total. It includes exercises on self-awareness and the effect of personal attitudes, bias and prejudice in the decision-making process.

I am advised by the social fund commissioner that social fund inspectors go through the same initial training programme as social fund officers. In addition, they attend a further one-week formal course arranged by the commissioner on their specific responsibilities as social fund inspectors. This training course focuses throughout on the principles of fair and balanced decision-making.

It is not possible to quantify what proportion of the total training time for SFOs and SFIs is devoted to assisting them in implementing paragraph 1017 of the social fund manual, because the considerations of bias an prejudice on the decision-making process is a continuous thread throughout the training period.

TVam (Lock-out)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been paid in unemployment and other benefits to members of the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians locked out and subsequently dismissed by TVam; what were the grounds for *(a)* payment and *(b)* withholding of benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information on social security benefits is not kept according to current occupation of claimants.

Income Support

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has completed his review of income support for hostel dwellers.

Mr. Portillo: Hostel dwellers not in full-time work, like people in ordinary board and lodging accommodation, are helped by special rates of income support with accommodation costs as well as with other necessities and are not eligible for housing benefit. From next April, ordinary boarders will be eligible for housing benefit to help meet their lodging charges and normal income support to help with other costs.

We have reviewed the arrangements for hostel dwellers in the light of the changes affecting boarders, taking into account the reformed structure of the social security scheme. As part of the review the Department commissioned the Policy Studies Institute to find out more about hostels, their clientele, costs, sources of funding and services provided.

Our conclusion is that the present rules contain anomalies. They assume that hostel dwellers receive prepared meals from their landlords, whereas half do their own cooking. They place special limits on hostel charges which have little in common with the controls on housing benefit paid for normal rents, yet most hostel dwellers live in ordinary houses. They treat a small group of people as different from other claimants, when in fact the differences are not clear cut: for example, over half of hostel dwellers receiving income support are registering as available for work, and 80 per cent. of hostels provide no personal care for residents.

We are therefore issuing a consultation paper today to interested organisations inviting views on two alternative approaches to change. I have made arrangements for copies to be placed in the Library. The first proposal is to pay housing benefit and normal income support to all hostel dwellers from April 1989. The second proposal would limit any changes to the majority of hostel dwellers who receive no substantial personal care from the hostel. Neither proposal would apply to hostels registered as residential care homes.

Comments on the proposals are requested by 23 September.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the public expenditure arising from *(a)* moving from supplementary benefits to income support, *(b)* the original transitional protection arrangements and *(c)* the further additional transitional protection arrangements announced on 27 April.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates of the information requested are *(a)* £220 million higher than if supplementary benefit had continued with a normal uprating, *(b)* rather more than £200 million, and *(c)* the additional income support and housing benefit transitional protection could amount to £100 million.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of telephones, personal aids, adaptations and holidays provided by local authority social services departments for people with disabilities in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Portillo: Figures for 1987, the latest year for which data are available, are shown in the table. For local authorities which did not provide information, the latest available data for those authorities are used.

Cases of assistance to persons by local authority social services departments in England—Year ended 31 March 1987

	Number
Communication equipment	
Installation of:	
Telephones	14,811
Attachments	3,772
Payment of telephone rentals	99,548
Other	6,098
Television	
Supply and installation	768
Licence fees or rentals	5,441
Supply of radios	1,320
Other personal aids	448,130
Adaptations to dwellings	
Non-local authority property	76,359
Local authority property	17,399
Holidays	56,610

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current number of registered disabled people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: The latest available information on the numbers of persons registered as disabled with local authorities in England is in the table. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Number of persons with disabilities registered with local authority social services departments (England)

Type of disability	[1] *Year*	*All persons*
Physically disabled (general classes)	1984	1,107,708
Blind or partically sighted	1986	191,652
Deaf or hard of hearing	1986	97,431

[1] All figures as at 31 March.

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current total number of people receiving rate rebates who *(a)* are and *(b)* are not registered disabled people.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally.

Physiological Measurement Grades

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to re-evaluate the physiological measurement grades by taking account of the introduction of new technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The pay and grade structure of physiological measurement technicians are for negotiation in the professional and technical staffs B Whitley council. It is for that council to determine the need to review the grades of any of its staff groups.

Drugs

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the estimated number of deaths caused from the use of illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

Mrs. Currie: The available data are shown in the tables.

Table 1 shows the number of deaths registered in 1987[1] in England and Wales with an underlying cause of death stated as drug dependence or non-dependent abuse of drugs.

It is not possible from death registrations to identify reliably which of these deaths were due to the use of illegal drugs.

Table 1
Deaths from drug dependence and non-dependent abuse of drugs

ICD code[2]	*Cause of death*	*Number of deaths*
304	Drug dependence	165
305.2-305.9	Non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco)	56

[1] Provisional. (Not yet published).
[2] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Table 2 shows the number of deaths registered in 1987[1] in England and Wales assigned to underlying causes of death due to diseases associated with alcohol consumption.

Table 2
Number of deaths associated with alcohol consumption

ICD code[2]	*Main diagnosis*	*Number of deaths*
291	Alcoholic psychoses	15
303	Alcoholic dependence syndrome	115
305.0	Non-dependent abuse of alcohol	122
425.5	Alcoholic cardiomyopathy	74
571.0-571.3	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol reported as a cause	1,153
980	Toxic effect of alcohol	110
571.4-571.9	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol not specifically reported as a cause	1,556

[1] Provisional. (Not yet published).
[2] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

In addition, statistics collated by the Department of Transport indicate that in 1986 in Great Britain there were 5,000 deaths or serious injuries on the roads where the driver or rider subsequently failed a roadside breath test.

For smoking it is not possible to be precise. Most deaths associated with cigarette smoking arise from three diseases: lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and "heart attacks" due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart. However, the proportion of deaths attributable to smoking is also implicated in certain other conditions where no estimate of the numbers of the deaths caused by smoking is available—for example, obstruction of the arteries of the lower limbs, and strokes.

It is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of deaths from cancers of the lung, lip, oesophagus and larynx, and 90 per cent. of deaths from chronic bronchitis, obstructive lung disease, chronic pulmonary heart disease and aortic aneurysm are attributable to smoking. The total number of deaths from these conditions involved is given in table 3.

Table 3
England and Wales—1987[1]

ICD code[2]	*Cause of death*	*Number of deaths*
Malignant neoplasm		
162	Trachea, bronchus and lung	35,138
140-149	Lip, oral cavity and pharynx	1,689
150	Oesophagus	4,770
161	Larynx	866
Diseases of the circulatory system		
416	Chronic pulmonary heart disease	680
441	Aortic aneurysm	7,844
Diseases of the respiratory system		
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	9,821
496	Chronic airways obstruction, not elsewhere classified	15,175

[1] Provisional (not yet published).
[2] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

In 1983 the Royal College of Physicians in its report "Health or Smoking" estimated that perhaps 20 per cent. of deaths due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart were related to smoking. The medical term for this condition is "ischaemic heart disease" but it is commonly referred to as "coronary heart disease". The total number of deaths from this condition for England and Wales in 1987 is as follows:

ICD code[1]	*Cause of death*	*Number of deaths*
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	155,235

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total expenditure on programmes aimed at reducing the use of *(a)* illegal drugs, *(b)* alcohol and *(c)* tobacco.

Mrs. Currie: The provision of services for drug and alcohol misusers is primarily the responsibility of health and local authorities. Information is not centrally available on authorities' expenditure from their normal allocations on these services, nor on expenditure on tobacco-related programmes. However, the Government made available £6,235,000 to health authorities in England in 1987-88 specifically for the development of drug misuse services.

Central expenditure in 1987-88 on programmes aimed at reducing the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and the use of tobacco, was as shown in the following table.

	£
Drug Misuse	
Central funding initiative (pump-priming grants to develop local services)	4,046,680
Grants to national voluntary organisations	534,091
Drug prevention and anti-injecting publicity	5,200,000
	9,780,771
Alcohol Misuse	
Grants to voluntary organisations	553,756
Smoking	
Grants to voluntary organisations	200,000
Publication of tar and nicotine levels	16,200
	216,200

In addition, the Health Education Authority spent £1,135,903 on tobacco-related programmes and £496,000 on drug and alcohol misuse programmes in 1987-88.

Hernia Repairs and Hip Replacements

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of hernia repairs and hip replacement operations performed in each region, each year, since 1974 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available centrally, without incurring disproportionate costs, as soon as possible.

Kidney Disease

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the proportion of patients with terminal kidney disease treated by *(a)* transplant and *(b)* dialysis; and what are the comparable figures in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and European Economic Community countries.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the number of patients treated by kidney transplants and dialysis in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries listed has been provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association. The figures, which relate to the position on 31 December 1986, are as follows:

All patients on renal replacement therapy

Country	*Percentage on all forms of dialysis*	*Percentage with a functioning transplant*
Austria	71	29
Belgium	67	33
Denmark	59	41
Federal Republic of Germany	85	15
Finland	37	63
France	76	24
Greece	85	15
Iceland	50	50
Ireland	44	56
Italy	88	12
Luxembourg	72	28
Netherlands	56	44
Norway	22	78
Portugal	92	8
Spain	77	23
Sweden	45	55
Switzerland	57	43
Turkey	71	29
United Kingdom	50	50

Statistics are not held centrally for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Sugar in Diet

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the sub-panel of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Health, COMA, on the effects of sugar in diet.

Mrs. Currie: We hope to receive the report from the expert panel on sugars in the diet set up by the chief medical officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) early in the new year.

Incomes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate for each year since 1979 the number of people in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales who had incomes (i) below, (ii) at and, (iii) up to 140 per cent. of the income support or supplementary benefit level on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1979; what percentage of the population they represented in each case; what is his estimate of the number of children living in such households; and what percentage of total children they represent in each;

(2) how many children for each year since 1979 in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales were living in families (i) below, (ii) at and (iii) up to 140 per cent. of income support or supplementary benefit level, classified by employment status; whether they were in one or two-parent families on the latest basis, and on a basis comparable with 1979; what proportion of these children made up the total number of children; and whether they were in families of one, two, three, four or more children.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 May, at columns *413-414*, and to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 21 June, at column *546*.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing *(a)* individuals and *(b)* children below various percentiles of the income distribution by family status and economic status in 1981, 1983 and 1985 both before and after housing costs from "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis."

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* A note has been put in the Library.

Maternity Services (Fund Raising)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the total number of working hours spent by each regional health authority director of maternity services on fund raising or income generation;

(2) what is the number of maternity staff involved in fund raising or income generation; and how many hours maternity service staff have spent on fund raising in each district health authority;

(3) how much of his total budget he expects to be spent on seminar and study days for maternity staff; and by how much each district health authority is having to supplement its allocation for this purpose by money raised through its own fund raising and income generation.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available. We have advised health authorities that income-generation activities should not interfere with their duty to provide services under the National Health Service Act 1977, and we intend that they should ensure that there is no unnecessary diversion of management or staff time. Levels of spending on seminars and study days are a matter for individual health authorities from within their general allocations.

Income Support

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the losses to *(a)* families and *(b)* other claimants, giving details of the number of both claimants and dependants for the changeover to income support and the change in housing benefit rules in April, taking into account all the protection measures; and if he will give the numbers transitional losses of (i) up to £2 a week, (ii) £2 to £4 a week, (iii) £4 to £6 a week, (iv) £6 to £8 a week, (v) £8 to £10 a week and over £10 a week.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Primary Health Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a further statement on how he plans to finance the changes in primary health care set out in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health".

(2) if he will make a further statement on his plans to introduce charges for eye tests and dental checks.

Mr. Moore: The discussions in the other place have produced no new arguments in relation to our proposals for sight tests and the dental examination charge. We remain of the view that it is right that those who can afford to should contribute towards the cost of sight tests and dental examinations. Our proposals rightly exempt those whose circumstances are such that they cannot afford to pay. We do not accept that those who are not exempt will be deterred from seeking treatment. The proposals were part of a package which would make a significant contribution to improvement in primary health care.

Audiology Technicians

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why audiology technicians are not paid on PTA scales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why audiology technicians are not included in a pay review body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Audiology technicians are graded as physiological measurement technicians (PMTs—audiology) whose pay is for negotiation in the professional and technical staffs B Whitley council. PMTs (audiology) do not satisy all the criteria drawn up at the time the review body structure was established.

Childhood Cancer

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what independent research has been or is being undertaken by or for his Department into instances of child cancers in the age ranges *(a)* 0 to 15 years and *(b)* 15 to 24 years throughout the United Kingdom and particularly in Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: In relation to childhod cancer, United Kingdom health departments have funded, or have agreed in principle to take forward, recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the independent advisory group report "Investigation of the Possible Increased Incidence of Cancer in West Cumbria" (Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1984). and recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 8 of the second COMARE report "Investigation of the possible increased incidence of leukaemia in young people near the Dounreay Nuclear Establishment, Caithness, Scotland" (Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1988). Copies of both reports are in the Library. In addition, the Department's directly commissioned research programme includes:

(i) the maintenance of the national registry of childhood cancer at the childhood cancer research group, Oxford university. The group is also in receipt of joint funding from this Department and the National Radiological Protection Board for the further development of the national medical statistical databases for childhood cancers in Great Britain.

(ii) a case control study of childhood cancers in west Berkshire and Basingstoke and north Hampshire.

In relation to Humberside, the East Yorkshie health authority commissioned a report (Report on childhood cancer aggregation in the Beverley and Kingston-upon-Hull administrative districts) earlier this year on the incidence of childhood cancers in certain areas in the east Yorkshire borough of Beverley, and the city of Hull. This report has recently been published and is being studied by the Department.

"Public Health in England"

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Government are now in a position to announce their response to the report "Public Health in England", Cm. 289.

Mr. Moore: The report "Public Health in England" (Cm. 289) was published on 14 January 1988. Its recommendations affect central Government, health and local authorities and other statutory and voluntary bodies.

The Government have accepted the principle the report advances of a greater commitment to improving the public health. The following steps are being taken at this stage to the report's recommendations.

New guidance is being given to health authorities based on the report's conclusions about their responsibilities to improve the health of the population, including the prevention, surveillance and control of communicable disease. This guidance will also ask authorities to arrange for the publication of an annual report on the health of the public to be prepared by their director of public health.

The capacity of the public health laboratory service and the communicable disease surveillance centre to provide specialist help to health authorities is being strengthened. My Department is also taking forward the report's recommendations to review the present system for the notification of communicable diseases and the scope for bringing public health legislation up to date.

Thirdly, a small multi-disciplinary unit within the Department of Health and Social Security is being set up to monitor and analyse information about the health of the population and to provide an improved epidemiological input at the centre.

In the longer term, the implementation of this strategy will depend on an adequate supply of appropriate trained manpower. The main professional bodies concerned are being asked to consider and act on those of the report's recommendations which relate to education and training in the public health field.

The application of the report outside England is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps will be taken to ensure that in cases where, as a result of the chief commissioner's finding in decision CSB/783/1987 that the term "adult" means aged 18 years or over, it appears that supplementary benefit may have been underpaid or single payments for washing machines wrongly refused, the relevant decisions are reviewed and the appropriate payments made, including transitional additions to income support.

Mr. Portillo: The implications of the decision, which was made on 10 June 1988, are currently under consideration by the office of the chief adjudication officer. I cannot at this point say whether and, if so, when, the guidance of the chief adjudication officer will be amended.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards promoting equal opportunities between employees of different sexes and ethnic origin in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The National Health Service is an equal opportunities employer. To assist employing authorities in promoting equality of opportunity we have established the national steering group on equal opportunities for women in the National Health Service. The group has issued practical guidance on recruitment and selection procedures and on the monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunities policies. We expect to receive its summary report later this year. The Department also supports the King's Fund task force on racial equality in the National Health Service which was established to accelerate the achievement of equal opportunities for ethnic minorities. We have commended to authorities the task force's model policy, published in July 1987.

Nursing Grades

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent National Health Service managers are using cost as a means of determining nursing grades; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The guidance which has been issued to health authorities makes it clear that posts should be graded in accordance with the agreed grading definitions.

Private Hospitals (Contracts)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those district health authorities and special health authorities which have entered into contractual arrangements with private hospitals or clinics during 1987-8; and if he will give details of the costs to each district health authority, the type of treatment given, and the number of patients involved in each of the arrangements.

Mrs. Currie: Information about patients treated under contractual arrangements for 1987-88 will be available in the autumn.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish any advice given to regional district or special health authorities about contracting out the management of pay beds or private patients sections to independent hospital companies.

Mrs. Currie: Guidance on contractual arrangements between health authorities and independent hospitals and nursing homes and on other forms of co-operation

between the National Health Service and the independent medical sector is contained in health circular HC(81)1, issued to health authorities in January 1981. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those district health authorities and special health authorities which have contracted out the management of their pay beds to independent hospital companies.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of each successful bid from the national initiative to cut waiting lists during 1988-89; and if he will list separately each successful bid involving the treatment of patients under contract at a private hospital or clinic;

(2) if any strategic decision was taken to ensure that a percentage of the sum set aside for the national initiative to reduce waiting lists was spent at private hospitals or clinics; and what criteria were used to judge bids from district health authorities or special health authorities for money from the national initiative;

(3) if he will place in the Library the complete list of successful bids from district health authorities and regional health authorities for money allocated by the national initiative; if he will publish a list of all those projects which involve the treatment of patients in private hospitals or clinics; if he will aggregate the amount of money being paid to private hospitals and clinics for this treatment; and if his Department had earmarked a proportion of the total sum to be spent in the private sector.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 28 March 1988]:* Schedules of the projects funded from the £30 million waiting list fund in the current financial year have been placed in the Library. The projects listed in the table involve some use of the independent sector. The cost of these projects will be £2·46 million. No part of the waiting list fund was earmarked for any particular type of project.

Health authorities were asked, when formulating their programmes, to concentrate on tackling excessive waiting, particularly for serious or disabling conditions, and, in doing so, to look at all available sources of health care, including use of spare capacity in other health authorities, service hospitals or the independent sector. Selection and funding of individual district projects was the responsibility of regional health authorities.

Waiting List Fund Projects 1988-89 involving the Independent Sector

Region	*District*	*Specialty*	*Target caseload in-patients and day cases*
Yorkshire	Huddersfield	Mixed	150
Yorkshire	Hull	Oral Surgery	300
Trent	Doncaster	General Surgery	202
Trent	Doncaster	ENT	229
Trent	Doncaster	Gynaecology	75
Trent	South Lincolnshire	T & O	300
East Anglian	West Norfolk	General Surgery	50
North West Thames	Region-wide	Mixed	1,350
North West Thames	Hillingdon	T & O	100
North West Thames	Hounslow and Spelthorne	Mixed	550
North East Thames	Southend	T & O	60
North East Thames	Bloomsbury	Plastic Surgery	100
South East Thames	Brighton	General Surgery	128
South East Thames	Brighton	T & O	60
South East Thames	Dartford and Gravesham	General Surgery/Urology	300
South East Thames	Hastings	T & O	50
South West Thames	North West Surrey	T & O	50
South West Thames	South West Surrey	T & O	190
South West Thames	Worthing	Ophthalmology	100
Wessex	East Dorset	Urology	110
Oxford	Aylesbury Vale	Plastic Surgery	270
South Western	Cornwall	T & O	50
South Western	Cornwall	Ophthalmology	60
South Western	Cornwall	General Surgery	240
South Western	Torbay	Ophthalmology	320
North Western	Bolton	Ophthalmology	100

Life Expectation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current expectation of life for *(a)* men and *(b)* women at the age of 45 years in (i) England and Wales, (ii) all European Econonic Community countries and (iii) Scandinavian countries; and what were the comparable figures for 1979.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 July]:* Available information is given in the table. Statistics for countries other than the United Kingdom and England and Wales are taken from "The United Nations Demographic Yearbook", and give the latest figures from that source, together with those closest to 1979.

Expectation of further life in years at age 45 years by sex for selected European Countries and years.

Country	*Year*	*Males*	*Females*
England and Wales[1]	1978-80	28·30	33·70
	1984-86	29·40	34·70
Belgium	1972-76	27·50	32·80
	1979-82	28·44	34·14

Country	Year	Males	Females
Denmark	1979-80	29·20	34·30
	1984-85	29·40	34·40
France	1978-80	28·75	35·47
	1983-85	29·48	36·24
Germany	1979-81	28·49	33·98
	1983-85	29·11	34·73
Greece	1970	30·47	32·98
	1980	30·94	34·15
Irish Republic	1978-80	27·68	32·14
	1980-82	28·05	32·56
Italy	1974-77	n/a	n/a
	1981	29·15	34·87
Luxembourg	1979	n/a	n/a
	1980-82	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	1979	30·00	35·70
	1984-85	30·24	36·28
Portugal	1975	27·12	32·69
	1979-82	28·69	33·61
Spain	1975	29·30	33·91
	1980	31·01	35·84
United Kingdom[2]	1978-80	28·10	33·40
	1984-86	29·17	34·26
Finland	1978	26·77	33·81
	1985	27·95	34·96
Norway	1979-80	30·11	35·63
	1984-85	30·48	36·19
Sweden	1980	30·39	35·49
	1985	31·07	36·27

n/a = not available.

Source:

[1] Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

[2] Government Actuaries Department.

THE ARTS

Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the Government has received a reply to its proposal for the future of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection.

Mr. Luce: The trustees of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust have informed the Government that they have decided not to pursue the British proposal at the present time. Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza has entered into preliminary accord with the Spanish Government which is intended to lead to a loan of most of the collection for display in Madrid for a period of up to 10 years. The trustees have decided to try to achieve a full agreement with the Spanish Government along those lines. In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government have withdrawn their proposal. The Government have said that, should circumstances change and the trustees approach the Government about a long-term location in the United Kingdom, we would be ready to look at the matter afresh.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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